

GEORGETOWN LAW JUDICIAL CLERKSHIPS

Judicial Clerkship Manual



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I. DECIDING IF YOU SHOULD CLERK

Clerkships are salaried, post-J.D. positions (typically lasting one or two years) with federal, state, local or administrative law judges. In helping the judge decide what to do in the cases before the judge, a clerk experiences the legal system from the perspective of the court, and gains insight into what makes a good lawyer, a persuasive brief, and an effective oral argument.

The value of the rigorous experience in research and writing, as well as the critical advocacy skills learned through most clerkships, cannot be overstated. Clerkships are also a wonderful way to learn about different areas of law, both in depth (as the law clerk digs into the particular case at hand) and breadth (as the law clerk amasses experiences across a lot of cases over the course of the clerkship period). Clerkships are also just plain fun, as chambers can be like a little family, bonding with its own jokes and outside activities.

Clerkships are an excellent way to gain a mentor and develop a professional network. Judges take their responsibilities to mentor their law clerks very seriously, and most are committed to helping their law clerks with their careers far beyond the clerkship year itself. Clerkships provide a lifelong professional network, not only with the co-clerks you worked with in your own judge's chambers, but with other law clerks who worked for other judges in the courthouse that year and with other clerks who have clerked for your judge in different years. In addition to the network of law clerks, some courthouses are located within combined government complexes that include investigative agencies and prosecutors within them or nearby; public defenders are also regularly in the courthouse. Clerking can be a wonderful way to see the work of these other players first-hand, and for people interested in this kind of public sector work after clerking, this insight can be extremely beneficial.

A law clerk's responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Researching and drafting legal memoranda;
- Assembling pleadings, briefs, motions, and evidentiary materials for the judge before trial or oral argument;
- Providing questions to ask the attorneys during oral argument;
- Researching pressing evidentiary issues during trial;
- Interacting with counsel; and
- Drafting the judge's final opinion

Ultimately, a judicial clerkship can be one of the most enjoyable professional experiences one can have as a lawyer!

A. Career Considerations

Clerking can be a positive experience for any type of legal career and can jumpstart a student's career for many different types of legal jobs:

- Large law firms, national public interest organizations, and the federal government often consider federal clerkships to be particularly relevant.
- Some boutique litigation law firms, which have very competitive hiring processes, nearly require that applicants complete a clerkship before applying.
- For students considering a career in academia, clerkships can be an important credential. For example, many Georgetown faculty members clerked for judges at all levels of the federal system and/or in state supreme courts.
- Many public interest fellowships highly value clerkships – both at the federal and state levels – and allow fellows to maintain eligibility for the fellowship throughout their clerkship year(s).
- Some organizations only hire attorneys with at least one to two years of experience. Clerking can provide that requisite experience.
- Small or mid-sized law firms and state or local government offices may particularly value state level clerkships.
- Clerkships are not just for students who want to be litigators. The core skills of working on hard issues, developing your writing, and advising a decision-maker on what to do are transferable to all types of practice areas, including corporate attorneys and policy advisors. The core benefits of gaining a mentor and extended professional network in the judges' previous clerks and others at the courthouse are relevant no matter what you will go on to do.
- Specialized clerkships can be extremely helpful for specific areas of work. Bankruptcy clerks have great options in bankruptcy jobs, clerks for the international trade court or the tax court may find it helpful in breaking into those specialized fields, and clerks at the Delaware Court of Chancery typically have great options in law firms' corporate practices.

B. Financial Implications

When considering what types of jobs to pursue, most students – particularly those with significant financial aid and other student debt obligations – are concerned about the financial ramifications of their choices and may worry about whether they can afford to clerk. Most of them, however, will find that clerking is a financially viable option.

Federal clerkship salaries are set based on the Judicial Salary Plan (JSP). While the hiring judge assigns a clerk's grade and step for salary purposes, a law clerk's salary depends upon a combination of legal work experience subsequent to graduation from law school, bar membership and applicable locality pay adjustments. Clerks with no experience come in at JSP level 11, which for 2019 is set at a base level of \$53,062. Clerks with one or more years of post-law school experience make a higher salary because they start at a higher JSP level. For example, when including locality pay based on cost of living, a clerk in New York City starting after two years of working as a lawyer would make almost \$100,000. For more information see: https://oscar.uscourts.gov/qualifications_salary_benefits

For students who anticipate a public interest career, clerking often actually provides a higher salary than many positions at a non-profit organization or in a public defender's office. Clerkship pay scales are also on par with the pay scales for many federal agencies. Additionally, if a student intends to use Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), payments made during a clerkship count toward the 120 payments needed for forgiveness. While a clerkship does not currently qualify for Georgetown's Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP), students who are clerking are granted an extension for applying to LRAP. As a practical matter, since the income-driven repayment models used for PSLF utilize your prior-year (in-school) income, it is probable that public interest career students will have a zero payment during the clerkship year. The Financial Aid Office is available to discuss your post-graduation financial situation.

Students who plan to work at a large law firm after law school will most likely make less during their clerkship year than they otherwise would. However, many large law firms highly value clerkship experience, particularly those at federal courts or the highest state courts. Accordingly, these firms often provide a clerkship bonus for associates who begin working at the firm after finishing their clerkship. In DC, a bonus of at least \$50,000 for one year of clerking or \$70,000 for two years is common, although the exact amount varies from firm to firm. Some bonuses are smaller, while others – particularly at elite litigation boutiques – are larger. The clerkship bonuses for United States Supreme Court clerks can also be much higher (for example, \$300,000 to \$350,000 has become the norm). Furthermore, when a clerk joins the firm, the clerkship year is typically counted in terms of pay and seniority.

C. Term versus Career Clerks

Another factor to consider when determining whether to clerk is the amount of time you will invest in the experience. Most clerkships are “term” clerkships, which means they last only for a certain amount of time - typically one to two years. Depending on their career goals and interests, some students only want to clerk for one judge for one term, while others choose to clerk for more than one judge for multiple terms. On the other hand, “career” or “permanent” clerks are hired as judiciary employees whose positions are indefinite. Applying for career clerkships is not typical for most law students or recent graduates, and most judges require their career clerks to have prior legal experience.

II. CHOOSING WHERE TO APPLY

Once you have decided that a clerkship might be right for you, your first step is to choose where you will apply. This step requires you to consider several factors, including your geographic flexibility, your career interests, your grades, and the depth of your desire to clerk.

The good news is that clerkship opportunities number in the thousands. The bad news is that clerkship applicants also number in the thousands. A typical federal district court judge receives at least 200 applications for clerkships each year, while federal appellate judges and district court judges in highly competitive district courts like the District of Columbia or the Southern District of New York receive upwards of 600! However, it is likely that if you truly want to clerk, you can

find a judicial clerkship. It will just take time, effort, and a more broad-based application process to find it.

Your Clerkship Advisor and faculty mentors can help you think through these many issues to help determine which kinds of clerkships might be the best ones for you to apply to. You are more likely to get a clerkship if you invest your time in applying for positions for which your credentials, experience, and interests make you a good fit.

A. Geographic Considerations

Georgetown clerkship applicants frequently express a desire to clerk in Washington, D.C., New York, or other large coastal cities. While some students have family situations or other reasons that prevent geographic flexibility, we generally advise that limiting your clerkship applications based on a narrow set of geographic constraints can severely limit your chances of clerkship success. It is common, both at Georgetown and at other top law schools across the country, to move for a clerkship, and it can be a lot of fun to have the opportunity to live in a city or town for a year or two in which you may otherwise never live. At the same time, applying to clerk in your home state or where you have family or attended college can give you a leg up for those judges who prefer clerks with geographic ties to the area. Many students find that what seemed to them initially to be a real geographic constraint turns out to be less so after talking it through. The bottom line is that the more geographically flexible you are, the better your chances of getting a clerkship.

B. Trial Courts versus Appellate Courts

Both trial and appellate clerkships generally involve extensive legal research, analysis, and writing. However, the form that a clerk's work takes, the schedule to which the clerk must adhere, and the collateral duties and atmosphere of the job may be quite different. Although trial and appellate clerkships can certainly vary with each judge, it is possible to offer some generalizations contrasting these clerkship experiences.

As a preliminary note, however, it is increasingly common for applicants to apply both to trial and appellate positions for which they are qualified. Many Georgetown students end up securing both kinds of clerkships and spend a year at each level of court. It does not matter which clerkship comes first.

