Finding a job can be a challenge under the best of circumstances. Add a soft economy and weak market to the mix, and the task can seem daunting. Steven Schneider, JD ’94, encountered these conditions upon his own graduation. Now a senior manager in Ernst & Young LLP’s Washington, D.C., national tax division, he helps other up-and-coming lawyers facing similar challenges.

“Times were tough in ’94, and they’re tough today,” he says. “The good news is, students have access to a network of alumni who can help—but they must be willing to take the first step themselves.”

Kelly Morrison took that step. A third-year law student and past treasurer of the Student Bar Association who majored in accounting as an undergraduate, she found Schneider’s name through Associate Dean Mark Smith in the Career Services Office. The professionals in Smith’s office often recommend alumni whom they feel would be willing to help students and graduates with advice about their jobs, the market, and the practice generally.

“My career goal is to work for the federal government or agencies that deal with tax regulations, so I started looking for a summer internship in Washington, D.C., about a year ago,” Morrison recalls. “Since Steven was working for a large accounting firm there, he was a natural contact.”

The advice and contacts paid off; Deloitte & Touche offered Morrison an internship for last summer. “The internship allowed me to use my accounting degree and my legal training,” says Morrison. “I did tax return work, but I also did research and writing for statutory interpretations.”

Like Morrison, Schneider found his career path made smoother by a mentor. One of his professors referred him to his first job, with the IRS. Today he handles large transactional planning—mergers and acquisitions in the $100-million to $2-billion range.

Though things worked out well for Schneider, he wishes he had been aware of the alumni database as a student. “I just didn’t know it was there,” he says. “However, I think it’s a good resource for alumni, too, at any stage of their careers.”

As for Morrison, this spring she is back in the nation’s capital. She has landed an internship with the United States Department of Justice as part of the School of Law’s clinical program.

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Steven Schneider, JD ’94, offers law student Kelly Morrison advice on her job search.

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