



“ALL RISE”
MANAGING
JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP INITIATIVES
WHEN IT’S NOT YOUR ONLY JOB

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INTRODUCTIONS

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Sandra Morriss, Career Coach & Academic Advisor, University of Washington School of Law
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Overview

- Allies
 - Faculty Committees
 - Local Judiciary
 - Alumni
 - NALP Colleagues

- Administrative Tools
 - Messaging

- Outreach
 - To students
 - To the Judiciary



+ Covid -19

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Allies

Faculty Members

- Faculty Committee
- Individual faculty members who have clerked and/or have connections
- Externship Program Coordinator/Clinicians
- Dean





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Allies

Local Judiciary

- Alumni and friends who have intel, connections, likely to hire our grads, bar association





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Allies

Alumni: Grads who have clerked or currently clerked

- Mock interviews
- Serve on panels
- Willing to recommend students to their judges directly





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Sample Faculty Committee Report

Class Year	% of clerkships of total class size	Total Post-Grad Judicial Clerkships	Federal	State Appellate	State Trial
Class of 2022 (ongoing)	—	1	—	1	—
Class of 2021 (ongoing)	—	12	6	6	—
Class of 2020 (ongoing)	15%	27	11	8	8
Class of 2019	19%	29	7	9	13
Class of 2018	16%	30	2	11	17
Class of 2017	17%	28	2	14	12
Class of 2016	11%	21	3	8	10
Class of 2015	19%	31	6	11	14
Class of 2014	12%	19	2	6	11
Class of 2013	14%	24	1	11	12
Class of 2012	15%	26	3	12	11
Class of 2011	17%	30	8	15	7

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Administrative Tools

Philosophical shift?

- More targeted programming to reach qualified and interested students or broad messaging to 1Ls or combination of both. What works for your student body?

Ideas

- Emails all 1Ls in January after grades post with a blueprint for clerkships and follows up with detailed timeline for applying.
- Small group meeting with students who qualify for clerkships based on grades or who have expressed interest in counseling sessions.
- Program in the fall
- Recording of all the basics of clerkships for over the summer (for 2Ls).
- Handouts

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Outreach

Students

- Symplicity Clerkship module.
- Externship program to identify interested students
- Programming in early spring about Nuts and Bolts of Clerkships (record it as well).
- Email 2Ls in early fall to get them excited for upcoming opportunities and to educate them/remind them of timeline for hiring.
- Emails to top 1/3 of the class in January – February inviting them to come and chat about clerkships

Students Con't

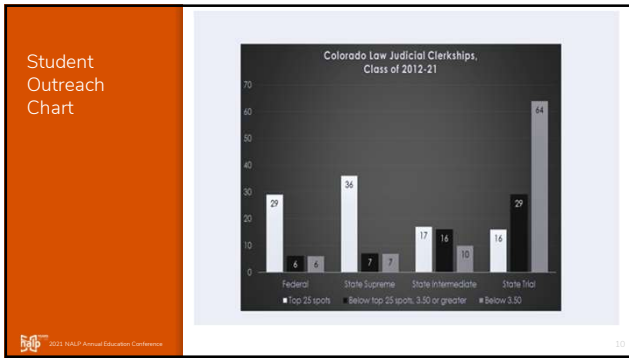
- Promote State Court clerkships early. Partner with faculty or alumni with experience and/or connections.
- Surveyed grads; data on prior State Clerks' careers and shares those stories with students.
- Piggyback on law school or bar association events with judges.
- Law School Center events with judicial speakers
- Moot Court teams/competitions

Judges

- Direct outreach via email or calls to federal and state judges in your state.
- Survey/email about hiring preferences, timing, etc.
- Maintains list of alumni Judges but can also use Yellow Book/directories.
- Judicial Reception (early January with State Court judges)
- Send school publication or head Law Clerk to showcase grads to non-alums. Can do similar marketing.
- Invite Clerk of Courts or Court Administrator to give presentation/panel for students.

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- Covid -19
- ...living in a virtual environment...*
- Trouble finding times for programs/trying different times rather than defaulting to lunch
 - None perfect fix
 - Recording everything – whereas sporadic in past
 - Noticing students accessing content after the fact
 - Fall clerkship panel (alumni) – working in diff courts; instead of larger groups, start with large group intro and split alumni into breakout rooms with different topics; more face-to-face small convos
 - Nuts and bolts – created async videos on Canvas whenever they happen to be working on various parts of app – point students there, instead of answering lots of emails on same topic
 - Increase interest in clerkships; seem to be stable hiring, externship context; separate judicial internship program; seen an increase in clerks participating because of virtual placement
 - Asking employers to do brown bag their own virtual programs to bring all judicial interns together; judges.
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FINAL THOUGHTS

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THANK YOU!