1. Trial Court Clerkships

Trial court clerks **in both federal and state courts** generally perform a wide variety of litigation related tasks – often on a time-sensitive basis. A typical job description for a trial court clerk might read: Research and draft memoranda on a variety of motions, including recommendations for disposition; attend oral arguments; assist with settlement and scheduling conferences; research and draft trial memoranda, opinions, and orders; advise and assist judge during trial; draft jury instructions; perform record-keeping and administrative tasks; and interact with attorneys. Therefore, many trial court judges value efficient writing, strong time management abilities, and

multi-tasking skills. The types of cases before the judge will vary and be driven by many factors, including the jurisdiction and the docket to which the judge is assigned.

2. Appellate Court Clerkships

Appellate court clerks **in both federal and state courts** generally focus more on research and writing. A typical job description for an appellate court clerk might read: Research and draft memoranda on issues raised on appeal, including questions for oral argument; assist with preparations for oral argument; attend oral arguments; and draft the final opinion, a dissent, or a concurring opinion according to instructions from the judge. An appellate court clerk may be asked to consult with clerks in other judges' chambers regarding various cases, arguments or proposed opinions. Appellate court clerks will generally read more briefs and do more intensive research and writing than their counterparts at trial courts, but they will rarely, if ever, deal with counsel or litigants. Therefore, many appellate judges value exceptional research and writing abilities, the ability to engage with the law in greater depth, and independent thinking. While trial judges are likely to have a weekly schedule for hearing motions, appellate judges generally have only monthly sittings. As a result, appellate court clerks go to court much less frequently than do trial court clerks.

Note on Staff Attorneys: Many appellate courts, both state and federal, employ lawyers as “staff attorneys.” These attorneys serve as law clerks for all of the judges on the court (rather than for just one judge) and often assist in the screening and pre-oral argument stages of the appellate process.

C. Federal Courts versus State Courts

There are many different kinds of courts in the federal system and in each state system. This section describes the different courts and explains their comparative competitiveness, painting with a broad brush, given differences around the country.

Here, too, as with applying to both trial and appellate courts, it is increasingly common for Georgetown students to apply both to federal courts and to state courts, and it is increasingly common to do both a state and a federal court clerkship. It does not matter in which order, although it is more common to do a state court clerkship before a federal one (largely because a state court clerkship is a credential that many federal judges find appealing when hiring).

1. Federal Courts

a. United States District Courts – District Court Judges

The United States District Courts serve as the trial level of the federal court system. There are 94 federal districts, including at least one district in every state. The District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are each their own district. In addition, three territories of the United States – the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands – also have district courts that hear federal cases. District courts handle a variety of different types of cases: criminal, civil cases brought under federal statutes (e.g., securities, civil rights, antitrust, environmental), constitutional, and cases

applying state law brought in diversity jurisdiction. Each federal district court judge generally hires two to three law clerks. Most hire for one-year clerkships, but an increasing number require a two-year commitment, and a few hire permanent or career clerks.

As you apply to district court judges, do not discount or ignore those who have taken what is called “senior status.” Often a judge will take senior status when available not because he or she is looking to reduce their workload, but because doing so allows another judge to be appointed to that court, thereby adding additional resources to the court as a whole. Many senior status judges still have active dockets and can provide some of the best clerkship experiences. You can research recent cases of a particular senior judge to determine how active his or her docket remains. Also note that as a senior judge’s docket is reduced, the number of clerks he or she has is also reduced accordingly, with the end result that the workload of the clerk of a senior judge may be just as robust as that of a non-senior status judge.

In recent years, most Georgetown students who have secured district court clerkships have had GPAs in the range of 3.5 to 4.0. The difficulty of securing a federal district court clerkship depends upon the reputation of the judge and the location. While well-known judges generally receive more applications than those who are less visible, a well-respected district court judge in Kalamazoo, MI will still receive many fewer applications than the typical judge in New York, Washington, Los Angeles, San Francisco, or Chicago (the Big Five cities). Many Georgetown students – like students at other top law schools – tend to want to clerk for judges in these larger cities. However, these are more difficult markets to break into – especially the Southern District of New York and the District of D.C. The Eastern District of Virginia, known for its “rocket docket” (a system of moving cases through the court quickly), is also a competitive district.

You most likely have a better chance of obtaining a clerkship if you apply to judges in smaller cities or even to larger cities outside the Big Five (for example, Georgetown students have recently had good luck securing clerkships in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Boston, Charlotte, Houston, Memphis, New Orleans, and Phoenix). The District of Maryland (particularly Greenbelt) also has a good record for hiring Georgetown students. Again, applying to clerkships in your home state or the state in which you attended college is also a good strategy. That said, you can certainly still apply to clerk for judges in more competitive districts, but if you really want a clerkship, we strongly recommend that you include other geographic locations in your clerkship search.

b. United States District Courts – Magistrate Judges

District courts consist not only of district court judges but also magistrate judges, who perform a variety of judicial tasks upon the referral of district court judges and subject to their supervision. Magistrate judges commonly conduct bail hearings, hold preliminary examinations, review search and arrest warrants, and decide pre-trial motions. They also commonly have significant civil responsibilities such as conducting settlement conferences, managing pre-trial matters in complex cases, holding hearings, issuing reports and recommendations and supervising discovery. Magistrate judges may also conduct trials. The amount and type of responsibilities accorded to magistrate judges will differ significantly by jurisdiction. Most magistrate judges hire one to two clerks.

While typically clerkships with magistrate judges are somewhat less competitive than clerkships with district court judges, some magistrate judges in highly competitive districts, such as the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York, are highly selective in choosing their law clerks.

c. United States Bankruptcy Courts

Each federal district has a Bankruptcy Court, which handles individual and business reorganization and insolvency matters. Bankruptcy judges usually hire one to two clerks, who are exposed not only to bankruptcy law and procedure but also to many types of legal claims that can be made against the debtor. Bankruptcy judges tend to want to see demonstrated interest and relevant experience in clerkship applicants.

d. United States Courts of Appeals

There are 13 different federal courts of appeals: the First through Eleventh Circuits, the D.C. Circuit, and the Federal Circuit. The Federal Circuit is located in Washington, D.C., and has nationwide jurisdiction over appeals in the following diverse areas of law: patent, trademark, international trade, government contracts, tax, takings, military claims, and government personnel litigation. The other federal appellate courts have jurisdiction over cases from district courts, the Tax Court, and administrative agencies. Most appellate judges hire three or four law clerks.

To secure a federal appellate court clerkship, applicants generally need excellent grades (typically 3.7 or higher), should serve on a journal, and have very enthusiastic recommendations. Significant writing experience helps, as will a previous or upcoming federal district court clerkship or state appellate clerkship.

The competitiveness of circuit court clerkships varies based upon a number of factors, including the wide appeal of the location in which the judge or court sits (an appellate judge's chambers may not be located in the city where the court hears oral arguments), the number of law schools in a given area competing for local clerkships, and a particular judge's reputation. The hardest-to-get clerkships are those with the D.C. Circuit, the Second Circuit, and the Ninth Circuit, and scattered judges in other circuits. Generally, clerkships for federal appellate court judges in the middle of the country are somewhat less difficult to obtain than clerkships on the east and west coasts, although they are still very competitive.

Over a period of years, certain highly selective federal appellate court judges develop a reputation for being "feeder" judges – that is, judges who have had multiple former clerks selected for Supreme Court clerkships. Some judges take great pride in this designation, and hire clerks with an eye to those they might promote to the Justices. However, applying only to "feeder" judges is a risky strategy because these clerkships tend to be among the most competitive.

e. Specialty Courts

There are many federal specialty courts that do interesting work. Georgetown alumni have clerked on each of these courts in recent years:

United States Court of Federal Claims, which primarily handles monetary claims against the federal government;

United States Court of International Trade, which has jurisdiction over tariff conflicts and hears appeals from United States International Trade Commission (which investigates and issues rulings concerning unfair practices in import trade);

United States Tax Court, which hears taxpayer appeals involving income, estate, and gift taxes;

United States Court of Military Appeals, where three civilian judges review court martial convictions; and

United States Court of Veterans Appeals, which reviews decisions of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

These clerkships all vary in their competitiveness, but it is generally reasonable for candidates with GPAs at 3.5 or above with a demonstrated interest in the subject matter of the court to apply.

f. The Supreme Court of the United States

The Supreme Court is the highest federal court of the United States and has ultimate appellate jurisdiction over all federal courts and state court cases involving issues of federal law. The nine active justices typically hire four clerks each for one-year clerkships. Retired justices each hire one clerk each year to assist approximately half-time with ongoing writing projects and the work of sitting on federal courts of appeals periodically, while loaning that clerk for the other half of the clerk's time to an active justice.

