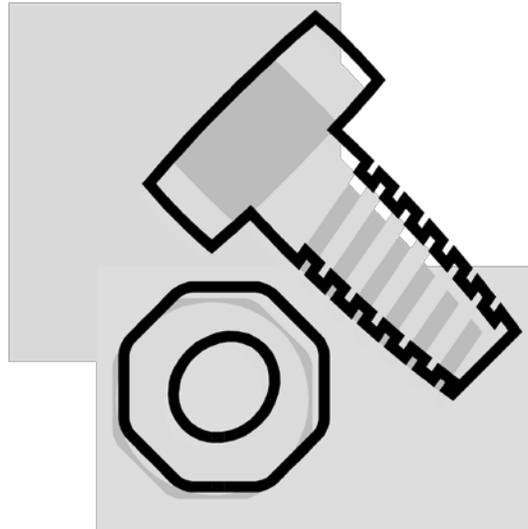


Clerkships 201:

The Nuts and Bolts of Applying for Judicial Clerkships



GENERAL ADVICE ABOUT CLERKSHIPS

The judicial clerkship application and hiring process is different from most other job searches. The timing of the application and hiring process can be very fast compared to OCI, and many of the rules that govern other job searches do not apply to clerkships.

Because judges receive so many applications (from over 100 to 1,000 for each clerkship opening), even getting one interview is a great accomplishment. For this reason, the most successful applicants apply to many judges. In recent years, many WCL students who have been successful in getting federal clerkships have applied to 75-300 judges across the country, especially in regions where they have geographic ties.

Besides the level of competition for each clerkship position, clerkship hiring differs from other hiring in that applicants are **not permitted** to gather several offers and weigh them – **the “Golden Rule” of judicial clerkships is that an applicant must accept the first offer given.** Though declining in practice, some judges may give “exploding” offers—on-the-spot offers during an interview that require an immediate acceptance or denial—and turning down a clerkship offer, absent extenuating circumstances, can hurt both the applicant and the school. For this reason, although students should apply to many judges, careful research should be done to ensure that each judge is someone for whom the student would probably enjoy clerking for a year. Once a clerkship offer has been accepted, applicants must withdraw all outstanding applications to other judges.

TEN STEPS – APPLYING FOR JUDICIAL CLERKSHIPS

1. Research types of positions and judges/courts to determine application deadlines and requirements (see “How to Research” guides in this packet). Without a clear timeline for **federal** clerkship hiring, you may expect judges to start interviewing and selecting clerks *as early as* the fall of your second year of law school for clerkship terms beginning in the fall after you’ve graduated. Without a clear timeline for **state** clerkship hiring, you may expect judges to start interviewing and selecting clerks *as early as* the spring of your second year of law school for clerkship terms beginning in the fall after you’ve graduated.
2. As soon as possible, ask three professors and/or legal employers to write letters of recommendation. . Provide your recommenders with your resume and give them a sense of why you are seeking a clerkship. Also make sure that your recommenders are aware of what needs to go into an effective letter for a clerkship application. Please provide your recommenders with as much lead time as possible, as it takes time to draft a careful letter. Build in time for generating paper letters, if applicable.

If your recommenders need guidance, you or they should feel free to contact OCPD and they will be directed to the appropriate career counselor.

3. For electronic OSCAR applications, please ask your recommenders to send the text only of the body of their letter to OCPD at oscar@wcl.american.edu as soon as possible. The letter should be in Word format, or cut-and-pasted into the body of an email. Please do not send PDFs, documents with letterhead, or images of signatures. OCPD will format the letter, perform a mail merge, and attach the letter to all of your OSCAR applications. **Note:** OSCAR uploads/attachments are only done during regular business hours (9-5, M-F), so please plan accordingly.

When you begin to use OSCAR, you must identify your recommenders in the system. Once you do this, your recommender will be emailed an invitation to log in to OSCAR to set up his/her profile (if s/he doesn’t already have one; most WCL professors already have active profiles). After this point, however, your recommenders do not need to do anything with OSCAR; OCPD will handle the entire upload and maintenance process.

For paper applications (some OSCAR, all state), finalize your list of judges/courts and then create an Excel spreadsheet with name and address information for all judges to whom you need to apply by paper to submit to your recommenders and/or their assistants. Your spreadsheet **MUST** be in the format provided on the Judicial page of the WCL website at the following link or it will be returned to you for correction:
http://www.wcl.american.edu/career/clerkships/letters_of_recommendation.cfm.

The Faculty Administrative Support Services office (FASS) will prepare the paper letters, and they will alert you when the letters are ready for you to pick up. You are responsible for mailing your applications and including your recommendation letters.

4. Draft cover letters to judge/courts (tailor at least based on location and type of court). Consult “Anatomy of a Judicial Cover Letter” in this packet, as well as the “Cover Letters that Worked” binder in the OCPD Resource Library.

