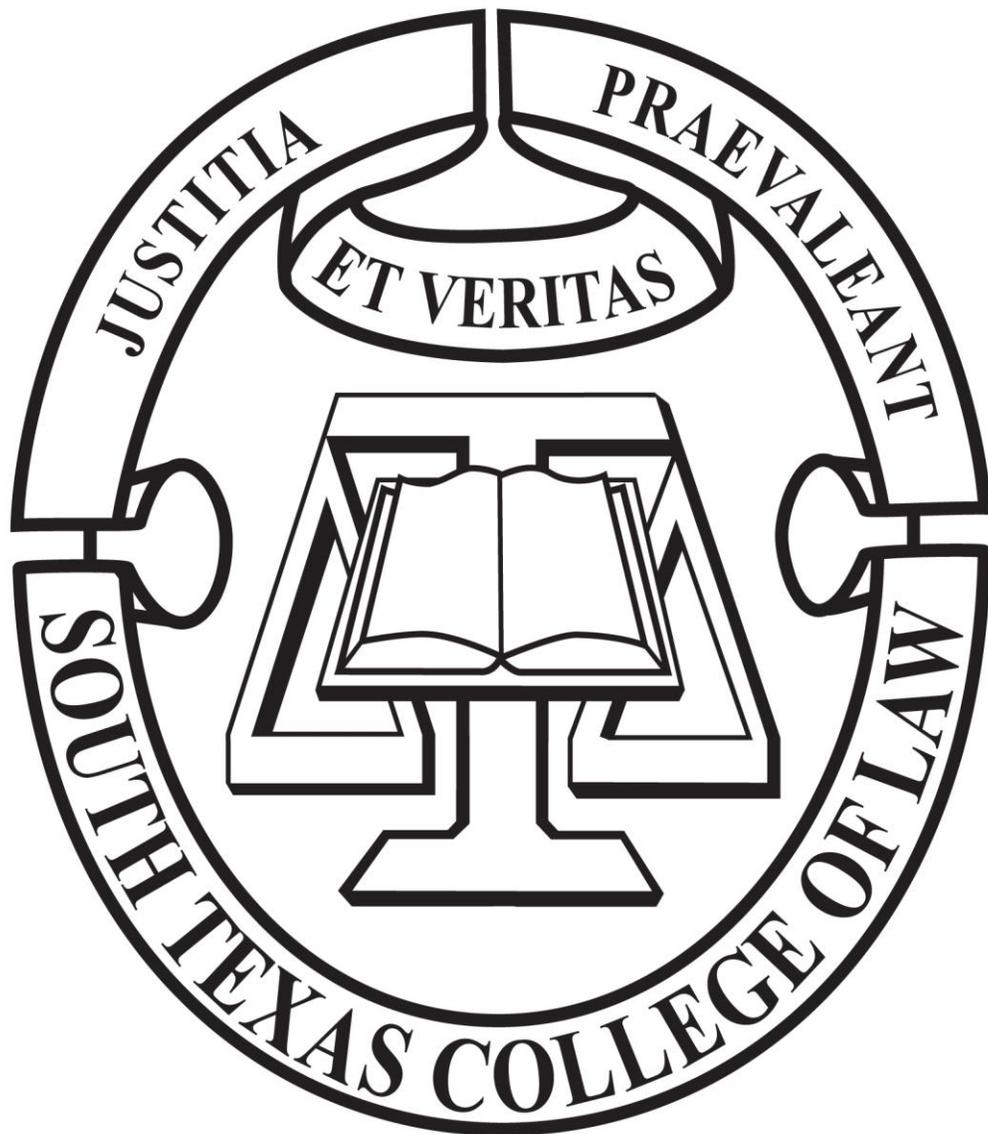


A Guide to Judicial Internships



The Career Resource Center

AN INTRODUCTION TO JUDICIAL INTERNSHIPS

A summer judicial internship is an opportunity to work for a federal or state judge during your 1L or 2L summer, or during the semester after your first year. Judicial interns have the opportunity to work on their research, writing and analytical skills. An internship broadens the areas of law in which you will gain experience and provides the opportunity to work closely with experienced judges and their law clerks. A judicial internship also exposes students to local practice and procedure and litigation in many different fields of law, which can ultimately help to decide what area of the law interests a student the most.