These clerkships are extremely difficult to obtain. In recent years, on average, one Georgetown graduate has secured a Supreme Court clerkship in any given year. Applicants must have a stellar academic record (graduating *summa cum laude* or very high *magna cum laude*); superlative letters of recommendation; and at least one prior appellate clerkship, and sometimes an additional prior clerkship as well. A leadership position on *The Georgetown Law Journal* or another journal has also been typical. Because a strong letter of recommendation from one's appellate judge is crucial, it typically does not make sense to apply for a Supreme Court clerkship until after completing an appellate clerkship. If you think that you might want to apply for a Supreme Court clerkship, it would be a good idea to discuss the application process further with a clerkship adviser.

2. State Courts

Most of the legal matters in this country are handled at the state, and not the federal, level. State courts resolve most contract and tort disputes, criminal prosecutions, divorce and custody matters, and the probate of estates. State courts also hear cases on state constitutional matters. The highest court in a state runs the state judicial system and regulates the state bar. States have trial courts and a hierarchy of appellate courts. There are many, many great clerkships to be found in state courts – do not neglect to research this area!

In recent years, many Georgetown graduates have clerked in state courts. State court systems vary in terms of their jurisdiction, caseload, employment of law clerks, etc. That said, the state court systems often break down as follows:

a. Highest State Courts

The highest state courts provide a tremendous opportunity to expand one’s knowledge of the law. These are the courts of last resort for issues of state common law, interpretation of state statutes, and state constitutional law. Note that different states call their highest courts by different names, usually either the “[State] Supreme Court” (as in the Virginia Supreme Court) or the “[State] Court of Appeals” (as in the District of Columbia, New York, and Maryland Courts of Appeals).

These clerkships tend to be quite competitive. Students who clerk on the DC Court of Appeals, for example, often also do a second clerkship in the District of DC or a federal court of appeals. A typical GPA range for these clerkships is 3.6 to 4.0.

b. Intermediate Appellate State Courts

Most (but not all) states have intermediate courts of appeals. Some states that do have intermediate appellate courts have more than one, such as Alabama, which has one intermediate appellate court for civil matters and another for criminal.

These courts vary in their competitiveness. Students interested in appellate work whose grades are in the 3.3 to 3.7 range may find it this a particularly attractive option. The Maryland Court of Special Appeals (the intermediate appellate court in Maryland) has voiced a particular interest in Georgetown applicants.

c. State Trial Courts

All states have trial courts, though not all of them provide for law clerks. The District of Columbia provides law clerks for Superior Court judges, usually one per judge, and many Georgetown graduates have had excellent clerkship experiences at the Superior Court. Similarly, many local Maryland and Virginia jurisdictions have strong trial benches with excellent regional reputations. Some state trial courts are specialized (e.g., family or juvenile court) and can provide particularly relevant experience for students planning to practice in those fields. Many state trial courts also have magistrate judges.

State trial court clerkships tend to be less competitive than other types of clerkships; students with GPA ranges of between 3.0 and 3.5 may wish to focus on these clerkships. (There are, however, some state trial court judges, especially here in D.C., who seek out Georgetown students with GPAs of 3.7 or higher.) That state trial court clerkships tend to be available to applicants with a broader range of GPAs does not mean these clerkships are any less valuable to clerks' careers or legal experience. Many applicants apply to state trial court clerkships, for example, because the criminal trial court experience they'll receive is invaluable to their career goals of becoming a prosecutor or public defender, or because they want experience in family or housing law.

Note on the Delaware Court of Chancery: Because thousands of corporations, including some of the world's largest, are incorporated in Delaware, the Delaware Court of Chancery handles many complex corporate disputes and is a particularly helpful clerkship for students considering a career in corporate law. These clerkships tend to be very selective – on par with competitive federal circuit court positions – and can lead to specialized knowledge and meaningful experience for attorneys interested in practicing corporate law.

D. Beyond Federal and State Courts

While the word “clerkships” typically brings to mind federal or state courts, there are two other kinds of clerkships you might wish to consider.

The first kind is in a federal or state agency with an administrative law judge (ALJ). ALJs preside over administrative hearings and adjudicate the claims or disputes of cases pertaining to their particular agency. In recent years, Georgetown alumni have secured administrative law judicial clerkships with the Department of Labor, the Executive Office of Immigration Review in the Department of Justice, and the D.C. Commission on Human Rights. More information about federal ALJ hiring practices can be found here: <https://www.nalp.org/aljclerkshipinfo>. Most states also have ALJs; information about these positions can be found on state agency websites or in central state administrative law judge websites. The GPA range for these positions tends to be on par with state trial courts.

The second alternative kind of clerkship you may wish to consider is with an international court. Most international clerkships, however, are unpaid, which frequently makes these types of clerkship prohibitive without some external source of fellowship support. One exception, however, is a clerkship with the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the judicial arm of the United Nations, located in The Hague in the Netherlands. According to the ICJ's website, “The Court's role is to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.” The ICJ has a “University Traineeship Program” that is in essence a judicial clerkship. While it is a very competitive process to be offered an ICJ clerkship, Georgetown Law has committed to providing funding for Georgetown ICJ clerks who apply through the Transnational Office. For more information about the ICJ and the traineeship program, see <http://icj-cij.org/en/university-traineeship-program>. For more information about Georgetown funding, see <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/academics/transnational-programs/fellowships-internships-research/international-court-of-justice-traineeship/>.

III. HOW TO PREPARE DURING LAW SCHOOL (WITHOUT HAVING TO DO IT ALL)

Decisions you make during law school can absolutely affect your chances of obtaining a judicial clerkship, regardless of the type of clerkship you want to pursue (federal or state, trial or appellate). Listed below are some of the things you should consider while you are in law school in order to be adequately prepared.

Of course, no student can reasonably do *everything* discussed below, and judges do not expect that either. However, most judges do expect that you do *some* things that sharpen your legal abilities and demonstrate your legal interests. You should consider each of these opportunities and decide which ones make sense based on your overall interests and career goals.

A. Establish Relationships with Potential Recommenders

A clerkship application generally requires three letters of recommendation. Most judges like to see recommendation letters from both faculty members and individuals who have supervised your work in a legal practice setting (we recommend, in general, that two of your letters be from faculty and one be from an outside supervisor). It is crucial that you work on these relationships long before you seek a recommendation. Stop by your professors' offices during office hours; they really do want to get to know you! Students may also choose to become a Research or Teaching Assistant for faculty members. These activities can strengthen your relationships with a professor because they allow the student and professor to develop a meaningful working relationship and give the professor the opportunity to comment on the student's work in a setting outside of the classroom. Research Assistant positions may be posted on Symplicity; students may also independently contact professors and ask if the professor intends to hire any Research Assistants. Similarly, serving as a Law Fellow – in addition to strengthening your writing skills – allows students to work closely with a writing professor. This can lead to a strong, detailed recommendation letter.

B. Do a Judicial Internship

Judicial internships (generally unpaid) are available in the summer and during the academic year for credit. These internships can provide a preview of the clerkship experience; many students believe their internships helped them obtain full-time clerkships both through the experience gained and connections made with their judge and the law clerks. Many district court judges hire summer interns, not only in D.C., but in other cities as well. Please see the *Judicial Internship Manual* located on the Judicial Clerkships webpage for more information.

That said, while judicial internships can be a helpful credential for clerkships and can allow students to get a feel for what it is like to work in a judge's chambers, judges do not require judicial internships in order to hire someone as a law clerk. Students should balance their desire to clerk with gaining other experience that may further their careers. For example, students focused on public interest careers may want to focus on public interest internships instead of judicial ones, and that does not necessarily hurt their chances of obtaining a clerkship.