5. Select a writing sample and revise it. For trial court judges, you may want to select a piece of practical legal analysis (e.g., IRAC-style memo, brief, etc.), while a more academic piece (e.g., a law review note/comment) may be appropriate for an appellate court judge. Note that some judges will require that your writing sample be self-edited, meaning that you may need to submit a first draft of something you submitted to an employer. This does not mean that you cannot edit it, but only that the final product must be your work alone. In addition, some judges may request more than one writing sample, so you may want to prepare two just in case.
6. Update your resume, making sure that all recent summer and academic-year employment, activities, and honors are accounted for.
7. In order to apply to the federal judges accepting online applications through OSCAR, you must begin by selecting the judges to whom you would like to apply. Start draft applications for each judge, and then select which recommendations you would like to use for each judge. Give your recommenders and OCPD ample time before the application due date.
8. Request an unofficial transcript from the WCL Office of the Registrar using the new online portal, and request an unofficial transcript from your undergraduate and any intermediate degree-granting program(s). If you are applying online using OSCAR, you will need to fill in OSCAR's Grade Sheet for both law school and undergraduate grades; you cannot upload your transcript(s) into the system.
9. Pick up your finalized letters of recommendation and mail your application packets by the deadlines, AND/OR upload your finalized application materials onto OSCAR by each posting's closing date. **Note: Do NOT to wait until the last minute to finalize your OSCAR applications. Once you finalize the application, you may be able to change parts of your application. It is best practice, however, to have a complete and final application submitted to each judge as soon as possible; do not rely on the editing feature.**
10. Read the OCPD Connect listserv every other Wednesday for resource and application updates and new opportunities. Become a member of the Judicial Clerkship Faculty Practice Group. Keep in touch with OCPD to let us know if you have interviews lined up; we offer mock interviews as a standard service. Finally, be sure to let us know if you are offered/accept a clerkship!

HOW TO RESEARCH FEDERAL COURT CLERKSHIPS

- The Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR) – www.oscar.uscourts.gov – serves two purposes: it contains a list of almost all federal judges, and it contains a searchable database of law clerk job postings from circuit judges, district judges, magistrate judges, bankruptcy judges, and for circuit court staff attorney offices. Each judge on OSCAR lists his/her hiring preferences, needs, and timelines, even if s/he is not presently hiring. Even if a judge does not list any current vacancies, s/he may be hiring clerks for future terms. Most federal judges participate in the online application system, meaning that you only need to apply digitally through OSCAR; others still require paper applications. Each judge will list his/her application preference. See the Judicial section of the OCPD website for more information.
- Some federal judges appear “grayed out” on OSCAR, and you will not be able to click on the judge’s name to ascertain hiring information. As such, you will need to research those judges’ needs independently by calling chambers directly. Use the *Judicial Yellow Book* or *BNA’s Directory of State and Federal Courts, Judges, and Clerks* to identify additional judges by jurisdiction, or locate contact information by visiting the court’s website. These resources are listed in the Judicial section of the OCPD website. You will only be able to access this resource from the link on the OCPD page while you are on campus because it is a Pence Law Library resource.
- Check federal court websites for clerkship hiring and/or contact information – occasionally information will be listed, particularly for specialty courts (ie. U.S. Court of Appeals for Veteran’s Claims, U.S. Tax Court, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, etc.) and *pro se* clerk positions, although some *pro se* clerkship positions may be listed on OSCAR.
- Some federal agencies have Administrative Law Judges (ALJs) who hire through various methods, including through the DOJ Honors Program or agency-specific Honors Programs. Some agencies also advertise administrative clerkships as “attorney advisor” positions on USAjobs.gov. Please see the portion of the OCPD Judicial website about ALJ clerkships for further details. Please note that you *may* be ineligible for some of these programs—DOJ Honors, specifically—if you have been working doing anything other than a judicial clerkship since law school graduation. Do verify your eligibility before you decide whether or not to apply.
- Speak with professors (especially those on the Judicial Clerkship Faculty Practice Group), WCL alumni, and OCPD counselors about particular judges.

HOW TO RESEARCH STATE COURT CLERKSHIPS

- Find out about a state's court structure by looking at charts provided in *BNA's Directory of State and Federal Courts, Judges, and Clerks* (this resource is accessible through the Judicial page of the OCPD website under "Judicial Resources").
- Go to the "Jobs & Internships" section of CareerLink for judge- and court-specific hiring information for surrounding-area courts. OCPD contacts approximately 32 states, year-round, for hiring and internship information, which is then posted on CareerLink on an ongoing basis.
- For those states not listed on CareerLink, use the *Guide to State Judicial Clerkship Procedures* (published by Vermont Law School) to research general application procedures and timelines. Every summer, the login credentials changes; for 2014-2015, the username is "white" and the password is "pine." The login credentials are always posted on the Judicial section of the OCPD website Note: Although this is a good place to start when researching state courts, sometimes the timing information can be too general. Even if it appears that you have missed a deadline, you should confirm this fact by calling chambers. **Also, please note that some states may be changing their hiring timelines due in the absence of the now-defunct Federal Law Clerk Hiring Plan.** If a current job posting does not state the new timeline, always contact the court directly to verify hiring timelines.
- Check state court websites for clerkship hiring and/or contact information.
- If the above resources fail to answer your questions, you can call chambers directly or apply to specific state court judges starting the spring of your 2L year. The following resources provide contact and biographical information for state court judges: *Judicial Yellow Book* (appellate court judges) and *BNA's Directory of State and Federal Courts, Judges, and Clerks* (appellate court and general trial court judges).
- Speak with professors (especially those on the Judicial Clerkship Faculty Practice Group), WCL alumni, and OCPD counselors about particular judges.

APPLICATION MATERIALS

Most judges request a standard set of application materials: a cover letter, a resume, a law school transcript, a writing sample, and two or three letters of recommendation. An OCPD career counselor is happy to review resumes and cover letters by appointment.

