Nuts and Bolts:
JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP APPLICATION PROCESS

University of Wisconsin Law School
Office of Career and Professional Development
Educational experience unlike any other
- See the judicial system in operation from the inside
- Become familiar with a wide array of legal issues from a court’s perspective
- Improve research, writing, and analytical skills

Prestige – Key credential for future law practice
- U.S. Attorneys’ Offices, Federal Public Defenders, and law firms regularly hire law clerks
- Gives you the confidence to jump in to writing assignments
- Can be leverage for more “meaty” assignments at a law firm
Deferment
  o Some firms will defer an offer until clerkship is completed.

Clerkship Bonuses

One year credit on partnership track
United States Supreme Court
  o Hires clerks from clerkships in other federal circuits

United States Courts of Appeals
  o 12 REGIONAL CIRCUIT COURTS OF APPEALS
  o FEDERAL CIRCUIT

United States District Courts
  o FEDERAL TRIAL COURTS
  o MAGISTRATE JUDGES
  o UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURTS
SPECIALTY COURTS

The US Court of International Trade
- International trade and customs issues

The US Court of Federal Claims
- Claims for monetary damages against the United States, disputes over federal contracts, unlawful “taking” cases

United States Tax Court
- Hears taxpayer appeals
- Clerkship info/application available on website: http://www.ustaxcourt.gov
SPECIALTY COURTS

☞ United States Court of Veterans Appeals
  o Reviews decisions of the Dep’t of Veterans Affairs

☞ United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces
  o Worldwide appellate jurisdiction over members of the armed forces on active duty
  o Clerkship info available on court website: http://www.armfor.uscourts.gov

☞ Federal administrative agencies and boards
  o SEC; EPA; EEOC; FCC
  o Contact agency to see if hiring
STATE COURTS

- Highest State Court
  - Generally known as the State Supreme Court

- Intermediate Appellate Courts
  - Review for errors at the trial court level.

- State Trial Courts/District/Circuit
CLERKSHIP LENGTH

Federal
- Term Clerkships
  - 1 – 2 Years
- Career Clerks
- Temporary Clerkships
  - Last as long as needed

State and Local
- Term Clerkships
- Career Clerks
Application Process
HOW TO APPLY TO CLERKSHIPS

**FEDERAL CLERKSHIPS**
- Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR)
- Other methods as indicated by Court (e.g., email)
- U.S. Mail

**STATE AND LOCAL CLERKSHIPS**
- U.S. Mail
- Other method indicated by Court
Usually late spring of 2L year; summer of 3L year

- Some states hire earlier
  - Oregon Supreme Court and Court of Appeals (Spring of 2L year)
  - North Dakota Supreme Court (Spring of 2L year)
  - Minnesota Supreme Court (March of 2L year)

**Vermont Law School 2015 Guide to Judicial Clerkships:**
http://forms.vermontlaw.edu/career/guides/
Username: white / Password: pine

Each judge has a different timeline; do your research and come to me early!
Hiring plan abandoned and judges make their own timelines and schedules

Judges are now posting applications for 2015, 2016 and even 2017 clerkships (NOTE: 1Ls cannot create OSCAR profiles until June 2015 and cannot apply to clerkships until August 2015 – judges who are filling these positions are doing this with graduates or students who will have completed a clerkship by that time)
Applications are nearly over for 2015 and 2016 are being accepted NOW

What you should be doing:
  o Create account on oscar.symplicity.com
  o Identify judges of interest
  o Let Clerkship Committee members know of your interest
  o Collect information about application deadlines and requirements
  o Approach recommenders to get them on board to submit letters
  o Draft cover letters
  o Perfect resume
  o Identify appropriate writing sample(s)
  o Meet with Melissa Burkland
  o Submit materials to judges accepting applications now
All judges generally require similar materials:
  o Cover Letter
  o Resume
  o Writing Sample (8 – 12 pages long)
  o Transcript/Law Grade Sheet
  o Letters of Recommendation (3) or a list of references (3)
  o Be sure to pay careful attention to the posting requirements
COVER LETTERS AND RESUMES

Cover Letters
- Use correct salutation and closing
- Include why you want to clerk for that particular judge
- Indicate connection to geographical location, if any (especially if judge indicates desire for candidates with connection)
- Emphasize qualities of a “Model Judicial Clerk”
  - Strong legal research, writing, and analytical skills
  - Strong interpersonal skills / discretion, tact
  - Ability to prioritize
  - Commitment to public service

Resume
- One to two pages maximum
- Highlight relevant skills and duties
- Include interests area / well-rounded person
BEST WORK

- Must show ability to research, analyze, and write
- Moot court brief
- Memo/motion/brief from summer position (get permission and redact identifying information)
- Paper for law school course
- Legal research and writing assignment
- Note or not?