Judicial internships allow students to gain exposure to the judicial process and the inner workings of a court while you are still in law school. Interns often work closely with the judge's law clerks and staff attorneys and may be asked to research and write memoranda, attend trials and hearings, summarize cases, and help with administrative work.

Benefits of a Judicial Internship:

1. Perspective. Although you are taught objective legal argument in law school, the primary thrust is to train you as an advocate. The largest benefit of an internship is for students to see advocacy through the eyes of a judge. When you are gaining the perspective of the judiciary, you are ultimately a better attorney.

2. Exposure. Working with a court typically allows you to view the documents and observe hearings on a larger number and variety of legal actions than you would be able to with a firm, public interest organization or government agency.

3. Resume Value. Legal employers respond very favorably to internships. The experience serves as a reliable discussion topic during interviews. Additionally, many judges consider judicial internship experience as a factor in selecting their post-graduate judicial law clerks.

4. Networking. Certainly the best contacts made during an internship are the judge and his or her staff. However, interns also have an opportunity to observe and meet many legal practitioners with business before the court.

Application Process:

Students will apply directly to the court and/or judge for their internships. You should check with each court for specific application requirements, but most federal and appellate judges will require the following information:

1. Cover Letter
2. Resume
3. Writing Sample (5-7 pages)
4. Transcript
5. List of References*

*Make sure you contact your reference and ask for their permission and how they want to be contacted before using their name on your list.

Many judges will require only a student resume and cover letter to begin the application process.

a) Application timeline

- As a general rule, there is no set timeline that every judge or court will adhere to. However, we always recommend you apply as early as possible in order to have the best opportunity to be offered a position. As for timing keep these dates in mind:
 - For fall internships, it is best to send out your applications by June 15th ***or earlier.***
 - For spring internships, it is best to send out your applications by November 1st ***or earlier.***
 - For summer internships, it is best to send out your applications by February 1st ***or earlier.***

Again, different courts will have different deadlines. ***Please check the individual court's website for more specific information or call the judge's chambers to inquire.*** For example, some judges will not consider applications for the summer until March. If you miss the earlier dates, check with the court to see if the positions have been filled or if they are still accepting applications.

Generally, most judges do not post judicial internships on Symplicity or other job banks. So, it is incumbent upon you to research these openings, and then send application materials directly to the judge. Most federal district judges, federal appellate judges, state trial judges and many state appellate judges take judicial interns during the summer and/or during the school year. Remember that there are also judicial internship opportunities with special courts including bankruptcy judges, magistrate judges, probate judges and county court judges.

b) Courts to Consider

Most courts at almost every level, both state and federal, will take a judicial intern during the summer and/or during the semester. Do your research, talk to your peers, speak to your professors and to your career counselor. It is advisable to seek an internship position in the location where you would ultimately like to practice (look at both geographic location as well as specialty courts dealing with certain practice areas). The ultimate goal is to gain experience, and the level and type of court may change your specific duties, but overall the experience will be the same.

c) Determine the type of experience and exposure you would like to receive

- Appellate courts help hone your research and writing skills.
- Trial courts generally have limited research or writing opportunities, but allow for a good deal of litigation observation and interaction both with the court and practicing attorneys.
- The federal district courts offer opportunities for writing, research and litigation observation in civil and criminal areas of the law.
- If you know you are interested in a specific area of the law, consider interning with a “specialty court,” such as family, probate, bankruptcy, or immigration.

Directory of the Courts: www.uscourts.gov

Once you have identified the judges you would like to apply to for an internship, you will generally send them copies of your marketing materials as listed above. Make sure to state in your cover letter your year in law school, and that you are applying for a judicial internship (not a postgraduate position). You should also state the time period in which you are interested in interning; e.g., I'm interested in applying for a judicial internship with your chambers for the summer of 2013.

d) Judicial Internships for Class Credit

There are opportunities to gain course credit while working as a judicial intern. This program has specific requirements so it is imperative that you check with the Clinical Studies program in order to determine eligibility and prerequisites.