Cover Letter

- Must be error-free!
- Should be targeted to the specific court and judge if possible (at least by location and level of court).
- See sample cover letter anatomy in this packet and Cover Letters That Worked binder in the Resources Library in OCPD.
- Explain what you can do for the judge, based upon your experience/skills and why you are interested in the clerkship (including how it relates to your career goals). Things to think about highlighting: research and writing skills (including service on a law review or journal or other publication); organizational skills; communication skills; time management skills; ability to work under pressure and to handle multiple deadlines; attention to detail; academic excellence; and a demonstrated commitment to public interest.

Resume

- Must be error-free!
- One page only. Judges with 30 years of practice have one page resumes, so too can you.
- Update to include summer employment and academic year employment and/or activities.
- Include “interests” or “hobbies” to let the judge know something about you personally (it can help!) – the more specific, the better. Remember, your interests should be interesting.

Transcripts—Law School, Undergraduate, Graduate

- Unless a judge specifies otherwise, an unofficial transcript is fine, but be sure it includes your most recent semester grades.
- Request an “unofficial” transcript from Registrar’s office using their online portal, plus one official transcript to take to interviews.
- OSCAR applications will require a grade sheet, a form on the system that you fill in yourself. You may also need a copy of your undergraduate transcript (and any graduate programs) for this purpose.

Writing Sample(s)

- 7-10 (or occasionally up to 15) pages, depending on court/judge preferences; excerpts are fine.
- Include a cover sheet explaining if it’s an excerpt, the concept, that it’s being used with permission if written for a judge or other employer, and whether it was edited by someone else.
- Use an up-to-date writing sample, not something from 1L year (if at all possible).
- Should showcase your writing and analytical skills and include accurate legal citations.
- Make an appointment with Legal Rhetoric to have the structure reviewed by another set of eyes, and to make sure it is error-free. OCPD can help you select a writing sample.

2-3 Letters of Recommendation (and sometimes list of references)

- Should be addressed to individual judges. Sometimes practitioner recommenders will not be able to accommodate this easily, so you should work with them to make their task as easy as possible. “Dear Judge” will do in a pinch, but this should and can be avoided by planning your applications ahead.
- See “Advice for Requesting Letters of Recommendation” for details about OSCAR letters and how to create a spreadsheet for a mail merge to obtain letters from WCL professors and adjuncts. You are responsible for ensuring that your list of judges is in order and the correct format.
- Ask your recommenders if they are willing to call judges on your behalf, even if they do know the judges personally. This *really* can make a difference.
- If sending paper applications, it is best to send the letters of recommendation along with the rest of the application packet if possible to make sure your materials stay together.
- If your letters are given to you in sealed envelopes, **you may not open them under any circumstances without the express consent of the recommender.**

ANATOMY OF AN EFFECTIVE COVER LETTER*

1. Appropriate (*i.e.*, conservative) Letterhead or:
 2. Street Address
City, State & Zip

Date (spelled-out)
3. The Honorable [full name (first and last)]
Full name of the Court
Name of the Courthouse [if applicable]
Address
4. Dear Judge/Justice [last name]:
5. **Opening Paragraph/Positioning Statement.** Include the following basic information: (1) the position you are applying for by year; (2) your status as a WCL student; (3) the name of any contact (former clerk, alumni, professor, etc.); and (4) why you are interested in clerking for the judge or court (one or two sentences). You could emphasize geographic connections to the jurisdiction, plans to practice in the area, or an interest in trial or appellate litigation.
6. **Heart of the Letter.** Highlight a few experiences from your resume by discussing the skills (e.g., research, writing, analysis, organization, communication) you developed and, if possible, how these positions/activities increased your interest in obtaining a judicial clerkship. Obviously, if you worked as an extern/intern for a judge, this would be an ideal position to mention. Emphasize relevant honors, awards, and other accomplishments. Remember that the function of a clerkship cover letter is to highlight certain aspects of your resume that demonstrate your qualifications for the clerkship, not to summarize your resume. The key to this paragraph is to **highlight how you will benefit the judge, not just how the clerkship will benefit you.** Mention your long term career goals, and how clerking fits in, but this is about helping the judge.
7. **Closing Paragraph.** Include the following information: (1) items you are enclosing in your application packet (e.g., resume, transcript, writing sample, recommendations) and (2) any dates that you will be in the area for potential interviews.
8. “Sincerely,”

Printed Name

Enclosures

**For many federal appellate judges, a much shorter cover letter will be appropriate. Talk with OCPD and alumni clerks to decide how to proceed.*

ADVICE FOR REQUESTING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- Choose recommenders who know you best, not necessarily only those you perceive to be most influential or prestigious.
- If you are applying to a large number of judges—over 150—consider compiling teams of recommenders, rather than relying on the same 3 recommenders to write and sign over 150 letters.
- Ask your recommenders as early as possible – it takes time to write a great letter. **Take into account exams, scholarly work, visiting status, travel, work, and trials, and plan accordingly.**
- Offer your recommender a copy of your resume and any other materials they might request. Talk to them about your interest in clerking and how a clerkship fits into your career goals. It will help them write a better letter.
- For printed letters, you must provide one complete mail merge document as early as possible. We require you to use an Excel mail merge spreadsheet, and we have an example posted on the OCPD Judicial Website. Incorrect or incomplete spreadsheets will be returned to you to fix.
http://intranet.wcl.american.edu/career/clerkships/letters_of_recommendation.cfm You can supplement this as needed, but you must make sure you allow reasonable time for FASS and your recommenders to generate letters. See below for instructions on how to request subsequent waves of letters.
- If you need additional letters, you **must** email the professor/recommender and copy FASS on the email. The email must include the additional judges in the correct Excel formation, and you must clarify your request and instruct the recommender to “reply all” to approve. See the enclosed sample for requesting additional letters:

TO: Prof. Learned Hand

CC: FASS

Dear Prof. Learned Hand,

I am sending more clerkship applications soon and would like to use your letter of recommendation again. The Faculty and Administrative Support Services Office oversees this process and they require your approval to use your letter again. I have copied the office here. You only have to reply all and let them know whether or not it is okay for me to use your letter for my applications.