C. Join a Journal

Journal experience is often necessary to secure a clerkship. Some judges have a strong preference for students who are on their school's main law review; others do not. Enter the writing competition and give it your best effort. Remember that the *Georgetown Law Journal* does not exclusively, or even primarily, select students based on GPA. The write-on packet score and diversity statements matter a lot. Do not let your GPA alone drive your decision about which journals interest you. Whether you are on a journal or not, you should consider submitting a note or other piece for publication in a journal.

D. Gain Legal Research and Writing Experience

Gaining research and writing experience is an important factor in obtaining a clerkship. In addition to being on a journal, doing research for professors, taking externships or clinics with an emphasis on research and writing, serving as a Law Fellow, taking a WR seminar, doing a writing-intensive externship, or participating in Barrister's Council teams are all meaningful ways to gain research and writing experience.

E. Join a Moot Court Team

Many judges also look for applicants who participate in moot court competitions. Moot court provides students with the opportunity to research and draft an appellate brief and participate in oral arguments. This can help demonstrate an interest in appellate law; it may also provide an opportunity to develop a strong writing sample.

F. Do Experiential Learning That Interests You

Georgetown has exceptional clinical courses and externship opportunities throughout DC. Many judges enjoy seeing students who took the opportunity to try interesting and meaningful work during law school. Further, juggling classes with a clinic or externship may demonstrate strong time management skills. These opportunities may also lead to a writing sample or great letter of recommendation. Further, if you get a clerkship interview, judges often like to talk about your interests within the law. Interesting clinical or externship experiences can provide good conversation topics.

G. Choose your Courses Carefully

Many judges prefer candidates who have taken (or plan to take) particular courses, such as Constitutional Law II, Evidence, Trial Practice (especially for trial courts), Administrative Law (especially for DC clerkships), and Federal Courts (for federal clerkships). Avoid taking these core classes pass-fail if you want a clerkship. A P on your transcript in Federal Courts, for example, does not tell judges whether you earned an A- or a B-.

Some judges have said that they do not like to see multiple "and the Law" courses on your transcript because it gives them the impression that you are trying to pad your GPA or are not

interested in blackletter law. That said, if there are seminars like this for which you have a genuine interest, go ahead and take them!

H. Plan Ahead

Whether you send one or more than two hundred clerkship applications, the process takes time. Do yourself a favor and plan ahead. You should update your resume, draft a cover letter, polish your writing sample, meet with an OCS clerkships advisor, and approach potential recommenders long before you submit your applications.

IV. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

A. Finding Available Clerkships and Application Timing Considerations

The clerkship application process can be daunting and confusing. Judges are unique individuals who have their own individual criteria and standards they use to select the “right” clerk for them. Some judges hire months prior to the start of the clerkship, while others hire many years ahead of time. Some judges prefer clerks who will have had some legal work experience prior to clerking, while others prefer to hire clerks fresh out of law school. So try to remain calm throughout the application process and understand that this is a marathon, not a sprint. You may find that the application process may take a year or longer before you have accepted a clerkship offer. If you really want a clerkship, then do not give up too quickly in the process!

1. Federal Court Clerkships

In March 2018, the federal courts announced a new clerkship hiring plan designed to provide some structure to the federal clerkship hiring process. The full text of the plan, as well as detailed information about specific federal court clerkship opportunities, is available on OSCAR (the Online System for Clerkship Application and Review) at <https://oscar.uscourts.gov>.

At a high level of generality, the hiring plan encourages judges to wait to consider clerkship candidates until the candidates have completed at least 4 semesters of law school coursework. This means that the plan impacts candidates differently based on their graduation date. The chart below details both when candidates are able to access OSCAR and when judges participating in the plan can consider their applications.

Graduation Year	OSCAR Access	Application Window
Class of 2019 or prior	Available since July 1, 2017 or earlier	Open, and rolling
Class of 2020	Available since February 6, 2019	Opened on June 17, 2019
Class of 2021	Available on February 5, 2020	Opens on June 15, 2020
Class of 2022 and beyond	Not yet established	Not yet established
<i>Note: Part-time, evening and dual-degree students may be able to access OSCAR earlier than the date listed above for their class year if they register with for an “alternative graduation date” account on OSCAR.</i>		

If you are considering federal court clerkships, you should create your own OSCAR account as soon as you are able to do under the plan's guidelines. Once on OSCAR, you will be able to get a better sense of how judges in various courts and geographic locations are managing their clerkship hiring. Some judges are hiring only a few months in advance of the clerkship start date, while others are hiring two or more years in advance of that date. Having a sense of what judges who may be of interest to you are doing will allow you to start making some informed choices about how to strategically approach your clerkship search.

While federal court judges are all encouraged to utilize hiring practices which are consistent with the hiring plan, there are judges who will decide to hire "off plan." The application timelines for these judges is likely to be accelerated, perhaps beginning as early as the summer before your 2L (3E) year. If you think you may be interested in pursuing opportunities with these "off-plan" judges, you should make an appointment with a clerkship advisor to discuss your application materials and consider what application timing makes the most sense for you.

2. State Court Clerkships

While many state courts, including the DC Superior Court, hire in the beginning of the 3L (4E) year for clerkships that start the fall after graduation, other state courts (including the DC Court of Appeals) hire their clerks as early as spring of 2L (3E) year. While there is no central location to find state court clerkship postings, helpful resources can be found on the Judicial Clerkships webpage, such as:

- *The Vermont Law School's Guide to State Judicial Clerkship Procedures*, which provides information about nearly all state court clerkship hiring procedures and timelines.
- *A Guide to Common State Court Clerkships*, a handout prepared regularly by the Clerkship team, which provides more detailed information about those state courts to which our students and graduates most frequently apply.
- *Symplicity*, which is home to both active job postings (state court clerkships opportunities will be frequently be posted here) and a database of information about judges and their former clerks.
- *Judicial Clerkships Newsletter*, which contains current clerkship and internship postings and other clerkship-related events and information. (A link to sign up for the Newsletter is available on the Judicial Clerkships webpage.)

See **Appendix A: Frequently Considered State Courts.**

B. Commonly Required Application Materials

Typical clerkship application materials consist of a cover letter, resume, transcripts, writing sample (including a cover page providing an explanation of the writing sample) and three letters of recommendation and/or a list of references. While judges frequently request similar application materials, you should research each individual judge's application requirements to understand the specific materials requested by that particular judge.

1. Cover Letter

As a general rule, a judicial clerkship application cover letter should be brief (never more than a page), well-written and error free. At a minimum your letter should mention the term(s) for which you're applying and specify what application materials are enclosed and what application materials will be arriving under separate cover. We also recommend that you include some additional information such as any geographical connection you have to the court and any biographical information that could be of interest to the judge (for example, discuss your military service, any extraordinary personal or family circumstances, or even just what brought you to law school and why you are interested in clerking for that particular court). You may also want to expand upon anything particularly relevant to a specific judge that is included in your resume (for example, highlighting your public interest work for a judge who expresses a preference for clerks with that type of experience). You can also mention anyone with a strong connection to the judge who recommended that you clerk for that judge (such as a former clerk). On the other hand, avoid discussing how clerking will help you hone your writing and research skills or how you would generically benefit from clerking. You should also avoid language that could be construed as bragging or puffery; it is better simply to state the relevant facts than to assert that they will make you an excellent law clerk.

See **Appendix B: Sample Cover Letter**.

2. Resume

For all clerkship applications, an updated, traditional one-page resume is generally best. Highlight your research and writing abilities and, if you wish, your interests outside the law, which may include community service or similar affiliations. If you are applying to judges in your home state, consider also including your permanent address on your resume for those judges.

You should also include upcoming positions that you have accepted but not yet started on your resume (for example, a summer associate position, internship, or another clerkship that you have accepted and will complete either in advance of or after the clerkship).

Although few (if any) judges make decisions based on a candidate's political affiliation, many judges look for a good ideological "fit," which can include social or political commitments. If a judge's ideology is particularly important to you, you might want to include any membership with, for example, the Federalist Society or the American Constitution Society on your resume. It would be a mistake, however, to think that you would only want to work with someone whose political affiliation matches your own. You will learn much from any judge who hires you.

See **Appendix C: Sample Resume**.