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Judicial Clerkship

Faculty Letter of Recommendation Checklist

- ☐ Individually addressed to a particular judge or contact
- ☐ On school-branded letterhead
- ☐ Include a reference line identifying the applicant
- ☐ Introductory paragraph
 - What you are recommending the applicant for
 - How you know the applicant
- ☐ Descriptive paragraph
 - Why you are recommending this candidate
 - Details and examples of the candidate's abilities, skills and characteristics
- ☐ Closing paragraph
 - Repetition of our recommendation of X applicant and how the reviewer can get in contact with you (via phone or email)
- ☐ Mentions whether the recommender themselves have any clerking experience
- ☐ Highlights and provides examples of how the student demonstrates the following skills:
 - Intellectual abilities – critical thinking, analysis skills
 - Research and writing skills
 - Personal characteristics
 - Ability to take initiative and direction
 - Ability to work under time constraints
 - Response to constructive criticism and feedback
 - Completion of assignments in a timely manner
 - Organization
 - Attention to Detail
 - Professional Demeanor



Judicial Clerkship Student Letter of Recommendation Checklist

Make sure to provide the following information when requesting a recommendation letter. For requests to faculty members, please also copy faculty assistants.

- ☐ Judge(s)/position(s) are you applying for
- ☐ Specific address block for each judge (attach separate excel spreadsheet with address blocks to allow for mail merge)
 - Copy/request help from a faculty assistant if you have multiple judges you are applying to. Personalized letters are best.
 - If there is a description for the position or qualities they are seeking in an applicant, provide a copy of that, link to the website, etc.
- ☐ Why are you pursuing a clerkship? What interests you about this particular court/position?
- ☐ Copy of your resume
- ☐ Copy of your transcript
- ☐ How does the Professor/Recommender know you?
 - If you had class with them, what classes and what semester?
 - What grade did you receive?
 - Did you attend office hours? Participate in class? Serve as a research assistant?
 - Did the faculty member serve as an advisor to the student organization in which you serve as leader?
 - Highlight your interactions with the professor
- ☐ A brief summary of your accomplishments or anything that sets you apart as a candidate
 - Demonstrated research and writing experience
 - Relevant personal characteristics
- ☐ Details about the timing of the application process – when you need the letter by

Sample Student Email to Faculty Member requesting a LOR

January 6, 2021

Dear Professor Gildin:

I am currently in the process of applying to clerkship opportunities and was wondering if you would be willing to write me a letter of recommendation for a judicial clerkship with Judge Dorothy Chavez of the U.S. District Court of Maryland as well as Judge Shawn Meyers of the Court of Common Pleas in Franklin County, Pennsylvania.

I am interested in both federal and state clerkship opportunities in the northeast and mid-Atlantic. If you have any other leads or suggestions, I would appreciate it. I hope to use my year as a law clerk to act as a stepping stone in my career towards civil liberties litigation in a private firm or with a government agency. I am interested in Judge Chavez's background as a civil rights advocate prior to joining the bench. Judge Meyers has a mixed docket and a state court clerkship would help prepare me generally for a career in litigation and advocacy.

Over my time at Dickinson Law, I have worked as your research assistant and enrolled in two of your courses.

- Summer 2020 Research Assistant: Conducted research related to trial advocacy and civil liberties litigation.
- Spring 2020 EXPSK 902 Advocacy – Received an A-
- Spring 2021 SEMNR 997 Advanced Persuasion Seminar – Received an A

While at Dickinson, I have participated law review and in the Leading Law Students program where I attended and volunteered with the YWCA. I also interned for academic credit with Judge Jones in the Middle District. My previous work experience as a community outreach specialist with Make the Road Pennsylvania prior to law school sets me apart as a candidate.

In order to meet the application deadlines, I am requesting the letters of recommendation by February 15th. Judge Chavez' letter can be uploaded directly to OSCAR.

I appreciate your consideration in writing these letters of recommendation and I look forward to hearing from you soon. I have also attached my resume, transcript as well as an excel document with the specific judicial address blocks for mail merge purposes.

Sincerely,

Carmen Flowers
Penn State Dickinson Law
Juris Doctor Candidate, Class of 2022

Sample Powerpoint/Audio Recording on Clerkship Overview;
Students required to watch before scheduling appointment to
discuss clerkships.