The Internship Process:

The experience will vary between courts and judges; however some specifics to consider include:

Appellate Courts: In an appellate court, a student may cite check opinions, observe oral arguments, research points of law and write judicial memoranda to be reviewed by the deciding judge(s). In some courts, students are allowed to sit in on the judicial conference where the judges discuss their decisions. Most of an intern's time, however, is spent researching and writing. The courts handle both criminal and civil appeals. While students spend some time observing proceedings, they can also learn a great deal of procedure and evidence when reviewing the trial court's record.

Federal District Courts (and Magistrate Judges): These are trial-level courts. Students will observe a great number of proceedings, but will also have the opportunity to research and write. Unlike state trial courts, these courts issue written opinions to the litigants (some of which are published) so students will fine tune their writing skills. These courts also provide exposure to civil and criminal areas of the law.

State District Courts: In smaller counties, district courts hear civil and criminal cases. In larger counties (like Harris County), courts have either civil or criminal jurisdiction. In courts with civil jurisdiction, students are often assigned to review motions (like summary judgment motions) and write memoranda to the judge advising him/her of the controlling authority. Criminal courts do not have as many written motions and those internships are frequently more observation oriented.

At any level, a judge may have a particular issue he or she would like an intern to research and address either verbally or in a written memo. Additionally, interns may research material for CLE articles or speeches for the judges.

a) The Interview:

Depending on the court, you may interview with a law clerk, a staff attorney, one or more judges, or a combination. No matter who interviews you, always display respect toward the judge and his or her staff, and be sure to conduct research on the judge prior to the interview. Always exhibit deference to the judge and his/her staff but also take your cues from them.

b) Interview Attire:

Always wear formal business attire when interviewing with a court. The key is to dress conservatively. This includes dark suits, white shirts, and conservative ties for men, and dark skirt suits, collared shirt or neutral shell, and panty hose for women.

c) The Offer:

The main thing to know is that you should not turn down an offer from a judge.

Before the interview: Go into an interview tentatively prepared for an offer. If you plan on interviewing in another city, have ideas about your housing, transportation and other such arrangements. Often, in a judicial internship interview, the judge will offer you a position immediately, and you should accept any offer from a judge. Be prepared to only apply to and interview with those judges from whom you would accept an internship.

You may apply to several judges/courts and even accept interviews from several judges. However, you must accept the first judge who gives you an offer. Keep in mind you may be able to do two internships in the summer. Once you have accepted an offer you must contact all the courts you have interviewed with and withdraw your name from consideration (and cancel existing interviews if necessary).

Keep a record of your communication with the courts – even if it is verbal, so there is no question of your adhering to proper etiquette. As for etiquette in the interview, this is generally a matter of respect, good manners and research on the particular judge.

How to Address Judges in a Cover Letter

Below are examples on how to address judges in letters. The first part is the format for addressing letters and envelopes; the second part is the format for salutations. This handout is only a guide as to format. You will need to check the court's website or a court directory to determine a particular judge's or justice's title.

Close your cover letters with "Respectfully," not "Sincerely". You may use Block, Indented or Modified Block format for your letter.

Chief Circuit Judge (Federal) / U.S. Court of Appeals

The Honorable Edith H. Jones
U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit
Street Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Chief Judge Jones:

Circuit Judge (Federal) / U.S. Court of Appeals

The Honorable Jerry E. Smith
U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit
Street Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Judge Smith:

Chief District Judge (Federal) / U.S. District Court

The Honorable Robert S. Lasnik
U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington
Street Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Chief Judge Lasnik:

District Judge/Senior Judge (Federal) / U.S. District Court

The Honorable Harry Hudspeth
U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas
Street Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Judge Hudspeth:

Magistrate Judge (Federal) / U.S. District Court

The Honorable Nancy M. Koenig
U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas
Street Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Judge Koenig:

Bankruptcy Judge (Federal) / U.S. Bankruptcy Court

The Honorable Leif M. Clark
U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Texas
Street Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Judge Clark:

Chief Justice (State) / Texas State Supreme Court or Texas Intermediate Appellate Court

The Honorable Wallace Jefferson
Texas Supreme Court
Street Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Chief Justice Jefferson:

Justice / Texas State Supreme or Texas Intermediate Appellate Court

The Honorable Bob Pemberton
Texas Court of Appeals, Third District
Street Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Justice Pemberton:

Presiding Judge (State) / Texas Court of Criminal Appeals

The Honorable Sharon Keller
Texas Court of Criminal Appeals
Street Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Presiding Judge Keller:

Judge (State) / Texas Court of Criminal Appeals

The Honorable Tom Price
Texas Court of Criminal Appeals
Street Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Judge Price:

Judge (County) / County District Court

The Honorable Ravi Sandill
127th Harris County Civil District Court
Harris County Civil Courthouse
Street Address
City, ST Zip Code

Dear Judge Sandill:

Sample Judicial Internship Application Cover Letter – Block

Suzy Ramone
123 Main Street
Houston, Texas 77002
sramone@email.com
713.228.9100

January 21, 2011

The Honorable Sam Smith
United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit
Bob Casey United States Courthouse
515 Rusk Street, 1st Floor
Houston TX 77002-2600

Dear Judge Smith:

Please consider this letter, enclosed resume, writing sample and law school transcript as my application for a summer 2011 internship in your chambers.

As a first year student at South Texas College of Law, I enjoyed being introduced to legal research, writing and analysis; I received an A in that class and am eager to do more research and writing in your chambers this summer. I am also excited about the idea of seeing practicing attorneys at work and learning more about the functioning of the court system.

My previous experience includes working as an office manager at Clark & Depew, LLC where I learned how to organize my time effectively and to establish positive relations with my co-workers. <Tailor your cover letter here about any skill set you possess that would make you a good candidate for this position>

If there is any additional information you need, please don't hesitate to call or email me. I am available for an interview at your convenience.

Respectfully,

Suzy Ramone

Enclosures

Sample Judicial Internship Application Cover Letter - Indented

Suzy Ramone
123 Main Street
Houston, Texas 77002
sramone@email.com, 713.228.9100

September 21, 2011

The Honorable Sam Smith
United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit
Bob Casey United States Courthouse
515 Rusk Street, 1st Floor
Houston TX 77002-2600

Dear Judge Smith:

I am currently a 2nd year law student and am seeking a position for a Spring 2012 internship in your chambers. Please consider my enclosed resume, transcript and writing sample as my application for the position.

After completing my first two semesters of law school I had the opportunity to clerk for the EEOC this past summer. I had the opportunity to work on my research and writing skills, as well as client communication during this clerkship. I also received a CALI award in my Legal Research & Writing II class and feel that performing more research, analysis and memorandum preparation in your chambers would be excellent experience. I am also excited about the idea of seeing practicing attorneys at work and learning more about the functioning of the court system.

My previous experience includes working as an office manager at Clark & Depew, LLC where I learned how to organize my time effectively and to establish positive relations with my co-workers. <Tailor your cover letter here about any skill set you possess that would make you a good candidate for this position>

Please contact me at your convenience if you have any questions or need any additional information. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully,

Suzy Ramone

Enclosures

Sample Judicial Internship Application Cover Letter – Modified Block

Suzy Ramone
123 Main Street
Houston, Texas 77002
sramone@email.com
713.228.9100

September 21, 2011

The Honorable Jackson Sandy
61st Harris County Civil District Court
Harris County Civil Courthouse
201 Caroline, 9th Floor
Houston TX 77002

Dear Judge Sandy:

I am currently a 2nd year law student and am seeking a position for a Fall 2012 internship in your chambers. Please consider my enclosed resume as my application for the position.

After completing my first year of law school I was afforded the opportunity to intern with a family law firm. I had the opportunity to hone on my research and writing skills and was given considerable client exposure during this time. I am involved in the Trial Advocacy program and know that a chance to perform research and analysis, as well as prepare related memorandum would be excellent experience. I am extremely excited about seeing practicing attorneys in court and learning more about the court system.

My previous work experience includes <Tailor your cover letter here about any skill set you possess that would make you a good candidate for this position>

Thank you for your time and consideration. I can provide additional information or documents upon request. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully,

Suzy Ramone

Enclosures