Thank you so much.

Signed,

Allie Applicant

Guidelines for Requesting Letters of Recommendation

1. For judges who are accepting paper applications, you must create an Excel spreadsheet that will be used by your recommenders and their faculty assistants in FASS (Room Y347) to do a mail merge--this will ensure that the letters of recommendation are addressed to the proper judge at the correct address. You should test the mail merge before sending it to your recommender/FASS to ensure that it works.

You must use the sample spreadsheet in the Judicial section of the OCPD website (http://www.wcl.american.edu/career/clerkships/mailmerge_sample.xls?rd=1) as a template to ensure that you have your spreadsheet in a usable format, and use only Times New Roman 12-point font. If your excel sheet is not in this format, it will be returned to you for correction. *Note: It is possible to download addresses from OSCAR and other sources directly into an Excel spreadsheet, but you will need to reformat these spreadsheets to conform with the template in order for your letters of recommendation to be completed. You also should check to verify that the addresses are correct before submitting your applications.

2. For **paper** applications, you are responsible for picking up your letters of recommendation from your professors/FASS (or arranging for pickup) and including them in your application packets. You will be notified when your letters are ready to be picked up, but don't hesitate to follow up with your professors or their assistants. FASS is not responsible for mailing your letters at any time.
3. For letters transmitted via **OSCAR**, have recommenders send the **text only** of the letter to oscar@wcl.american.edu. The mail merge feature in OSCAR does not support letterheads or images within documents, so recommenders should send the text only – either in a Word/Word Perfect document or in the body of an email. Non-WCL recommenders may also upload their own letters if they so choose, but please offer them OCPD's uploading services. It may be easier and more streamlined for OCPD to handle all of your recommendations.
4. **All faculty letters of recommendation are confidential and are NOT to be opened by applicants without the express written consent of their recommenders.** Recommenders may provide you with a copy of their letter for your viewing at their option.

THE ONLINE SYSTEM FOR CLERKSHIP APPLICATION AND REVIEW

Frequently Asked Questions

The Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR, located at <https://oscar.uscourts.gov/>) is administered by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts and all federal district, appellate, and bankruptcy court clerkships and Staff Attorney Office positions are available here. All judges and Staff Attorney Offices are *listed* on OSCAR, but each judge/Staff Attorney Office may select how it receives applications. Many will offer an internet-based application, permitting applicants to upload their federal clerkship application materials online, while some may still require a paper application. Finally, there will be a few judges who may simply require you to contact their chambers directly to ascertain their hiring preferences.

This year, OSCAR will open for research and applications (meaning, you can apply) on JULY 1st to those students who have just completed their full 1L year. **This may change in the coming years.** OSCAR takes your graduation date seriously, as this is how they judge your eligibility for use. Attempts to misrepresent this date in order to gain access to the system will result in critical action by OSCAR and may open you up for violations of AUWCL policies.

Q. How many judges will be participating in OSCAR this year?

A. All federal judges will be listed initially at least by court and name, but the judges will retain the freedom to decide whether to post clerkship information. Due to recent changes, judges are encouraged to use and update OSCAR more than ever. For those judges who do not post clerkship information, a notation of “no information available” or “not hiring” will be displayed. In recent years, approximately 65% of federal judges input some hiring information via OSCAR. Because of different administrative structures, the U.S. Tax Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, and the U.S. Supreme Court never have been included in OSCAR, and that will not change in the immediate future.

Q. What does it mean if I can't click on a listed judge or Staff Attorney's Office in OSCAR?

A. If a judge or Staff Attorney's Office (SAO) is “grayed out,” it means the judge or SAO does not list his/her hiring preferences in OSCAR, nor does s/he accept online applications. You must contact chambers directly to ascertain hiring preferences.

Q. How do I determine if a participating judge or SAO is hiring?

A. If a judge or SAO has posted an available position, the judge is hiring. If no available position has been posted, check the “expired” postings to determine if hiring is already complete. Also check whether the judge has indicated specifically that s/he is not hiring for an upcoming term, or only has career law clerks. If none of this information is available, check with the judge's chambers or with Kira Epstein in OCPD to determine the course of action. Note: If a listing says “Do Not Contact Chambers,” do not contact chambers.

Q. When filling out my profile, it asks for my class rank. What do I put here?

A. Each summer, the Registrar's office estimates students' class rankings and posts them on this website: <http://www.wcl.american.edu/registrar/classrank.cfm>. You determine your class rank

based on the GPA you have earned through the spring semester. WCL ranks students only once per year, so your ranking this summer will be your ranking until the new rankings are released next summer. **You will need to update your OSCAR profile at that time before finalizing your applications to ensure that your information is accurate. Failure to do so is considered a violation of WCL's Honor Code.** Do not guess or approximate your exact ranking based on the ranges provided by the Registrar's office: you must use the percentage into which you fall. **Failure to do so is considered a violation of WCL's Honor Code.**

Q. How will applicants create cover letters on the system?

A. Applicants will be able to upload individualized cover letters for specific judges (in PDF format only), as well as create general letters for the remaining judges. For general letters, OSCAR will provide mail merge fields to allow applicants to automatically insert each judge's name and address information. There is a tutorial on OSCAR for how to use the cover letter template feature. Through ,y. Consult the“”.