8 – 12 Pages

- Excerpt of longer piece can be used if identified and explained in context cover page
Context cover page

Edited vs. Unedited

Prepare second sample

Be prepared to discuss samples/arguments made

*Proof everything, and then have someone else proof it, and then proof it again!
OSCAR has a grade sheet you will complete.

An unofficial transcript is usually acceptable, but federal courts may require an official version prior to your start date.
Most judges require three letters

Who should you ask for recommendations?
- Law school professors
- Legal employers

**Content**: Letters should address academic success, intellect, research/writing/analytical abilities, interpersonal skills, work ethic. Should contain specific examples, if possible

Faculty recommenders should give letters to Theresa Evans in administration
Not including all of the information requested
Not paying attention to the details
Not doing your research - Check OSCAR or call the chambers to see which judges are actually hiring
Starting the process too late
FAQs

How many judges should I apply to?
- The decision is up to you
- Expanding geographically and type of courts will increase opportunities
- Be selective, but DO NOT limit yourself

Is a Judicial Clerkship for only the very top of the class?
- No, there are exceptions, especially in lower courts
- Guidelines (there are exceptions):
  - Federal Court of Appeals: Top 5%
  - Federal District Court and State Supreme Court: Top 5-10%
Typically meet with law clerks and judge

If you receive an interview, meet with a counselor on the OCPD.

Be prepared!
- Know your audience and judge’s cases
- Know your resume
- Have questions prepared
- Talk to former clerks about interview process

Some judges will offer stipends during the interview. So be ready!

OCPD has a limited number of stipends so please contact us if you will be traveling for an interview.
RESEARCHING JUDGES

Written resources:
- Almanac of the Federal Judiciary
- BNA’s Directory of State and Federal Courts, Judges, and Clerks
- Judicial Yellow Book (in the Office of Career and Professional Development)

Electronic resources:
- OSCAR (for federal judges)
- Vermont Law Guide (online)
- US Courts website (www.uscourts.gov)
- National Center for State Courts (www.ncsc.org)
- www.judicialclerkships.com
- Individual Court Websites
- Law school websites in the area you are applying, i.e. Georgia

Personal Resources
- OCPD
- Faculty who have clerked before (list on OCPD website)
- Alums who have clerked before (ask OCPD/website)
Here’s a sampling of what’s currently available in 2015:

- Magistrate Judge L. Auld, Middle District of Georgia, term to begin in 2015; applications accepted 1/28/15-3/1/15
- Judge Joan Azrack, Central District of New York, term to begin in 2015; applications accepted 1/28/15-3/1/15
- Judge Julie Carnes, 11th Circuit, term to begin in 2015; applications accepted 12/3/14-2/28/15
- Judge A. Fish, Northern District of Texas, term to begin in 2015; applications accepted 12/3/14-2/27/15
Clerkships to begin in 2016:
- Judge Hamilton, 7th Circuit, applications accepted 1/3/15 to 8/15/15
- Judge Kanne, 7th Circuit, applications accepted 2/2/15 to 6/1/15
- Judge Ripple, 7th Circuit, applications accepted 1/23/15-12/1/15
- Judge Sykes, 7th Circuit, applications accepted 9/8/15-3/1/15

Clerkships to begin in 2017:
- Judge James Boasberg, U.S.D.C. in Washington, D.C., applications accepted 2/2/15 to 11/15/15
- Judge Susan Carney, 2nd Circuit, applications accepted 10/3/2014 to 4/3/2015
- Judge Furman, Southern District of New York, applications accepted 4/14/14-7/31/17
Think about the kind of clerkship you are interested in pursuing

Identify judges of interest and determine whether application period for the judges is open

Tell Melissa Burkland that you’re interested in clerking

Reach out to a member of the clerkship committee

Schedule an appointment to meet with Melissa about clerkship options

Watch your OSCAR emails!