

# Clerkships 101:

Jumpstart Your Judicial Job Search



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# Why Work for a Judge?

- Enhance your legal writing and research skills
- Observe law and procedure in action
- Decision-making versus advocacy
- Exposure to jurisdictional rules, laws, practice
- Assess whether a post-graduate clerkship is right for you by completing a judicial internship/externship

# During Law School

- **Judicial Internships**—unpaid, find on CareerLink and by reviewing the Judicial section of OCPD Connect/Judicial Listserv, making calls
- **Judicial Externships**—for credit; can work with OCPD to identify position, obtain credit through Externship Office
- **Tasks?** Work with the law clerk(s) and judge(s) researching legal issues, summarizing facts and travel, drafting memoranda and decisions, and observing courtroom proceedings

# After Graduation

- **Judicial Clerkships**—paid positions, usually 1-2 years, either right after graduation or a few years into practice.
- **Tasks?** Conducting legal research, drafting opinions and memoranda, preparing bench memos, advising on motions, handling the docket, occasional courtroom observation

# Where Can I Work for a Judge?

- State or Federal
- Trial or Appellate
- Specialized Courts—Tax, Bankruptcy, Federal Claims, Vaccine Program, Court of International Trade, etc.
- Staff Attorney Offices in appellate courts
- Administrative Law Judges
- Research courts/judges using the Judicial Yellow Book, BNA Directory, and USAJOBS/NALP for ALJs
- *Most post-grad federal positions are listed on OSCAR*
- *Learn about post-grad state positions in the VT Guide*

# Application Materials

- Resume
- Cover Letter—tailored to the judge, court, docket, geography, specific skills
- Writing Sample—practical piece of legal analysis best (e.g., IRAC memo/brief), 5-10pg
- Law school grades/transcript
- Letters of Recommendation/References (2-3)

# Timing of Applications

**Always pay attention to specific deadlines, and submit early in the process.**

Generally, however...

- **Internships/Externships:** 3-5 months prior
- **State Clerkships:** *may appear as early as the spring of your 2L year*
- **Federal Clerkships:** *may appear as early as the start of your 2L year*

# *The Numbers*

## **Internships/Externships**

Generally, students in the top 50% can consider judicial internships/externships.

Ideal candidates for each court:

- State Courts: within the top 33.3%
- Federal Courts: within the top 15%

*...of course, if a judge specifies a ranking in a posting, take notice.*



# *The Numbers*

## Judicial Clerkships

Generally, students in the top 33.3% should consider judicial in/externships. Ideal candidates for each court:

- State Courts: at least top 33.3% for **trial** court; at least top 20% for **appellate** courts
- Federal Courts: at least top 15% for **trial** court; at least top 5% for **appellate** courts

*...of course, if a judge is specific in a posting, take notice and plan accordingly.*

# Your Next Steps to Jumpstart your Judicial Job Search

1. Intern or extern with a judge during the academic year/summer.
2. Think *NOW* about who you can ask for letters of recommendation. Build and maintain relationships.
3. Gain as much writing experience as possible, and develop your writing sample portfolio outside of Legal Rhetoric.

4. Get your GPA as high as possible, and keep it competitive. Remember “*The Numbers.*”
5. Seek editorial/executive board positions on briefs/journals, or leadership roles in honors societies.
6. Talk to current and former judicial interns and clerks. OCPD has a list; ask professors.
7. Be flexible about the location and type of post-graduate clerkship you might seek.

8. Consider all types of courts and levels: in this market, all clerkships are coveted, prestigious, and an honor.
9. Research application timelines now.
10. OCPD Connect listserv, Faculty Practice Group, OCPD judicial events.
11. Request a counseling appointment on CareerLink to discuss your judicial job search plans.