Guide to Applying for Judicial Externships

Working as a judicial extern during your first summer is an excellent way to develop and improve your legal research and writing skills and to gain first-hand knowledge of the judicial system. The experience will vary depending upon the judge and the type of court—appellate or trial, federal or state. Externs typically draft bench memoranda to assist the judge in ruling on motions or preparing for oral arguments, prepare draft orders and opinions, observe courtroom proceedings, and participate in discussions with the judge and clerks.

Please note that judicial externs are volunteer positions. SLS does not provide funding or academic credit for judicial externships.

Finding Externship Opportunities: Symplicity is the best source for finding specific externship opportunities. In addition, some courts post information about externship application procedures on their websites. You should check the official website for any court that interests you. A complete listing of federal court websites is available at [http://www.uscourts.gov/Court_Locator/CourtWebsites.aspx](http://www.uscourts.gov/Court_Locator/CourtWebsites.aspx)

Externship information is often found in the “Career Opportunities” or “Employment” sections of the website. Some courts, like the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, provide information about internships/externships on the individual judges’ pages. Some examples:

- U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California: [https://www.casd.uscourts.gov/Job%20Listings/SitePages/LawClerkExternInfo.aspx](https://www.casd.uscourts.gov/Job%20Listings/SitePages/LawClerkExternInfo.aspx)
- U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia: [http://www.dcd.uscourts.gov/judges](http://www.dcd.uscourts.gov/judges). Scroll below a judge’s bio to click through to his or her webpage. For example, [http://www.dcd.uscourts.gov/content/district-emmet-g-sullivan](http://www.dcd.uscourts.gov/content/district-emmet-g-sullivan)
- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas: [http://www.txnd.uscourts.gov/northern-district-judges](http://www.txnd.uscourts.gov/northern-district-judges) Look for information about extern hiring under the “Specific Requirements” of each judge.

You may also call a judge’s chambers to ask if the judge is hiring judicial externs for the upcoming summer and, if so, how you may submit an application. Phone numbers for federal judges and some state court judges are shown in each judge’s profile in the clerkship database in Symplicity. Select the Clerkships tab for a list of all federal judges. You can also check court websites for chambers contact information.

The clerkship database also includes over 450 interview evaluations for clerkship interviews (not externship interviews) and some clerkship evaluations.
Applying: An externship application generally consists of a cover letter, resume, transcript, writing sample, and references. Refer to specific externship postings for each judge’s requirements.

Your cover letter should be crisp and concise. In the first paragraph, identify yourself as a Stanford Law student seeking a summer externship. State why you are interested in an externship with the judge (e.g., recommended by a faculty member, former extern or clerk, etc.) and/or your connection to the geographic area. In the second paragraph, highlight the skills and qualifications you can offer. Do not just reiterate your resume.

In the third paragraph, list the application materials you are enclosing. It’s fine to say that you will submit your first quarter grades as soon as they are available. Finally, if you plan to travel to the judge’s city in the near future, give the dates that you will be in the area and available to interview.

Refer to “Proper Forms of Address” below when preparing your cover letters and address labels. You may search for judges in Symplicity’s clerkship database, then save your search results by selecting the records and exporting them to an Excel spreadsheet. Contact information for the judges is included in the information downloaded into the spreadsheet. Unless the court has an online application system or the externship posting provides an email address, mail your applications to chambers.

Timing: There are no fixed application deadlines. Most judges accept applications from 1Ls starting December 1. Federal judges in the most competitive federal courts (those in California, New York, and Washington, DC) tend to hire first. If you are interested in externing for a judge in these courts, you should apply in early December and state that you will update your application when fall quarter grades are available.

Some judges offer externships to candidates at the conclusion of the interview. You should therefore be prepared to accept an offer on the spot. If you are offered interviews with multiple judges, try to schedule them in order of your preference. As soon as you accept an offer, call any other employers with whom you have interviews scheduled and graciously explain that you need to cancel because you have received and accepted an offer.

Additional information about applying to work in the judiciary, including descriptions of the various types of courts and advice about interviewing, is available in the Judicial Clerkship Handbook. https://www-cdn.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2016-17-Clerkship-Handbook.pdf (Note that unlike clerkship applications, externship applications do not require letters of recommendation.)

For a list of SLS students who have completed judicial externships during the last five summers, visit https://law.stanford.edu/careers/employer-research-tool/student-employment-contact-lists/#slsnax-class-employment-contact-lists. In the document titled, “1L Placements: Classes of 2013-2017,” select “JC” for “Employer Type.”
Insight about Judicial Externships from Former SLS Externs

- Externs become experts on the facts of a particular case, research the relevant law, and recommend a course of action to the judge. Externs often have the opportunity to present the facts and issues of a case to the judge and discuss them in depth. As an extern, it is extremely rewarding to hear the judge ask counsel questions you raised and to see your recommendations adopted in a published opinion.