Sample Clerkship Presentation – NALP AEC 2021

Post-Graduate Clerkships

Samantha Z. Kasmarek, Esq.
Office of Career Services

Syracuse University
College of Law

2019-2020

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What is a Judicial Clerkship

- Post-Graduation Employment
- Typically, one or two year appointments
- Work closely with a judge (elbow clerk) or group of judges (pool clerk)

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Clerkship Myths

Myths:

- Only for those interested in litigation
- Only for those in the Top 10%
- Consists of just sitting at a desk research and writing

Fact:

- There is a clerkship for just about everyone!

Set up an appointment with Sam Kasmarek
to discuss the best options for you.

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So again...Why to Clerk:

- “Inside” perspective on judicial process and what constitutes a good lawyer
- Intense tutorial on research, writing, legal analysis, styles of advocacy
- Develop contacts in chambers and throughout courthouse
- Mentoring opportunity
- Appeals to wide range of employers

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Responsibilities of a Law Clerk:

Appellate:

- Primary focus on research and writing
- Draft opinions or memoranda
- Edit/check citations for reported cases
- Caucous with judge on legal research
- May attend/prepare for oral arguments

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Where to Clerk?

- Federal:
 - Appellate, Trial, Magistrate, Bankruptcy, Tax, International Trade, Veterans Appeals, Federal Claims
- State
 - Appellate & Trial (depends on state)
 - Heavy concentration of entry-level clerk positions in: NJ, CT, MD, NH
 - NYS: Mainly the appellate courts and Court of Appeals
 - Entry-level clerkships for Syracuse Law grads also secured in: PA, DE, ME, NH, NV, MA
- Staff Attorneys & Pro Se clerks
- Administrative Law Judges
 - Examples: FERC, Department of Labor, International Trade Commission

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Where to Clerk: Continued

- **Factors to Consider**
 - **Location**—Some judges want clerks who have a geographic tie to the area; some do not focus on this. Regardless, if you apply to a judge, at the very least, know where that judge is located in the U.S. in case he/she calls you!
 - **Competitiveness of Court**—The more geographically flexible you are, the more you can apply to less competitive jurisdictions. Most competitive regions: DC, NY, Boston, Chicago, and California
 - **Similar Interests/Ideology**—Do your research!
 - **Personality**—This is a key factor! You will be working very closely with the judge for 12-24 months.

How do you learn this information?
Talk to former clerks, interns, practitioners, or professors

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When to Apply

- **Federal:** Varies by judge; their openings/application preferences are mostly posted via **OSCAR - Online System for Clerkship Application and Review**
 - Class of 2020 – applications released via OSCAR on June 17th. Note that many judges are already hiring into 2021, 2022. Those are great opportunities to consider as well.
- **State:** Varies depending on state; consult **Judicial Clerkship Handbook****
 - It's updated every August; still use to get a sense of deadlines. ****contact Career Services for username and password****
 - Select State Information:
 - **Maryland:** Trial Courts begin summer 2019 and through out fall; good for those considering DC market as well
 - **District of Columbia:** Appellate – summer 2019 into early fall; Trial generally throughout year starting summer 2019
 - **New Jersey:** Online system for all of its courts opens June 17, 2019; judges will continue to view applications until May 2020; good for those considering careers pretty much anywhere on East Coast, but especially NYC, NY state, NJ, CT and PA
 - **New York:** Court of Appeals – apply direct for either pool or elbow clerk positions. Pool Clerk deadline mid-September 2019. 3rd Department (Albany) apply direct; will be posted on Symplicity; 4th Department (Rochester) will be listed as a posting under the OCI tab on Symplicity with interviews taking place on-campus in August.
 - **Delaware:** Superior Court information, and Supreme Court.

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Application Materials

- **Brief cover letter**
 - Focus on your skills/"why you" instead of your experiences or why you want to work for that judge
- **Resume**
 - Professional & ERROR-FREE!
- **Writing samples**
 - Have at least 2 ready; length: 5-10 pages for State trial (unless otherwise specified by judge); 10-15 pages for State appellate and Federal (unless otherwise specified by judge)
 - Avoid using policy-type samples; if using a sample from an employment opportunity, be sure to ask the employer's permission first!
- **Law school transcript**
 - It should not be your advising transcript; Log-in to: MySlice> Student Services > Academics > Transcript Request
- **Letters of recommendation/List of references**
 - DO THIS EARLY!!
 - Who to use? Professors vs. Employers vs. Judges
 - Letters should be included in application packet, not mailed separately. (Except NJ State Courts and federal via OSCAR)
 - Be sure to provide a spreadsheet to the recommenders of the judges to whom you plan to apply (email me for a copy)

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Interviews

- Schedule the earliest available interview
- Be prepared to travel (financial costs and logistics)
- Work with the Career Services Office: Schedule a mock interview or check in for contacts
- Know your resume and writing sample
- Be nice, polite, and courteous to every single person in the courthouse!