3. Transcript(s)

Almost all judges will want to see your law school transcript. Sending an unofficial transcript is generally fine, unless a judge explicitly requests an official one. You can obtain official transcripts from the Registrar if necessary. When applying for a clerkship via OSCAR, you will have to create

an online grade sheet since transcripts cannot be uploaded. You should list all of your law school professors on your law school grade sheet.

Some judges will also request an undergraduate transcript. Unlike for law school grade sheets, in OSCAR, it is generally okay not to list professors for each course.

4. Writing Sample

Most judges require that an applicant submit at least one writing sample. When choosing a writing sample, you will want to choose the piece that best showcases your legal research, analysis, and writing talents. Unless otherwise specified by the judge, we generally recommend your writing sample be between 10-15 pages in length.

Before submitting a writing sample, read the judge's job posting. You may want to have two or three different writing samples ready so that you can follow individual judges' requests. Some judges ask for two writing samples. Some state that academic writing – like student notes – are not acceptable, while others state that they prefer academic pieces. Some ask for short samples and specify that you may only submit a five- or ten-page sample. Be sure to read each posting closely and follow the stated instructions about writing samples!

Read your piece again, polish it, and excerpt it if necessary to reduce the length. You might consider making an appointment with the Georgetown Law Center Writing Center for advice on further revisions. However, if you are submitting a writing sample defined as an unedited piece of work, ethically you are bound to submit a piece of work that was not directly edited by another person. Some judges may ask for you to describe how much the piece was edited by others in your writing sample cover sheet.

Include a brief cover sheet with your writing sample putting it into context – for example, stating for which class you wrote your paper or for which employer. If you are using a sample written for an employer, be sure to note in your cover page that you have permission from the employer to use it and discuss any confidentiality issues (for example, if you had to change or redact names in the sample). In addition, if you have to excerpt your writing sample in order to get it to an appropriate length, you can briefly discuss any important information or relevant facts that were left out. Finally, if you plan to use a piece that has been substantially edited or reworked by others, you should note that fact as well – although generally it is best to use a piece that has only been edited by you, or alternatively, use a prior draft of a piece that was unedited by others.

Possible writing samples include:

- **Law journal note or seminar paper.** If you submit the entire piece, and it is lengthy, be sure to include a cover sheet indicating the strongest part of the piece and providing some background. Make sure to send your original work and not one edited by the journal staff. You may submit your final seminar paper even if you received feedback on it along the way.

- **A Legal Research & Writing paper.** You may use a memorandum or brief you wrote during your first year of law school as your writing sample. Take as much time as you need to revise and polish the paper, especially if your skills have improved since you submitted it for class. If you are applying in your third year of law school or beyond, we recommend that you use something you wrote after 1L year.
- **A brief written as part of an academic competition.** You may use a brief written as part of a moot court competition. If your brief won any prizes in the competition (for example “best brief”), you may state that in your cover sheet.
- **A memorandum or brief written for a legal employer.** You may use a memorandum or brief you wrote for a legal employer. But please note: You must have the permission of your employer before you submit your work for that employer as a writing sample, and sometimes confidentiality and privilege concerns may preclude you from submitting it as a writing sample. When approaching your employer to ask for permission to use your work as a writing sample, consider discussing ways you can anonymize it, like redacting party names or obscuring some facts. The employer may be more likely to approve the writing sample if you take steps to preserve confidentiality. If you receive permission to use this kind of piece, be sure to note this on the cover sheet.

For additional guidance on writing samples, the Georgetown Law Writing Center has created several documents about writing samples which are relevant for judicial clerkship applications, including “[Choosing the Right Writing Sample](#)” and “[Writing Samples for Judicial Clerkships: Some Helpful Tips from Chambers.](#)”

See **Appendix D: Writing Sample FAQs.**

5. Letters of Recommendation

Strong letters of recommendation are among the most important parts of the clerkship application. Most judges require two or three letters of recommendation. We advise that at least two letters should be from professors and one should be from an employer or other person familiar with your work. However, if you do not have two professors who can write glowing letters because they do not know you sufficiently well, it may be best for you to just have one faculty recommendation letter and two letters from outside supervisors. It is definitely not effective to have a faculty letter that only states what grade you earned in a course and little more. Judges look for clerks who will fit into their chambers and they will want to know something about your work ethic, intelligence, personality, background before law school, ability to get along with others, discretion, and sense of humor.

In selecting whom to ask for a recommendation, you should consider how well the potential recommender knows you and your work and how well you performed in this person’s class or employment. It is not always necessary for a student to have gotten an A on a professor’s exam to receive a strong recommendation. A professor may write an enthusiastic recommendation for a well-prepared and engaged student whom they know well, regardless of the student’s exam grade. You should discuss this with your professor if applicable.

You may also wish to consider whether the potential recommender has any connection with judges and whether this person is well-known and well-respected in the field. That having been said, a well-connected, well-known recommender who does not know you well is less helpful than a less-connected, less-well-known recommender.

You should do your part to help your recommenders write enthusiastic letters that speak to why you would be a great clerk in specific and concrete terms (for instance, your research and writing, performance or work product, professional judgment, personality (why you would be a joy to have in chambers), and how clerking supports your career goals). Offer to meet with potential recommenders in person to discuss your background and share relevant details about yourself so they can reference this information when writing their letters.

While the information that a particular recommender would like to receive from an applicant may vary, you should offer to provide the following to each of your recommenders well in advance of the due date for the recommendation letter:

- Resume.
- Transcript.
- Draft cover letter.
- Copy of writing sample.
- List of judges to whom you plan to apply: if you do not know which judges you will apply to because you anticipate applying broadly, you may want to tell the recommender the types of judges to whom you plan to apply (e.g., federal district courts in a particular area or areas of the country).
- For faculty recommenders, the name(s) of course(s) you have taken with the recommender and when, as well as the final grade(s) you received in the course(s) and any other relevant information about your class participation.
- The date upon which you plan to apply.

You should also provide your recommenders with additional information that they may choose to use in the letters. This may be a long, short, formal, or informal communication (e.g., law school application essay, personal statement, other written work product, or a draft short biography written specifically for the recommender). It may include anything you think the judge(s) should know, but that cannot comfortably be included in your resume and/or cover letter. The intention is not that you write your own letters of recommendation, but rather to provide an opportunity to help recommenders personalize and strengthen their letters. Try to think of things that would enable recommenders make you more appealing and distinctive than the average applicant.

Some examples of the types of additional things applicants have shared with recommenders in the past include:

- Extraordinary or unusual family situations or upbringing
- Why you applied to law school and what you hope to do in the future (try to be specific)
- Particulars about job experiences that illustrate desirable qualities of character
- Interesting hobbies or trivia

- Community good works
- Proudest moments
- Most formative experiences
- Biggest comeback from adversity
- Relevant information about family and hometown
- Languages spoken and/or family heritage stories

No matter how excellent a candidate you are, it may be the case that some potential recommenders will decline to write a letter of recommendation for you. Perhaps they don't know you well enough; perhaps they are supporting another candidate for the same positions; or perhaps they are simply too busy. Alternatively, some recommenders may be willing to send letters only to specific judges, and some may limit the number of letters they will send on your behalf. It is always difficult to hear an answer other than the one you are hoping for, but don't get discouraged. If you have difficulties securing recommendations, or if you want to discuss your alternatives, talk to a clerkship advisor and/or your other mentors.

Please ask potential recommenders if they would be willing to write a letter for you well before you need the letter – at least four or six weeks in advance. They may need a month to get it written, and the clerkship team will also typically require an additional week or two to process the letter once it is submitted. So plan accordingly, particularly for your initial applications. After your letters have been submitted and initially processed, the process will generally be much quicker for subsequent applications.

Once written, all recommenders should submit their letters of recommendation to the clerkship team at lawclerkships@georgetown.edu. Letters that are submitted in a Word (or similar) format will be prepared so that they are addressed to each individual judge to whom you apply. Often, outside recommenders prefer to submit PDF versions of their letters. Letters submitted in this format are typically prepared on the letter writer's organizational letterhead, addressed to "Dear Judge," and signed by the supervisor prior to submission.

Occasionally, in lieu of (or sometimes in addition to) letters of recommendation, a judge may ask for a list of references. Unless otherwise specified, this list should include your three recommenders. It may also include a few additional references who would be willing to speak to a judge about your candidacy. You should list your recommenders in order of relative strength rather than in alphabetical order because many judges will start from the top of the list and may stop after making one or two calls. In that case, you'll want those two calls to be your most enthusiastic references.