Q. How do I upload resumes, writing samples, and other documents to the system?

A. All resumes, writing samples, and other documents uploaded to the system (except for cover letters, which may be typed in) must be uploaded as PDFs. To save a document in PDF format, select the “save as PDF” option in Microsoft Word. Check the document after you have uploaded it to ensure that the document is formatted correctly.

Q. Why can't I upload my transcript?

A. Per judges' requests, OSCAR does not allow you to upload any transcripts. Instead, OSCAR provides a Grade Sheet Form that converts the entered grades into a PDF document for the applicant. The Grade Sheet Form may be viewed as a PDF, so that you may see it just as the judge will see it. You may then edit the form and re-save it if necessary. Judges are aware that these are unofficial transcripts, and you may be asked to provide an official transcript later in the interview or application process. There is a tutorial on OSCAR for how to create a grade sheet. You will have to create separate grade sheets for your law school and undergraduate transcripts (and for any other schools you may have attended).

Q. What are my responsibilities with respect to letters of recommendation?

A. OCPD is handling the uploading of letters of recommendation from professors and recommenders outside the school. Once you identify a recommender in OSCAR, they must create an OSCAR profile (if they don't already have one; most WCL professors already do). You will identify which recommenders should be associated with which applications, generating a request that OCPD will monitor and fill as you continue to associate recommenders with new applications. Applicants must also inform their recommenders that they need to send the general text of their letters of recommendation to OCPD at oscar@wcl.american.edu. Please provide your recommenders with adequate time to compose and send the letter to OCPD, and reasonable time for OCPD to upload to OSCAR. Uploads and letter attachments are performed only during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, and in conjunction with other business operations.

Q. I've added more applications; what do I need to do about my letters of recommendation?

A. Please bear in mind that, even if your recommender has already processed letters for some judges, OSCAR does not automatically associate recommendation letters to new applications, so

OCPD (or your recommender, if doing it him/herself) will have to go into the system and upload the letters to the new applications. If a substantial amount of time has passed since your recommender wrote your letter, you may need a new, up-to-date letter to provide judges with an accurate picture of your candidacy. It is your responsibility to request an updated letter from your recommenders, though OCPD will do its best to spot overtly stale letters.

Q. How do I determine the status of my letters of recommendation?

A. To determine whether letters of recommendation have been uploaded for a particular application, go to the “My Recommendations” tab, and click on “Status of Clerkship Recommendations.” Completed letters will display a green check mark in the “Complete” column. If you do not see any green checkmarks next to a recommender’s name, OCPD may not yet have received the letter to upload in the first place. If you do not see a green checkmark next to one or a few instances of a recommender’s name, contact OCPD about the status of the uploads. Because uploads are only performed M-F, 9am-5pm (regular business hours), the request for the additional letter may not yet have been processed.

Q. What do I do if I am no longer looking for a clerkship?

A. If you have accepted another position or are no longer seeking a clerkship for any reason, you must withdraw your applications in OSCAR. You can do this either by withdrawing each individual application, or by marking yourself “unavailable.” To mark yourself unavailable, go into your account and click “yes” next to the button “I am unavailable.” This will result in all your applications being withdrawn for the period, including the application you may have submitted to the court that hired you. To withdraw your applications, click on the “My Applications” tab, then select “Clerkship Applications.” For each application you wish to withdraw, click the “Withdraw” button in the Options column on the far right.

Q. Is there any limit on how many applications I can submit?

A. Yes. OSCAR limits each applicant to 100 open, online applications at a time on a rolling basis. This is simply a server space restriction: applicants will regain application slots for any positions marked “filled” by a judge or for any positions from which they “withdraw” an application, and applicants can regain slots immediately by withdrawing applications. As a result, applicants are encouraged to judiciously select the judges to whom they wish to apply. Applicants will be able to monitor their application totals from the application dashboard in their OSCAR account. Note: There is no limit on the number of applications students can submit for staff attorney, pro se clerk, death penalty, and bankruptcy appellate panel law clerk positions, or on paper.

STATE COURT HIRING INFORMATION: TYPICAL DEADLINES AND OCPD PHONE RESEARCH

The application process and timing for state court clerkships varies by court and judge/justice. Some courts conduct a centralized hiring process with deadlines, while other judges/justices hire independently. Without a clear timeline for state clerkship hiring, you may expect judges to start interviewing and selecting clerks *as early as* the spring of your second year of law school for clerkship terms beginning in the fall after you've graduated.

Below, you will find a summary of the typical application periods, as well as phone research conducted by OCPD each spring/summer, for several jurisdictions. OCPD phone research and direct postings from state court judges will be posted in the Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink, but do not end your search there. Always independently verify this information by going directly to the source, the hiring court. An excellent place to begin your state court research is with the **Vermont Law School Guide to State Judicial Clerkship Procedures**, linked to on the OCPD Judicial website, along with its rotating password information.

THIS IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST. RESEARCH EACH JURISDICTION FURTHER.

Alaska

- Supreme Court – Centralized deadline (but apply to each Justice)
- Court of Appeals – Centralized deadline (but apply to each Judge)

Arizona

- Supreme Court – Centralized deadline (but apply to each Justice) – apply by late July/beginning of August; interviews early September; top 10% or above and AZ connection preferred
- Court of Appeals – Centralized deadline (but apply to each Judge). Division I judges in Phoenix begin accepting applications around July 15th; hiring right after deadline through October/November.

