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lack capri pants. Animal print strappy heels. Ties hitting above the beltline. These descriptions aren't from a trendy crowd during a night out, but what staff from a few law schools said were worn by law students during various school job fairs over the past few years.

Amy McCarthy, a career management specialist at Georgia State University College of Law since 2009, recalled seeing these

fashion choices during job fairs and on-campus interviews throughout her time as a career advisor for the law school.

"These situations showed us students needed help," McCarthy said of the school's decision to implement a crash course last year on how to dress appropriately for job interviews and beyond.

The school held a "what not to wear" seminar last year where local clothing vendors were invited to campus to showcase what an interview suit outfit looked like, McCarthy said. One of the goals of the seminar was to distinguish between the interview suit and an everyday working suit, she added.

Since graduating law school nearly 13 years ago herself, McCarthy said the wardrobe standards for the legal industry have changed, which may result in sending confusing messages to students who likely come from a generation with different attire standards than the majority of the attorneys setting the firms' dress code.

So, as many law firms adopt the business casual attire trend, McCarthy said, it might be hard for law students to grapple with what that means exactly.

Only one first impression

For starters, appropriate interview attire starts with a dark suit, McCarthy said. The ensemble also includes closed shoes for women and polished shoes for men.

"There may be variations to the workday attire, but not much. A conservative dark suit with conservative colors is a pretty consistent wardrobe choice for interviews across the country, at least anecdotally."

Liza Larky of The Ohio State University's Michael E. Moritz College of Law spends some of her time as a career advisor for the school, chatting with legal professionals in the community, from private and public sectors, about some ways students can make a memorable impression. The feedback helped the school develop a program aimed at showing law students not only how to dress appropriately but also how to act professionally during formal gatherings.

"A lot of students come straight from undergrad and don't have a lot of experience in the professional workforce," Larky said. "You only have one chance at a first impression, and sometimes you do that with the way you look and how you speak or act. So I think it's important for students to get infor-

mation up front [about dressing properly] rather than figuring out as they go along."

Larky's tips for appropriate presentation include: wearing jewelry sparingly, cutting darts off suits, and keeping perfume or cologne at a minimum.

Style on a budget

One of the biggest hurdles you might face when putting together the perfect interview or workday outfit is the limited funds you have to work with. Officials at some schools are alleviating some of the money woes by teaming up with local retailers to give students clothing discounts periodically. But for the most part, the high price tag that can come with a professional wardrobe can seriously dent your bank account.

Atlanta-based image consultant Anna Hinson, who owns a style consulting company called Style Counsel, has a few ideas for dressing professionally without breaking the bank.

Start your wardrobe gradually, Hinson advised, beginning with one staple—a nice quality conservative suit. Beware, this typically runs around \$300 to \$500 without any sort of discount, but you can cut costs up to half by targeting sales and finds at secondhand stores. Hinson said it's better to accumulate staple pieces slowly rather than buying mediocre products all at once because lower-quality items won't last past a few washing cycles. With each paycheck, try adding one bottom or top to your wardrobe to develop a polished professional image, she added. Buy accessories such as jewelry, scarves, or shoes that complement the conservative color scheme you've established to maximize your mix-and-match options. Going this route will result in a professional, high-quality wardrobe sooner than you know it.

Also, Hinson said, shop at discount retailers and pay close attention to sales and quality consignment shops. Look for high-quality fabrics such as silk, cotton, or wool. Your geographic region could dictate the kind of suit fabric you invest in, but your first suit should be conservative and dark colored to get the most all-purpose wear.

The first outfit "gets you through the first month" so that you can "invest in an additional piece each month," said Hinson. "Your wardrobe isn't going to happen overnight, but over time."

Hinson has talked with McCarthy at Georgia State University Law School about visiting campus to chat with students about developing a personal brand, in addition to dressing professionally.

Another way to dress appropriately? Hinson believes you should take hints about what pieces to invest in next by looking at what partners at the firm are wearing. "Law is still very much a conservative field, where courtroom appearances, working with corporate clients, and assisting seasoned partners in a firm require you to dress professionally and usually in formal business attire," she said. ■

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MUST-HAVES FOR YOUR WARDROBE

According to Atlanta-based image consultant Anna Hinson, who owns a style consulting company called Style Counsel, the essential work outfit includes the following:

FOR MEN

- 2 DRESS SHIRTS (1 white and 1 light blue)
- 1 PLAID BUTTON DOWN (perfect for casual Friday if your firm participates)
- 1 PAIR GRAY SLACKS (works nicely with navy jacket)
- 1 PAIR BLACK SHOES
- 1 DARK SUIT (preferably navy)
- 3 TIES
- 1 LEATHER BLACK BELT
- 1 POCKET SQUARE

FOR WOMEN

- 1 JACKET
- 3 SKIRTS
- 1 DRESS (that can be used as a business dinner dress)
- 3 BLOUSES
- 1 HAND BAG
- 1 SILK SCARF
- 1 PAIR OF DRESS PUMPS