OSCAR Year 2 - What's New?

The Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR) is currently undergoing system changes to make it an even more efficient clerkship application system for Year 2. These system changes are based on the feedback that we received from the OSCAR Year 1 evaluation surveys. The OSCAR Committee would like to thank all of the law school administrators who took the time to fill out the law school survey. The OSCAR Committee culled through the survey data and incorporated it into the system's functional requirements for Year 2.

Since mid January, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia received its funding for OSCAR Year 2 and has been diligently working with Symplicity Corporation to develop Version 2.0 with a deployment date of May 15, 2006. What does all this mean for the law schools and applicants?

What Is the Timeline for Release of OSCAR Version 2.0?

Dates	Actions
January 19 - May 15, 2006	System programming, testing, development of new user guides, and system acceptance.
April 1 - 30, 2006	Judges sign up for Year 2.
April 26 - 28, 2006	Demo OSCAR Year 2 capabilities at the 2006 NALP Education Conference.
Date To Be Determined	Provide demo accounts to law school administrators to access the demo system.
May 1, 2006	Provide capability for law school administrators to upload the directory of faculty recommenders.
May 15, 2006	Roll out OSCAR Version 2.0,

What Does Archiving Mean?

In late April/early May, all applications and pending recommendation requests submitted between June 1, 2005 and October 31, 2005 will automatically be moved to an archive that will be accessible by judges and law school administrators via a tab labeled "2005 Archives." At this time, the system will also automatically archive any applicant and recommender accounts that have not registered any activity since October 31, 2005. The archived applications will only be available for viewing (read-only). Judges, themselves, will have the ability to archive applications received after the October 31, 2005 date. Archiving will not affect the ability of law school administrators to run reports on applicant data for any time period.

Will Users with Existing OSCAR Accounts Have to Re-register?

Applicants - Applicants who already have OSCAR accounts will be required to re-register. Version 2.0 will recognize these applicants and require them to only complete a modified applicant information form. When applicants log into the system, all of their application documents (except transcripts) from the previous hiring season will be available to them. When the user logs into OSCAR Version 2.0 for the first time, the system will have a pop-up box appear that notifies applicants that their application materials from the previous hiring season are available and that they should review their documents and delete any that are not needed.

Law School Administrators - Law school administrators will use their current login and passwords to access the system. We recommend that law school administrators verify in OSCAR who they issued accounts and system rights in Year 1 and determine if those accounts need to be changed.

What Are the Major Changes in the Applicants Interface?

- ***Applicants must upload all of their documents in Adobe Acrobat .pdf format***. The OSCAR Program will forward information to the law schools on where to access web sites that provide free software for converting documents into .pdf format.

- ***Grade sheets will replace official transcripts***. The OSCAR System has a 300kb file size limit that is enforced due to the sheer volume of documents that are uploaded to the system. In Year 1, the scanning of transcripts was problematic due to the file size limit and the legibility of the transcripts once scanned. In Version 2.0, judges will accept typed

grade sheets as part of the application packet and may request the applicant to forward his/her official transcript via mail/e-mail. (Note: For applicants who re-register, the OSCAR system will automatically delete all transcripts that were uploaded during the previous hiring season. During Version 1.0, scanned transcripts caused system errors for some judges when opening and printing application(s).)

Applicants will have the ***ability to submit 2 law school grade sheets and 3 other grade sheets*** to an application.

- After logging into the system, the Applicant Home Page will display the following items that the user can easily access under Quick Links: the Applicant User Guide, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), Help, Federal Law Clerk Information System (FLCIS), and information on converting documents to .pdf.

- ***A GPA field*** will be added to the applicant's My Profile Form.