California

- Supreme Court – Typically career positions (no annual openings)
- Court of Appeals – Court website lists positions (3-4 months in advance)
- Los Angeles Superior Court – Centralized hiring process (continuous resume collection process; ideally apply by January of 3L year)
- San Francisco Superior Court – Centralized hiring process

Colorado

- Supreme Court – OCPD calls these Justices (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)

Connecticut

- Supreme Court – Centralized hiring process
- Appellate Court – Centralized hiring process
- Superior Court – Centralized hiring process (on-campus interviews in previous years)

Delaware

- Supreme Court – OCPD calls these Justices (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Chancery Courts – OCPD calls these Chancellors (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Superior Courts – Centralized hiring process for each county (previous years' deadlines ranged late September to late December)
- Family Court – Centralized hiring process

District of Columbia

- Court of Appeals – OCPD calls these Judges (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink); generally should apply mid to late summer, hiring early Fall
- Superior Court – OCPD calls these Judges (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink); some deadlines as early as late summer, but very judge-specific

Florida

- Supreme Court – OCPD calls these Justices (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)

Georgia

- Supreme Court – Typically career positions (no yearly openings)

Idaho

- Supreme Court – Centralized deadline (but apply to each Justice)
- Court of Appeals – Centralized deadline (but apply to each Judge)
- District Court – Centralized deadline (but apply to each Judge)

Illinois

- Supreme Court – OCPD calls these Justices (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Circuit Court, Cook County (Chicago) – Judges do not hire on annual basis, but you may submit a resume to the clerk's office to be kept on file for when openings arise

Maine

- Supreme Judicial Court – Centralized hiring process
- Superior Court – Centralized hiring process

Maryland

- Court of Appeals – OCPD has called these Judges (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink; apply generally during early spring of 2L year)
- Court of Special Appeals – OCPD has called these Judges (postings will be in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink; apply generally by early summer after 2L year)
- Baltimore City Circuit Court – OCPD calls these Judges (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Baltimore County Circuit Court – OCPD calls these Judges (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)

- Montgomery County Circuit Court – OCPD calls these Judges (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Prince George’s County Circuit Court – OCPD calls these Judges (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Other Circuit Courts – see <http://www.courts.state.md.us/circuit/directory.html> and apply generally in September

Massachusetts

- Supreme Court – Centralized hiring process
- Appeals Court – Centralized hiring process

Michigan

- Supreme Court – OCPD calls these Justices (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)

Minnesota

- Supreme Court – Centralized hiring process
- Court of Appeals – Centralized hiring process

Mississippi

- Supreme Court – Centralized hiring process (early fall deadlines in previous years)
- Court of Appeals – Centralized hiring process (early fall deadlines in previous years)

Montana

- Supreme Court – Centralized deadline (but apply to each justice); generally apply by December of 3L year

Nevada

- Supreme Court – Centralized hiring process; staff attorney positions may be available later

New Hampshire

- Supreme Court – Centralized hiring process
- Superior Court – Centralized hiring process

New Jersey

- Supreme Court – Centralized process through electronic repository (also apply directly by mail to each justice’s chambers in August/September)
- Appellate Division – Centralized process through electronic repository (also apply directly to each judge’s chambers in August/September)
- Superior and Tax Courts – Centralized process through electronic repository (also apply directly to individual judges in August/September)

New York

- Court of Appeals – Most of the Judges do not hire on an annual basis
- Appellate Division, First and Second Departments – Openings could arise throughout the year (posting at that time)

- Appellate Division, Third Department – Centralized process
- Appellate Division, Fourth Department – Centralized process
- Supreme Court, Manhattan – Justices do not hire on annual basis

North Carolina

- Supreme Court – OCPD calls these Justices (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Court of Appeals – OCPD calls these Justices (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)

North Dakota

- Supreme Court – Centralized process

Ohio

- Supreme Court – OCPD calls these Justices (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink) (most of these Justices only hire career clerks who are licensed attorneys who have already passed the Ohio bar exam)

Oregon

- Supreme Court – Centralized hiring process; apply during spring of 2L year
- Appellate Court – Centralized hiring process; apply during spring of 2L year
- Tax Court – Centralized hiring process; apply during spring of 2L year

Pennsylvania

- Supreme Court – OCPD calls these Justices (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Commonwealth Court – OCPD calls these Judges, but rolling applications generally (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Superior Court – OCPD calls these Judges (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)

Rhode Island

- Supreme Court – OCPD calls these Justices; apply during summer, interviews are held in early fall (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Trial Courts (Superior, Family, District) – Centralized hiring process, usually beginning of 3L fall, with offers made by February of 3L.

South Dakota

- Supreme Court – Centralized process

Texas

- Supreme Court – Apply to each Justice individually in early fall or apply to all Justices through centralized application process (hiring done on rolling basis; interviews begin after Labor Day)
- Court of Criminal Appeals – OCPD calls these Judges (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)

Vermont

- Supreme Court – OCPD calls these Justices (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Trial Courts (Superior, District, Family) – Centralized hiring process

Virginia

- Supreme Court – OCPD calls these Justices (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Court of Appeals – OCPD calls these Judges (postings in Jobs & Internships section of CareerLink)
- Alexandria Circuit Court – centralized process, early September deadline last year
- Arlington County Circuit Court – centralized process
- Fairfax County Circuit Court – On-campus interviews conducted in previous years

FAQs ABOUT JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP RESOURCES

Q: Where can I find general information about judicial clerkships and the application process?