- Externships are sometimes described as mini-clerkships. The most desirable externships are those that give externs the opportunity to draft bench memoranda and orders/opinions on entire motions. Externs who are only permitted to research discrete issues for the clerks’ drafts do not have as rich an experience. Similarly, some externs have the chance to interact directly with the judge while others only interact with the clerks and other externs.

- Externs can see first-hand a wide range of lawyering skills in briefs, hearings, arguments, and trials. Discussing the judge’s opinion of the argument you just observed is a terrific way to learn about effective (and ineffective) advocacy.

- Externships are research and writing intensive. Because clerks typically edit multiple drafts of externs’ work, externs receive a great deal of feedback on their writing.

- An externship can help you decide if you would enjoy clerking after graduation. It can also be a chance to observe a different level of judiciary. For example, if you think you would prefer to clerk for a court of appeals, you might seek an externship with a district court judge.

- Clerks may set interim deadlines for externs’ work or give them less structured time periods for completing assignments. In some chambers, it is therefore particularly important for externs to be self-starters and have good time-management skills.

- Some judges allow externs to use their memoranda and draft opinions as writing samples, but some do not. As with any job, you must ask for permission to use your work as a writing sample.

- Externships are great experiences for students interested in civil and criminal litigation. They also offer opportunities to develop lasting relationships with judges and clerks. Judges typically do not write letters of recommendations in support of clerkship applications, but they are generally willing to serve as references.
Judicial Internship Programs for Diversity Applicants, 2016-17

- **The ABA Section of Litigation Judicial Intern Opportunity Program** is a full-time summer internship program with participating federal and state judges for six weeks or more. The program is open to diverse law students in their first or second year. Each selected student is offered a $2,000 award. The Section will begin accepting applications for summer 2017 on November 1, 2016. Interviews will continue until all positions are filled. For more information, visit: [http://www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/initiatives/good_works/judicial_intern_opportunity_program/students.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/initiatives/good_works/judicial_intern_opportunity_program/students.html).

- **The Summer Judicial Internship Diversity Project** is an unpaid judicial internship program jointly sponsored by the Judicial Resources Committee of the United States Judicial Conference and the Just the Beginning Foundation. The application deadline for summer 2017 is January 13, 2017 at 5:00 EST. For more information, visit: [http://www.jtb.org/index.php?submenu=studentprograms&src=gendocs&ref=internshipjrcjtbf&category=main](http://www.jtb.org/index.php?submenu=studentprograms&src=gendocs&ref=internshipjrcjtbf&category=main).
Proper Forms of Address

Federal Courts
United States Courts of Appeals

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Addressee</th>
<th>Cover Letter and Envelope Address</th>
<th>Salutation</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Chief Judge     | The Honorable [full name]
                 | Chief Judge
                 | U.S. Court of Appeals for the [ordinal] Circuit                                               | Dear Chief Judge [last name]:                   |
| Senior Judge    | The Honorable [full name]
                 | Senior Judge
                 | U.S. Court of Appeals for the [ordinal] Circuit                                               | Dear Judge [last name]:                        |
| Judge           | The Honorable [full name]
                 | U.S. Court of Appeals for the [ordinal] Circuit                                               | Dear Judge [last name]:                        |

United States District Courts

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<th>Cover Letter and Envelope Address</th>
<th>Salutation</th>
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</table>
| Chief Judge     | The Honorable [full name]
                 | Chief Judge
                 | U.S. District Court for the [district] Address                                                   | Dear Chief Judge [last name]:                   |
| Senior Judge    | The Honorable [full name]
                 | Senior Judge
                 | U.S. District Court for the [district] Address                                                   | Dear Judge [last name]:                        |
| Judge           | The Honorable [full name]
                 | U.S. District Court for the [district] Address                                                   | Dear Judge [last name]:                        |
| Magistrate      | The Honorable [full name]
                 | United States Magistrate Judge
                 | U.S. District Court for the [district] Address                                                   | Dear Judge [last name]:                        |

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1 Adapted from Debra M. Strauss, Behind the Bench: The Guide to Judicial Clerkships 263-65 (2002).
## United States Bankruptcy Court

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<td>The Honorable [full name] Chief Judge U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the [district] Address</td>
<td>Dear Chief Judge [last name]:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge</td>
<td>The Honorable [full name] U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the [district] Address</td>
<td>Dear Judge [last name]:</td>
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## State Courts

### State Supreme Court

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<tr>
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<td>The Honorable [full name] Chief Justice [Name of State Supreme Court] Address</td>
<td>Dear Justice [last name]:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>The Honorable [full name] [Name of State Supreme Court] Address</td>
<td>Dear Justice [last name]:</td>
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## Other State Courts

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Judge</td>
<td>The Honorable [full name] Chief Judge [Name of State Court] Address</td>
<td>Dear Chief Judge [last name]:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge</td>
<td>The Honorable [full name] [Name of State Court] Address</td>
<td>Dear Judge [last name]:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that for judicial officers of the Delaware Court of Chancery, the proper salutation is “Dear Chancellor” or “Dear Vice Chancellor.”