C. How to Apply

You are responsible for submitting *all* of your clerkship application materials directly to the judges to whom you are applying *EXCEPT* for your letters of recommendation, which are sent directly from Georgetown to the judges' chambers in accordance with your requests.

There are three main methods of getting judicial clerkship applications into the hands of judges: mail, email, and OSCAR (for federal clerkships). It is your responsibility to determine the specific

application method and necessary application materials for each judge to whom you apply. For federal clerkships, you will be able to find much of this information on OSCAR. For state court clerkships, you will often find the necessary application information on the court's website and/or from individual clerkship postings advertised in Symplicity.

Once you have determined the proper application method for each court and/or judge, you will need to request your letters of recommendation based on the application method.

If your letters need to be submitted via OSCAR, you will need to list all of your recommenders in your OSCAR account and indicate that they are supporting your applications. This will allow our clerkship team to see and fulfill your recommendation letter requests directly on OSCAR.

If your letters need to be prepared outside of OSCAR, you will need to email your request directly to the clerkships team.

Specific instructions for how to request your letters of recommendation are available on the Judicial Clerkship website at:

- [Instructions for Requesting Letters of Recommendation via OSCAR](#)
- [Instructions for Requesting Letters of Recommendation via Mail or Email](#)

D. Updating your Applications

After you have applied for a clerkship, whether federal or state, you should update your applications when you have additional information that can impact your application – for example, when you have secured a summer internship or post-graduate job or received additional grades.

You can update your applications by sending a cover letter specifying the updates and including any relevant attachments. You should generally do so using the same method for which you originally applied – whether OSCAR, mail or email. However, some judges specify in their OSCAR posting that initial applications should be submitted through OSCAR and any updates should be sent via email or mail. So if you are planning to update all of your applications as a batch on OSCAR (for example, by attaching a new grade sheet to all applications after a new semester of grades has been released), you should open each individual judge's posting and check to see if they have specific requests for application updates.

E. Tips for Improving Your Chances of Success

1. Apply broadly...

- Many successful clerkship applicants apply to 100 – or even 200 – different judges before they obtained a clerkship. While you should never apply to a judge from whom you would not accept a clerkship offer, you should think about potential clerkships broadly.

- Geographic flexibility will – more than any other factor – increase the likelihood that you will get a clerkship. The more widely you apply, the more clerkship opportunities you will have. Applying outside of DC, New York City, and larger cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco and Chicago will also increase your odds. Outside of major markets, geographic ties can also help. If you have family in the judge’s city/state or have ever lived there, mention it in your cover letter.
- Flexibility with regard to timing can help, as well. For example, applying to two-year clerkships in addition to one-year clerkships can be helpful. Some judges hire for “off” terms – for example, for clerkships beginning in January rather than in the Fall. These positions may also receive fewer applications. Finally, applying for positions that begin one or more years after you graduate from law school may increase your chances of obtaining a clerkship since many judges prefer that their clerks have prior legal experience.
- Applying to all of the judges in a given court will also increase the likelihood of getting a clerkship. Many applicants think that they need to perform extensive research on each individual judge before deciding whether to apply. This is typically not a good use of your time, however, as you are likely to learn a great deal from any judge for whom you clerk – and there is little reliable information online that would tell you anything that would make or break whether you decide to apply for a given judge.

2. ... and at the same time target your search

- Aim for clerkships that are within reach based on the credentials that judges request and the advice you receive from your Clerkship Advisor and Georgetown Law faculty. For example, if the judge requires GPAs in the top 10% of the class, but your GPA places you in middle of the class, your application will likely not be closely considered.
- Consider applying to judges who are Georgetown Law alumni and judges who have connections to Georgetown Law. Many of these judges regularly hire Georgetown Law applicants. You can find updated guides of alumni judges as well as those judges who have recently hired from Georgetown on the Judicial Clerkship website.

3. Continue to apply and then reapply

- The application process could take at least a year or longer before you accept a clerkship offer. Do not give up after a few months thinking that you are not going to receive a clerkship offer. Continue to apply (broadly) to as many judges as possible as additional clerkships become available.
- Unlike many other legal jobs, after you are not selected for a clerkship for a particular term, you can reapply to the same judge for different term clerkships.

In fact, judges often encourage applicants to do so. With another year of law school or more work experience under your belt, you may be considered a stronger candidate the second time around.

4. If relevant, participate in a diversity-related clerkship program

There are several diversity-related clerkship programs that can be very helpful for potential clerks. Some of these programs include:

- [Share the Wealth Clerkship Program for Law Students](#)
- [DC Hispanic Bar Association –Law Student Clerkships Support Program](#)
- [ABA Judicial Internship Opportunity Program](#)
- [Robert E. Wone Annual Judicial Clerkship and Internship Conference](#)
- [LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York –Dr. M.L. "Hank" Henry, Jr. Judicial Fellowship Program](#)

We encourage you to apply to, or participate in, one of these programs if you think you would be a good fit.

5. Other ways to get a competitive boost

- A recommendation from a judge's former clerk or from a faculty member personally known by the judge explaining why you are a good fit for that judge could generate interest.
- Ask your faculty recommenders if they would be willing to call a few judges on your behalf. Such a call – particularly if the caller can genuinely discuss your qualities and skills – can give the judge the information and confidence in your abilities needed to invite you to interview for the clerkship. Please limit these calls to one per judge. More than that can be annoying to the judge and can do more harm than good for your chances of getting an interview. Also, don't give faculty members a long list of judges to call; at most, a willing faculty member should call no more than two or three judges on your behalf at a time, or the faculty member cannot credibly express your interest in this particular judge.
- Network! Talk to people you know and tell them you are applying to clerkships. Sometimes, a personal or professional connection may know a judge and make a call on your behalf. This might encourage the judge to take a closer look at your application.

F. Additional Considerations for Non-US Citizens

U.S. Citizenship is a requirement for some, but not for all, clerkships. Non-citizens tend to find the largest number of available clerkship opportunities within the state courts and in federal courts in Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands or the Northern Mariana Islands. Due to federal appropriations rules, non-citizens are not eligible for paid employment for clerkships located in the continental United States unless they qualify as:

- Lawful permanent residents seeking citizenship under 8 U.S.C. § 1324b(a)(3)(B);
- Individuals admitted as refugees or granted asylum who have filed a declaration of intent to become a lawful permanent resident and a citizen upon eligibility; or
- Individuals who owe “allegiance to the United States” (i.e., nationals of American Samoa, Swains Island, and Northern Mariana Islands, and nationals satisfying other requirements under 8 U.S.C. § 1408).

All non-U.S. citizens must be eligible to work in the U.S. in accordance with immigration laws.

Additional information regarding the employment of non-U.S. citizens with the federal judiciary is available online at: <http://www.uscourts.gov/Careers/CareerCitizenshipRequirements.aspx>.

V. INTERVIEWS AND OFFERS

A. Waiting for an Interview Invitation

Once you send off a bunch of applications, you might be waiting by the phone for an interview invitation. Getting an interview is more difficult than it might initially appear, however. How do judges select candidates to interview? Conventional wisdom holds that judges screen applications by looking for those candidates with the best mix of a well-respected law school, grades, journal experience, and recommendations. But to say that judges rely on these credentials alone may give you the mistaken impression that the process is a predictable one. It is not.

First, there are simply too many applications reviewed over a short period of time for the process not to be somewhat random. Second, many judges look for credentials which are not always apparent from the outside. For example, some judges hold a special place in their heart for candidates with pre-law-school professional experience, advanced degrees, public interest or volunteer work, internships for other judges, or military experience. Some judges look for unrelated but interesting credentials such as sports prowess, singing or other musical ability, or fluency in foreign languages. Some judges have strong preferences for geographical ties to their location; others do not. Some judges also try to balance different interests or backgrounds among all of their clerks in a given year, so your chances of being considered depend in part on who else has already been hired.

In short, innumerable factors beyond your control may affect your clerkship chances. Given the competitiveness of the selection process and the desire of most judges to limit the number of students they interview, be patient, and do not expect your applications to generate many

interviews. That said, most Georgetown students who successfully obtain a clerkship often have more than one clerkship interview. Remember, the key thing if you want a clerkship is persistence! This is a marathon, not a sprint.