A:

- Judicial section of the OCPD website is an excellent place to begin your research.
- *Behind the Bench – The Guide to Judicial Clerkships* (Debra Strauss). Go-to resource for getting you started, providing excellent overview. (Copies available for your use in OCPD resource library.)

Q: Where can I find contact information for judges?

A:

- *BNA's Directory of State and Federal Courts, Judges and Clerks* – Directory of federal and state judges that includes state trial court contact information (but not the lower limited jurisdiction courts). Fantastic resource for understanding court structure and locations within a jurisdiction, too. Access online through the “Useful Resources” box on the clerkship page of the OCPD website.
- *Judicial Yellow Book* – Contact information for federal judges and state (appellate level) judges. Access online through the “Judicial Resources” column on the Judicial page of the OCPD website or through the link to the “Leadership Directory” on when off-site through the Library’s Resources page (http://library.wcl.american.edu/resources/resources.cfm?parm_val=L&local_attribute_id=17) by putting in your mywcl username and password.
- *Almanac of the Federal Judiciary* – Volume One (district, magistrate, and bankruptcy judges); Volume Two (Supreme Court and appellate judges). Available on Westlaw – AFJ database.
- *The American Bench* – This is the one print resource with listings of all federal and state court judges (including judges for limited jurisdiction state courts). It provides contact and basic biographical information.
- State court websites – Some contact information for state court judges. The National Center for State Courts (www.ncsc.org) provides links to many of these sites.

Q: How can I locate websites for federal and state courts?

A:

- The National Center for State Courts (www.ncsc.org) and the Federal Judiciary Homepage (www.uscourts.gov under “Court Links”) – Links to federal and state court websites.
- *BNA's Directory of State and Federal Courts, Judges and Clerks* and *The American Bench* – Information and diagrams explaining court structure and jurisdiction. Access online through the “Judicial Resources” column on the clerkship page of the OCPD website.

Q: Where can I find biographical and more detailed information about judges?

A:

- *Almanac of the Federal Judiciary* – Volume One (district, magistrate, and bankruptcy judges); Volume Two (Supreme Court and appellate judges). Available on Westlaw – AFJ database. Along with biographical information, this resource provides detailed

information about federal judges' professional associations, activities, honors and awards, publications, evaluations from lawyers, and media coverage.

- The Federal Judges Biographical Database (<http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf>) – Biographical information for all judges who have served on the U.S. District Courts, U.S. Circuit Courts, U.S. Courts of Appeals, and the Supreme Court.
- *Judicial Yellow Book* – Biographical information for federal and state judges (appellate courts only for state judges), as well as the identity and educational background of current law clerks. Access online through the “Judicial Resources” column on the clerkship page of the OCPD website.
- *The American Bench* – This is the one print resource with listings of all state court judges (including judges for limited jurisdiction courts). It provides contact information and basic biographical information.
- General internet searches and emerging online resources such as www.judgepedia.org.

Q: Where can I find information about **federal clerkship availability** and a particular **judge’s application requirements**?

A:

- Check the Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR) – www.oscar.uscourts.gov – All federal district, circuit, and bankruptcy court judges, and all circuit court staff attorney positions, are listed on OSCAR. The vast majority post hiring preferences and vacancies on OSCAR, and a majority of those permit online applications through the OSCAR program.
- Information for judges who appear “greyed out”—ie, their names are *not* hyperlinked—on OSCAR can be gathered by calling chambers directly.

Q: Where can I find information about **state clerkship availability** and a particular **judge’s application requirements**?

A:

- *The Guide to State Judicial Clerkship Procedures* (Vermont Law School) (http://vermontlaw.edu/career/index.cfm?doc_id=93) – General overview of the hiring process for the courts within each state. The login information for the Vermont Guide changes each summer, and the current information will always be listed on the Judicial page of the OCPD website. You must first be logged into the OCPD website (MyWCL username and password), then you will log in to the Vermont Guide using their posted login information.
Note: Although this is a good place to start when researching state courts, sometimes the timing information can be too general. You should do further research by looking at individual court websites. Also, even if it appears that you have missed a deadline per the Vermont Guide, you should confirm this fact by calling chambers (and checking with OCPD for additional information).
- State court websites. The National Center for State Courts (www.ncsc.org) provides links to many of these sites.
- CareerLink Jobs tab will contain postings for select courts. OCPD calls courts each year (all courts in the DC vicinity, as well as the appellate courts in a number of states), posting that information, as well as direct postings received from various state appellate and trial courts.

- Information regarding state court hiring circulated through CareerLink’s “Judicial” list serv.

Q: Where can I find information about judicial nominations and confirmations?

A:

- Senate Judiciary Committee Report on Nominations (<http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/nominations/judicial>).
- The American Constitution Society’s Judicial Nominations website (<http://judicialnominations.org/>).
- *The Third Branch News*, a newsletter published by the Administrative Office of U.S. Courts (<http://news.uscourts.gov/>) – Information about federal judicial appointments, resignations, retirements, and deaths. Within each issue, look under the “Judicial Milestones” and “Judicial Vacancies” sections.

Q: How can I identify and find contact information for WCL alumni who have served as judicial clerks?