- ***Several buttons will be renamed to better reflect their significance in the overall application process.*** For example, last season, current students clicked the "Submit Application" button after they selected their application materials and designated their recommenders. However, their applications were not actually "submitted" until noon on the day after Labor Day and students were able to modify aspects of their applications up until that time. Accordingly, the "Submit Application" button will be renamed to "Create Application" to reflect the fact that clicking on it merely has the effect of creating the application and notifying recommenders that the applicant has selected them. For alumni applicants whose applications are viewable by judges as soon as they are submitted, they will have two buttons viewable on their user interface. One of which may be labeled "Hold for Later Release" (which will replace the old "Save As Draft" button) and one of which labeled "Release My Application to Judge" (replacing the old "Submit Application" button).

  Current students who go back into their application record after clicking on "Create Application" but prior to Labor Day will see a "Delete" button. Alumni applicants will also see the "Delete" button after clicking on "Hold for Later Release" but before they click on "Release My Application to Judge." Clicking on the "Delete" button will allow applicants to delete an application, but it will not prevent them from re-applying to that judge at a future date.

  Students or alumni reviewing an application after it has been made viewable to a judge will not have the option to delete their application. Instead of the "Delete" button, applicants will only see a button labeled "Withdraw." Clicking on the "Withdraw" button will prevent an applicant from re-applying at a future date.

- ***An online editor with mail merge capabilities will streamline the cover letter uploading process for applicants.*** The online editor will mirror the process by which recommendation letters were uploaded on the recommender interface last season. The merge fields will include Judge First Name, Judge Last Name, Judge Suffix (e.g., Jr.), Judge Title (e.g., Chief Judge or Senior Judge), Court Name, Street Address1, Street Address2, City, State, and Zip Code. Applicants will have the ability to view, edit, delete, and save cover letters.

- ***In order to minimize the risk of applicant error in entering recommender contact information (which could prevent recommenders from being notified about pending requests), the method for applicants to enter their recommender information has been revised.*** The old "Recommendations" tab is being renamed and divided into two sub-tabs called "My Recommenders" and "Status of Recommendation Letters."

  My Recommenders - Tab 1:
  The "My Recommenders" tab is similar to the "My Documents" tab. ***Applicants will identify all their recommenders prior to actually creating applications***. Applicants can then pick and chose which recommenders that they want to use for particular applications. There will be three sources for recommender information on this page.

  - Recommender Directory. Each law school will upload a list containing the names of the school's permanent and adjunct faculty, their email addresses, telephone numbers, and assigned faculty support (cc: email address). The Recommender Directory will be maintained by the law school administrator(s)–eliminating errors in recommender names and emails, as well as the creation of multiple accounts for the same recommender. (Additional details concerning the Recommender Directory are included in the Administrator section below.) The Recommender Directory will appear as a drop-down list from which an applicant can choose one or more recommenders.

  - Master Law School Directory. Because law school faculty are mobile, one or more of an applicant's desired recommenders may be teaching at a different school (as a visitor or a permanent hire). To avoid multiple entries of professors (and to save each law school from the effort of maintaining contact information for visitors from years past), each law school will enter information for its permanent faculty members, both those in residence and those visiting elsewhere. All of those individual school recommender directories will be available to applicants on a master list, quickly searchable by name.

- Other Recommenders. Recommenders not affiliated with a law school (e.g., a supervising attorney from a summer internship) would be entered manually in a section called "Other Recommenders." Applicants will enter the name, email address, and phone number for these recommenders, along with a cc: email address for an administrative assistant. The Other Recommenders will not be listed in the law school's Recommender Directory or in the Master Law School Directory.

Clerkship Application:

To submit an application, applicants will identify the clerkship, select the application documents, and go to the drop-down list of all the recommenders they chose on the "My Recommenders" page. From that list, they can choose each recommender for that judge (similar to the method of attaching documents to a specific application) and click on the "Create Application" button (for students) or "Hold for Later Submission" (for alumni) to send the request for recommendation letter to the recommender. Applicants will have the ability to add or delete recommenders after application submission up until the date the application is reviewed by the judge.

