

## **JUMPSTART your *Judicial* Job Search!**

### **WHY A JOB WITH A JUDGE?**

Students interested in gaining experience working within a judge's chambers should consider two types of positions: judicial clerkships and judicial internships/externships. A judicial clerkship is a post-graduate position (usually for one or two years) during which the clerk assists a judge with his or her caseload. A clerk's typical duties include conducting legal research, assisting in the drafting of opinions, preparing bench memoranda, advising the judge on the resolution of motions, assisting the judge during trials and other hearings, and directly handling inquiries from litigants. A judicial internship/externship is a full- or part-time position in a judge's chambers filled by a law student during the summer or academic year. Although responsibilities vary, interns/externs often assist with the drafting of bench memoranda and opinions, research issues before the court, observe hearings, and organize the judge's docket. Judicial internships/externships are one of the best ways to increase your chances of obtaining a judicial clerkship!

Although clerkships obviously involve more substantive experience, both types of positions are unique opportunities to enhance your legal writing and research skills while observing law "in action" from a judge's perspective. Clerks and interns/externs gain valuable insight into what makes a good lawyer, a persuasive brief, and an effective oral argument, as well as knowledge about courtroom procedures and state/federal law. Additionally, clerks and interns/externs often form close personal relationships with their judges that lead to long-term friendships and mentoring. Many private and public sector employers recognize the value of these positions and prefer applicants who have this experience.

### **WHERE CAN I GET A JOB WITH A JUDGE?**

Judges in state and federal courts all over the country hire judicial clerks and interns/externs. At the trial court level, clerks and interns/externs are part of the decision-making process through all stages of litigation. At the appellate level, clerks and interns/externs focus on the appeals stage.

### **HOW DO I GET EXPERIENCE WORKING FOR A JUDGE?**

Academic-year and summer internships/externships are the perfect way to gain initial experience working for a federal or state judge. For both clerkships and internship/externships, it is important not to rely exclusively on postings because many judges do not advertise. The print and online resources listed below will help you identify postings as well as judges/courts that you can call to inquire about available positions. Clerkship applications usually include a cover letter, resume, writing sample, law school transcript, and two or three letters of recommendation. For internship/externships applications, you may often submit a list of references instead of letters of recommendation.

### **WHEN DO I APPLY FOR A JOB WITH A JUDGE?**

Since most judges hire on a rolling basis, it is best to apply as soon as the judge/court is accepting applications. For internships/externships during the academic year, apply two to four months in advance. For summer positions, apply four to six months in advance. Federal judges tend to hire the earliest.

The application timing for clerkships can vary significantly by court and judge. Under the new federal hiring plan, the majority of federal judges are waiting until early September (the day after Labor Day) to begin accepting applications from 3L/4L students for clerkships beginning the following year. A minority of federal judges do not follow the new federal hiring plan and either have application deadlines before September or start accepting applications before September. The timing for state court clerkships varies by state and is less standardized than for the federal courts. Some state judges and courts have conformed to the federal plan and are accepting applications in the fall from 3L/4L students for positions beginning the following year, while a minority of judges and courts begin their application process the prior spring.

## **KEY RESOURCES**

### **CareerLink**

(<https://law-american-csm.symphlicity.com/students/>)

Within the jobs & resume collection section, choose Judicial Clerkship as the Position Type to see judicial clerkship openings (mostly state courts). Choose the Temporary or Summer Position Types, with Judicial as the practice area, to find judicial internship openings. Go to the Clerkships section to download addresses for all federal judges and many state judges.

### **Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR) – Only for Federal Judicial Clerkships**

(<https://www.oscar.uscourts.gov>)

The public section includes a searchable database with clerkship application timing and requirements for some federal judges and a list of federal judges who do not have clerkship openings. The applicant section of this Internet-based application system is the preferred method of more than 450 federal judges to hire clerks for the 2009 term.

### **The Guide to State Judicial Clerkship Procedures (Vermont Law) – Only for State Judicial Clerkships**

(<http://vermontlaw.edu/career>)

Provides a general overview of the hiring process for the courts within each state. The username/password changes annually and is listed in the Judicial section of the OCPD website.

### **Judicial Yellow Book (Leadership Directory Series)**

(Access online through the “Useful Resources” box on the Judicial page of the OCPD website.)

Provides contact information (mailing addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers and email addresses) and biographical information for federal (trial and appellate) and state (appellate only) judges. Once you have logged in, choose “Judicial” under “Browse” and then expand the pluses on the left to see all court listings.

### **BNA’s Directory of State and Federal Courts, Judges and Clerks**

(Access online through the “Useful Resources” box on the Judicial page of the OCPD website.)

Contains contact information (mailing addresses and phone numbers) for all federal and state judges (except for the state courts of limited jurisdiction), as well as diagrams explaining court structure and jurisdiction.

### **Judicial Clerkship Alumni Survey Database – Only for Judicial Clerkships**

([http://intranet.wcl.american.edu/career/clerkship\\_search/](http://intranet.wcl.american.edu/career/clerkship_search/))

Searchable database that includes feedback (e.g., clerkship experience, interview process, tips) and contact information from alumni who clerked with federal and state judges around the country.

### **Judicial Section of the OCPD Website**

([www.wcl.american.edu/career/clerkships](http://www.wcl.american.edu/career/clerkships))

Contains detailed application information, as well as a list of DC area judges who usually hire interns/externs.

### **WCL’s Externship Database – Only for Judicial Externships**

([www.wcl.american.edu/externship/externshipapp](http://www.wcl.american.edu/externship/externshipapp))

Searchable database of externships, including judicial positions.