B. Scheduling an Interview

When you do get a call from a judge (or more likely from a current clerk or a judicial assistant) for an interview, timing is a critical consideration. The most important thing to know about interviewing and offers in the clerkship hunt is that this is nothing like law firm hiring. Generally speaking, judges do not see everyone, make offers, and then wait indefinitely for you to decide which of a number of offers you will take. Instead, many judges will hire as they interview, thus closing you out if you wait too long to schedule an interview. Very rarely will an applicant have more than one offer pending.

While judges participating in the new federal clerkship hiring plan discussed above will be guided by set deadlines for accepting applications and interviewing potential clerks, other federal and state judges will not. When these judges post their clerkship openings, it often remains unclear as to when they will decide to interview candidates. Then there are some judges who have a completely rolling application process, while others post openings a week before they intend to do interviews. Some may not even interview candidates for six months or more after they post the position!

It's worth noting that if you are applying to several judges in the same city or general area and one judge requests an interview, you might consider contacting the other judges in that city to whom you have applied and politely ask whether they would be willing to interview you since you will already be at the courthouse. Sometimes they will be. Indeed, they may give your resume another look simply because Judge X is interviewing you.

C. Preparing for an Interview

- **Budget Accordingly.** Sometimes initial screening interviews will be conducted on Skype, but final interviews almost always occur in judges' chambers, and unlike with law firm callbacks, judicial chambers have no budget to reimburse your travel expenses. Interviews might be scheduled with short notice, and you may have to purchase last-minute tickets or hotel rooms. These can be expensive, so consider setting aside some money for the interview process.
- **Know the Judge.** The best tip in preparing for an interview is to know the judge. Common reasons applicants are rejected at the interview stage include lack of curiosity and knowledge about the position, the judge or the court. Failure to research in preparation for the interview also demonstrates to the judge that you might not be an effective researcher - one of the most important duties of a clerk. So do your homework to show your competence and enthusiasm! Useful resources include:

- Texts such as *The Almanac of the Federal Judiciary* and *The American Bench* for biographical information about judges.
 - News sources can provide information about the judge’s recent or important decisions and cases. Find out if the judge has written any law review articles and read them.
 - Try to speak to individuals who know the judge. Georgetown professors and alumni who have clerked or interned for the judge are excellent resources. See **Appendix E: Georgetown Law Faculty who Have Clerked**. You can also find out information from former Georgetown clerks using the Clerkships tab in Symplicity or searching on LinkedIn. Many former clerks – even those who are not Georgetown alumni – are willing to take a quick phone call and discuss their time in chambers.
 - Many Georgetown Law clerks and interviewees have provided “Hearsay” information about their clerkship interviews which can be especially helpful when preparing for your interview. You must access this information in OCS, though no appointment is needed.
- **Anticipate the Questions.** Prior to an interview, look at **Appendix F: Sample Clerkship Interview Questions**, and think through your possible responses to questions the judge and clerks might ask you. Then look at the list of questions you might ask the judge and clerks and decide which of these, or which other, questions you want to focus on when given the opportunity. Be prepared to discuss everything in your applications materials, including every item on your resume and the substance of your writing sample.
 - **Set up a Mock Interview with a Clerkship Advisor.** A mock interview can help you anticipate which questions might be asked and receive feedback on your responses so that you can be more effective during your interview. While you do not need to proactively bring up any personal flaw or shortcoming in an interview (for example, a low grade in a particular course), you should anticipate receiving questions about it. Accordingly, you will want to practice your response so you can confidently address the issue and put as positive a spin on it as possible. A mock interview will help you prepare for such questions.
 - **Let your Recommenders know you have an Interview.** Be sure to inform your recommenders that you have an interview scheduled. This can help them to be prepared should they receive a call from the judge. They might also have some intel or advice to offer about the judge and/or the interview. Also, be sure to use this opportunity to thank your recommenders; they spent a lot of time writing your letters of recommendation and they will be glad to hear that their efforts were helpful!
 - **Confirm the Logistics.** Twenty-four hours before the interview, confirm the date, time, location, and duration of the interview with the judge’s assistant or law clerk. Make sure you are polite and courteous over the telephone and in person.

- **Be Prepared, Arrive Early and Remain Calm and Positive for the Interview.**
 - Spend a few minutes the morning of your interview to read the local news in order to make sure you are aware of any important events in the area as well as at the court.
 - Dress as if you are prepared to go to court – a suit is standard.
 - Remember to bring a photo ID, which is often required to get through security.
 - Plan to arrive to the court early so that you will have time to find the appropriate court entrance and go through security before your interview start time. However, do not actually show up to chambers until 5-10 minutes before your scheduled interview so that the judge and his staff will be prepared for you when you arrive.
 - Treat everyone you encounter from the minute you enter the courthouse with respect. Courthouses are like a family, and judges often take very seriously the opinion of permanent staff (like a judicial assistant, courtroom deputy, or favorite security guard) of how pleasant you will be to work with.
 - Bring with you extra copies of your resume, transcript, and writing sample. If you have a second writing sample that was not used as part of the application, it cannot hurt to bring a copy with you just in case the judge asks for an additional writing sample.
 - An interview can last anywhere from 20 minutes to two hours or more. Typically, the interview will consist of a one-on-one session with the judge, as well as a session with the current clerks. You may meet also with the judge’s career clerk, judicial assistant, or courtroom deputy as well. Be courteous and deferential. Be aware that you are being evaluated, sometimes more stringently, by the clerks.
 - Enjoy yourself and be confident (though not arrogant)! You are meeting with interesting people who decided to interview you because they believe you to be qualified for the position. At this point most interviews are about personality fit, for both you and the judge. The judge will want to get to know you better to ensure that if you are selected for the clerkship, it will be a positive and productive clerkship experience for you both. The judge is usually also looking to ensure that you and his or her other clerks, if applicable, would be able to get along well with each other.

- **Send a Thank You Letter.** Immediately after the interview, write a thank you letter to the judge and also email messages of thanks to the clerks and other staff you met. If you have not heard from the judge several weeks after the interview, it is okay to call chambers once and inquire about the judge’s timeline.

D. Receiving and Accepting an Offer

Most judges do not make on-the-spot offers at the interview. Instead they will typically call you anywhere from a few days to a few weeks later to make the offer. Regardless, a judge will often (but not always) give you some time to consider an offer. This is only a courtesy, however, and the judge is typically expecting that you will accept his or her clerkship offer. You would certainly not try to hold or obtain multiple clerkship offers in an attempt to get the “best” one.

Declining a clerkship offer could put your ability to clerk in that particular court in jeopardy and also reflects poorly on your character absent reasonable extenuating circumstances. It may also have institutional repercussions for Georgetown that could make it more difficult for future Georgetown candidates to clerk for that judge or that court. If prior to an interview you think for any reason you would not like to clerk for the judge, you should politely withdraw from the interview. If for any reason after the interview you think you would not like to clerk for the judge, you should immediately withdraw your application from consideration. This is a tricky situation, and you should consult with a clerkship advisor and/or your recommenders before doing so.

That all said, the common wisdom surrounding clerkship offers may be changing slightly on the federal court front. A new provision in the federal court hiring plan encourages participating judges to give candidates at least 48 hours to consider a clerkship offer and acknowledges that candidates may continue to interview with other judges during that time. If as a candidate you find yourself in a position where you have an offer, are allowed time to consider it, and have another clerkship interview scheduled, please be sure that you clearly understand the terms of the offer and are communicating with the judge in a timely and professional manner about your decision. If you have questions about a particular situation, remember, our clerkship advisors are always available to help you navigate clerkship interview and offer scenarios.