Status of Recommendation Letters - Tab 2:

The "Status of Recommendation Letters" tab will only display the status of recommendation requests that were requested in the actual clerkship application under the "Clerkships" tab. Under "Status of Recommendation Letters" tab, the Status Column will display a green checkmark "√" for letters that have already been completed/ uploaded on behalf of the applicant, a "W" for applications that are withrawn, and a red "**X**" for pending requests.

What Are the Major Changes in the Recommender Interface?

- Recommenders will continue to receive an initial Evite email from OSCAR with login information. ***The Evite email will be modified to eliminate the applicant's name and replace it with the recommender's name in the subject line.*** Law school administrators will have the ability to modify the text of the Evite for their recommenders and send subsequent emails to their recommenders. However, OSCAR will no longer generate automatic periodic email reminders. For schools with a decentralized process for preparing and uploading recommendation letters, law school administrators will have the ability to "batch email" their own reminders–as often as they like–to faculty with pending recommendation requests.

- ***Any letters not generated in the online editor must be uploaded in .pdf format***.

- After logging into the system, the Recommender Home Page will display the following items that the user can easily access under Quick Links: the Recommender User Guide, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), Help, and information on converting documents to .pdf format.

- Recommenders will have the ability to ***search for applicant names.***

- ***A "Select All" field will be added for attaching a recommendation letter to all applications***. This field will allow recommenders to select the names of all judges to submit a recommendation letter without having to click in each judge's box.

- Recommenders will have the ability to ***preview recommendation letters*** created in the online editor prior to submission.

- The online editor will have ***more merge fields available*** (e.g., Judge First Name, Judge Last Name, Judge Suffix (e.g., Jr.), Judge Title, Court Name, Street Address1, Street Address2, City, State, and Zip Code.

- A "Documents" tab will be added to ***allow the recommender to view, edit, delete, and copy existing letters created*** in the online editor and letters uploaded as .pdf files.

What Are the Major Changes in the Law School Administrator Interface?

- After logging into the system, the Law School Administrator (LSA) Home Page will display the following items that the user can easily access under Quick Links: the Law School Administrator User Guide, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), Help, Federal Law Clerk Information System (FLCIS), and information on converting documents to .pdf.

Applicants:

- Administrators will have the ability to perform ***a Keyword Search on an applicant's name and sort applicants alphabetically by last name***.

- OSCAR will display a column that provides the applicant's class year with the ability to search and filter on class year.

- The Applicant Login As tab will duplicate all changes stated above in the Applicant Interface.

Recommenders:

- The system will provide the ability for administrators to ***send email recommenders using the Batch Options feature***.

- The Recommender List will ***display the recommenders's names by last name*** (not first name or honorific).

- Administrators will be able to perform a ***search on the Recommenders List for a particular recommender***.

- The administrator will have the capability to edit recommender details.

- Most importantly, administrators will have the ability to ***Login As the recommender and can perform any of the recommender functions***. The Recommender Login As tab will duplicate all changes stated above in the Recommender Interface.

School Administration:

- Administrators will have a tab titled "Tools" with two sub-categories labeled "Pick Lists" and "Email Messages."

- ***The "Pick Lists" category will allow administrators to upload a directory of all their law school professors (names, email addresses, phone numbers, and cc: email address)***. The directory will be used by the applicants when selecting their law school recommenders. The directory will have to be in a formatted text file or Excel spreadsheet–instructions will be provided. (Note: Instructions on uploading the directory will be provided in April.) Administrators will have the ability to revise the listing at any time and can add new recommenders as needed.

- The "Email Messages" category will allow law schools to ***manage their system emails*** that they send to applicants and recommenders. Law schools will have the ability to send out their own personal email to their recommenders with OSCAR login information.

- Administrators will be able to ***customize reports and have access to the following canned reports***:

  - Applicant Contact/Profile Information
  - Applicants by Graduation Year
  - Applicants Using "Hold for Later Submission"
  - Pending Recommendations by Applicant
  - List of Recommenders
  - Recommendation Reports by Applicant with Recommender Names and Judges
  - Recommendation Reports by Recommender with Applicant Names and Judges