A:

- OCPD has a *list of all state and federal alumni clerks* on the Judicial Page of the OCPD website. These charts do not contain contact information, but you can contact those people through LinkedIn or other internet search means.
- *WCL’s Judicial Clerkship Alumni Survey Database* (access through Firefox or Google Chrome with your myamerican.edu username/password) – Contact information and feedback from alumni who clerked with federal and state judges around the country.

Q: How can I identify a judge’s current (or past) law clerks?

A:

- OCPD maintains a list of former AUWCL state and federal judicial clerks, posted on the Judicial Page of the OCPD site. You can download the lists or access them online.
- *Judicial Yellow Book* (includes each clerk’s school and an index section organized by school for clerks and judges). Access online through the “Judicial Resources” menu on the judicial page of the OCPD website.
- *Judicial Staff Directory* (published by CQ Press, available in the OCPD Resource Library).
- *LinkedIn*—search by judge or court, and narrow by law school.
- *WCL’s Judicial Clerkship Alumni Survey Database* (access through Firefox or Google Chrome with your myamerican.edu username/password) – Contact information and feedback from alumni who clerked with federal and state judges around the country.
- Contact the Judicial Clerkship Advisor if you cannot locate any information; OCPD may be able to double check or reach out to other sources.

Q: Once I get an interview, where should I look for more information about a specific judge?

A:

- Search on Westlaw (jurisdictional database) or Lexis for the judge’s recent opinions. Read recent opinions, landmark decisions, and those that may have been upheld on appeal. If there is a chance you may also be interviewing with the judge’s current law

clerk(s), focus on recent decisions that the current law clerk(s) may have assisted with.

- For federal judges, search on Westlaw or Lexis for the judge's decisions listed in the *Almanac of the Federal Judiciary* ("AFJ" database) under "noteworthy rulings."
 - Search on Westlaw (ALLNEWS) to locate recent articles about the judge.
 - Look on the applicable court's website for press releases that mention the judge, as well as calendar assignments and recent decisions/orders. Standing orders may give you some insight into the judge's expectations for his/her courtroom, and may provide an excellent inside scoop to his/her thought process.
 - Contact the judge's prior judicial clerks (see above) or clerks from the same court.
-
- Check for interview feedback from WCL students who have interviewed with the judge in *WCL's Judicial Clerkship Interview Feedback Database* (access with your myamerican.edu username/password) – Feedback on interviews from alumni who recently received an interview with federal and state judges around the country.
Note: After your interview, we ask that you fill out a survey for inclusion in this Database. It will not be viewable by other students until you notify OCPD that you have accepted a clerkship position for the upcoming term(s).

JUDICIAL CLERKSHIPS THROUGH THE JUST THE BEGINNING – A PIPELINE ORGANIZATION

For law students in the pipeline towards a legal profession, the Just The Beginning-A Pipeline Organization (JTB-APO) offers resources and opportunities to assist students, including the JTB-APO Share the Wealth Clerkship Program, which provides rising 3rd year law students and law school graduates with invaluable experience and perspective that is both attractive and useful as they enter the legal profession. To apply for the program listed below, many judges require you to submit your required materials through OSCAR. For further information, visit JTB-APO's website at www.jtbf.org.

Share the Wealth Clerkship Program:

Description: Judge Gerald Bruce Lee (E.D. Va.) (WCL alumni) and six other judges select 12 students to participate in a special round of interviewing for six fulltime clerkship positions, though the final number of positions varies each year.

Materials needed: (1) statement of interest; (2) resume; (3) 3 letters of recommendation; (4) law school transcript; and (5) 10-15 page writing sample.

***2018-2019 Term Deadline:** *projected* to be July 2017; stay tuned!
(*future dates are TBD, but in the past it has been end of June to early-mid August*)

The Share the Wealth Clerkship Program Interview Day is held approximately one month following the deadline for submission (dates are announced each year). Candidates will be notified of their application status and invited to interview shortly after application submission. At the conclusion of this initial process, students who are not extended an offer by any of the participating judges may have their application materials shared with additional judges who have requested to receive information on applicants through JTB-APO.

NINE WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF OBTAINING A JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP

1. Research application timelines and judges of interest **now**.
2. Talk to current and former judicial clerks about their clerkship experiences. Don't forget about WCL's Judicial Clerkship Alumni Survey Database, WCL's Judicial Clerkship Interview Feedback Database, and the list of alumni clerks available on the OCPD website.
3. Be flexible about the location and type of the clerkship. It is only one or two years and the experience will be an asset for the rest of your legal career. Consider all levels of state court clerkships, ALJ clerkships, federal magistrate judge clerkships, staff attorney positions, and pro se clerk positions. Federal circuit and district court clerkships are only *some* of the amazing opportunities available, and there are times when a state or specialty court clerkship will make more sense for your long term goals.
4. Get and keep your GPA as high as possible. Post-graduate clerkships are usually filled by those within the top 33.3% of the class, with more and more judges preferring—if not requiring—top 10% or higher.
5. Ask professors and legal employers to write letters of recommendation as soon as possible. Some may also make unsolicited phone calls: ask!
6. Select and revise your writing sample(s). Make an appointment with Legal Rhetoric to go over your writing sample and ensure that it is error-free.
7. Don't give the court a reason to reject you – have all of the documents you send checked over by several sets of eyes, especially your resume and cover letter.
8. Apply as soon as the judge or court *begins* accepting applications.
9. Be proactive after you apply. For example, once you have one interview, call other judges to check on the status of your application because you will be in town for the interview and see if they might want to interview you. (Note: This only works outside the DC area.)