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Offers

- Many judges will expect a response to offers as soon as possible.
 - Always acknowledge an offer right away; do not pretend like you didn't see/get the call!
 - Some judges will rescind offers if you don't acknowledge within 24 hours (or less!)
 - If you need some time, it's appropriate to ask for 24-48 hours to respond
 - This is also true with "exploding offers" – offers made while you are at the interview.
- Once you accept an offer, IMMEDIATELY notify other judges you have INTERVIEWED with to withdraw your application.
- When in doubt, check with Career Services about how to best negotiate the offer process when you prefer another position.

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Diversity Program

- Just the Beginning Foundation's Share the Wealth Judicial Clerkship Program (JTBF)
- A Federal District Court Clerkship referral program run by judges and JTBF
- Designed to encourage greater diversity in clerkship applicants
- Open to 3rd-year law students and recent graduates starting in July 2019 for 2020-2021 term clerkships
- Participating judges screen applicants, conduct panel interviews with 12 students, and consider them for clerkship positions
- If a clerkship is not secured through this process, application packages are shared with other judges who request information on applicants through JTBF
- [Wealth Clerkship Program \[URL\]](#)

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QUESTIONS?

Career Services Clerkship Counselor:

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Faculty Judicial Clerkship Committee:

Professor Aliza Milner, Chair
amilner@law.syr.edu

Judge Jamie Baker
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Professor Andrew Kim
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Federal Judicial Clerkships Information Sheet (Post-Graduate Positions)*

❖The following information is provided to students as an introduction to the application process for federal clerkships. Please inform the Career Services Office if you are interested in federal or state clerkships so we may work together in identifying potential clerkships and as you draft your application materials.

❖The Administrative Office of the Federal Courts has an online application resource called OSCAR (Online System for Clerkship Application & Review) where some federal judges post information regarding their open law clerk or staff attorney positions and where applicants may apply for these positions. Additional detailed information about the application process can be found on OSCAR (www.oscar.uscourts.gov).

❖Judicial clerkship applicants must be proactive in their pursuit of a clerkship. Information on OSCAR may be updated at any time as needed by judges, so students should either check the website on a regular basis or create a search agent in order to receive email notifications about new postings. Keep in mind that OSCAR is a good resource to consult, but it is not the only avenue to pursue regarding federal clerkships. You should check Career Services postings and individual court websites.

❖Student applicants may apply beginning in February of 2L year (2D, 3E). Some federal judges will accept applications from students during their third year. For Class of 2022 grads, applications via OSCAR will be released 12:00 pm EDT on June 14, 2021. Judges also will not directly or indirectly contact applicants, or schedule or conduct formal or informal interviews, or make formal or informal offers, before 12:00 pm EDT on June 15, 2021.

❖Some federal judges do not use OSCAR to post their open clerkship positions or to collect application materials. Students must review the judicial profile information that is provided by the judges on OSCAR. In some cases, you will see application instructions for open positions; in others, you will see an advisory note that the judge is not hiring new law clerks; and in others, you will not see any information at all. In the latter case, students should consult the judge's biography on his or her court website in order to see if the judge has posted any clerkship application information there (this occurs in rare instances).

*credit: Thanks to Alisa Benedict O'Brien - Univ. of Akron - for originally compiling this for 2020 AEC

❖ If OSCAR and the judge's court website are silent as to a judge's open clerkship positions, students are advised to apply via U.S. Mail. Some judges will not post their open clerkship positions because they receive many unsolicited applications and interview from that pool of candidates.

❖ When applying via OSCAR, applicants must create a free account and complete all necessary sections before an application is considered finalized. Students are encouraged to watch the videos on OSCAR before starting their applications. Students are encouraged to finalize all applications before the June release dates during 2L year.

❖ Unless otherwise directed, applicants should submit the following application materials:

*cover letter and resume

*writing sample (10-15 pages)

*letters of recommendation (3)

*law school transcript (unofficial)

❖ Apply to only those judges from whom you are prepared to accept an employment offer on the spot. When a judge selects his or her law clerk from among numerous applicants, the judge assumes that the offer will be accepted immediately. Failing to do so could adversely impact your professional reputation. Judges are advised to hold offers open for 48 hours.

❖ Applicants are encouraged to have their application documents reviewed by the Career Services Office prior to submitting them via OSCAR or mailing them to judges.

❖ Candidates are encouraged to do a mock interview and to review the list of questions that are typically asked during a clerkship interview, available in Career Services.