E. After Accepting an Offer

- **Inform the Clerkship Team and Your Recommenders about your Clerkship.** If you accept a judicial clerkship, please notify your clerkship advisor, as well as your recommenders (and do not forget to thank your recommenders again for all of their efforts spent assisting you with your clerkship applications). Georgetown collects this information for our records and to enable us to better help future applicants.
- **Withdraw Your Outstanding Applications.** Once you have accepted a clerkship for a particular term, it is common courtesy to withdraw all of your outstanding applications for that same term. Do so by using the same method you originally used to apply (whether OSCAR, mail or email). You do not have to give a reason for your withdraw. You can simply state you are withdrawing your application from consideration.
- **Complete a Clerkship Survey for any Interview(s) You Attend and for any Offer(s) You Receive.** The clerkship team has two separate surveys designed to gather information from candidates about both their clerkship interviews and offers. The information collected gets reviewed by our clerkship advisors and published in the Hearsay Files to help future Georgetown applicants to be better prepared for future interviews.
- **Complete Any Required Background Checks.** The judge and court will be in touch with you about any background checks you need to complete before starting the position. As a condition of beginning a federal clerkship, for example, you must undergo a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) fingerprint check, which includes a criminal records and FBI database check. The background check documentation requests that you disclose any convictions (juvenile or adult) and whether you are facing charges for any offense at the

time of completion of the documents. Your name, social security number and date of birth will also be verified. Judges may require a more comprehensive background check if they are hearing certain matters. For example, judges handling high-profile financial regulation or securities matters may request credit checks. Some judges who hear matters related to national security may also require their clerks obtain security clearance. The judge or appointing officer has some discretion when making suitability determinations, which are based on guidelines that apply to hiring at federal government agencies.

VI. GEORGETOWN LAW CLERKSHIP RESOURCES

A dedicated **Clerkship Advisor** is available to provide you with both general information about clerking, as well as to help you develop a personalized clerkship strategy. For example, you can consult the Clerkship Advisor for the following:

- Individual clerkship-related appointments
- Resume, cover letter and writing sample cover sheet review
- Clerkship interview prep and mock interviews
- Clerkship drop-in hours
- Dedicated [Judicial Clerkships page](#) on the Georgetown Law Careers site
- Judicial Clerkships Newsletter
- Hearsay Files with information about specific judges provided by past Georgetown Law clerks and clerkship candidates (accessible only in OCS)
- Clerkship-related postings in Symplicity
- Clerkship-related panels comprised of federal and state judges, clerks, and faculty held throughout the year
- Clerkship-related programming held throughout the year

Other on-campus resources include the **Writing Center**, where fellows can review your writing sample and provide feedback, as well as offer advice when choosing between two potential writing samples. **Georgetown Law faculty**, in addition to writing letters of recommendation, can also provide valuable advice on clerking, since many of them have also clerked and have maintained connections with judges throughout the United States.

We hope this guide has been helpful, and we look forward to supporting you on your path to find a clerkship. Good luck!

APPENDICES

- APPENDIX A: Frequently Considered State Courts
- APPENDIX B: Sample Cover Letter
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- APPENDIX D: Writing Sample FAQs
- APPENDIX E: Georgetown Law Faculty Who Have Clerked
- APPENDIX F: Sample Clerkship Interview Questions

APPENDIX A: Frequently Considered State Courts

Below is a list of those state courts our clerkship candidates most frequently consider during their clerkship searches. The chart provides some basic information about how application deadlines are set by the courts and about when applications are normally considered. The information in the chart was last updated in October 2018.

Court/Jurisdiction	Timeline Established By	Application Window Opens
District of Columbia Court of Appeals	Individual judge's preference	Late fall or early spring of 2L (3E) year
District of Columbia Superior Court	Individual judge's preference	Late spring of 2L (3E) year, with significant activity in fall of 3L (4E) year
Maryland Court of Appeals and Court of Special Appeals	Individual judge's preference	Late fall or early spring of 2L (3E) year
Maryland Circuit Courts	Individual judge's preference	Late summer or early fall of 3L year, with activity continuing throughout 3L (4E) year
Virginia Supreme Court and Court of Appeals	Individual judge's preference	Early spring of 2L (3E) year
Virginia Circuit Courts	Circuit Court preferences	Early fall of 3L (4E) year
Delaware Court of Chancery	Centralized application process	Early spring of 2L (3E) year, with a deadline in mid-February
New Jersey Judiciary (Supreme, Appellate and Trial Courts)	Both a centralized process and individual judge's preference	Mid-June after 2L (3E) year
Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court	Centralized application process	Early June after 2L (3E) year
Massachusetts Court of Appeals	Centralized application process	August before 3L (4E) year
New York Court of Appeals (Personal Clerks)	Individual judge's preference	Not all judges hires on a regular schedule, so timing varies
New York Court of Appeals (Central Staff Clerks)	Centralized application process	Early July after 2L (3E) year, with a deadline in mid-September
Connecticut Supreme Court	Centralized application process	Late spring of 2L (3E) year, with a deadline in mid-June
Connecticut Appellate Court	Centralized application process	Summer after 2L (3E) year, with a deadline in early to mid-August

APPENDIX B: Sample Cover Letter

[Your Name]

[Address]

[Date]

The Honorable [Judge's first and last names]

[Court Name]

[Address]

Dear Judge [Judge's Last Name]:

I am a second-year student at Georgetown University Law Center and a member of the *Georgetown Law Journal*. I am writing to apply for a [insert term year for which you are applying, for example, "2021"] term clerkship in your chambers. [If you have a connection to the geographic area where the judge sits, you can mention that you grew up there, have family there, etc. and plan to practice there after law school, if applicable.]

[We encourage you to include an additional paragraph about yourself. In general, this paragraph should consist more of statements of fact while avoiding mere puffery. For example:

- If you are applying to clerk at a specialty court like bankruptcy or international trade, you should describe your interest in clerking for that particular court and your experience in that substantive area of the law.
- If you are applying to clerk for a state court, you can include your reasons for applying to clerk in that particular state and for that particular court and judge.
- If you have a specific reason you are applying to clerk for a particular judge, you should mention it. For example, perhaps the judge visited your class or you studied a specific opinion of that judge, which motivated you to apply to clerk for that judge.
- If you have a compelling personal story, let the judge know. For example, are you the first in your family to attend college? Are you a veteran? Highlight how that experience impacted your decision to practice law.
- If none of these apply, you should still craft a short paragraph describing what brought you to law school / what you have focused on in law school / why you are interested in clerking for that particular court.]

[WORDS OF CAUTION: We recommend that you avoid describing how clerking would be good for your long-term career goals. You should also not discuss how clerking would help you to hone your writing and research skills. Finally, do not explicitly mention how you would be an excellent clerk because of your superior research and writing skills. Many judges report that these types of statements are not helpful or persuasive in a cover letter.]

I have enclosed my [list the documents you have enclosed; typically you will be asked to include your resume, unofficial law school transcript (plus possibly your undergraduate transcript), and writing sample] for your review.

Letters of recommendation will arrive separately from the following [or if you are applying via OSCAR, you can state that “Letters of recommendation are attached from the following”]:

- Professor [Name]
Georgetown University Law Center
[Contact phone number and/or email address]
- Professor [Name]
Georgetown University Law Center
[Contact phone number and/or email address]
- [Name of supervisor and title]
[Name of the organization]
[Contact phone number and/or email address]

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information. I can be reached at [phone number] and [email address]. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Respectfully,
[Your name]

APPENDIX C: Sample Resume

Katie Smith

300 Mass. Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001 | (123) 456-7890 | ks123@georgetown.edu

EDUCATION

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER, Washington, DC

Juris Doctor, expected May 2020

GPA: 3.67

Honors: CALI Award for best exam in Property; Dean's List

Journal: *Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics*, Staff Editor

Moot Court: Barrister's Council: Appellate Advocacy Division (moot court team member)

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, Gainesville, FL

Bachelor of Business Administration in Economics, *cum laude*, May 2017

Honors: Phi Beta Kappa

Study Abroad: Universidad Carlos III de Madrid in Madrid, Spain (Spring 2016)

EXPERIENCE

HOGAN LOVELLS, Washington, DC

Summer Associate, expected May–July 2019

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION, BUREAU OF COMPETITION, Washington, DC

Legal Intern, expected January–April 2019

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER, Washington, DC

Law Fellow, September 2018–present

Serve as a Teaching Assistant to Professor DeLaurentis for Legal Research and Writing. Work directly with six 1Ls to improve their research and writing skills. Provide thorough feedback on memoranda and briefs; discuss feedback in conferences.

LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, Washington, DC

Summer Law Clerk, May–August 2018

Represented clients with housing and public assistance needs. Researched and drafted memoranda about the District's landlord-tenant laws. Conducted intake interviews with potential clients.

LANGUAGES & INTERESTS

- Fluent Spanish; Conversational German.
- Enjoy running (completed Chicago and New York marathons) and playing the violin.
- Volunteer with Big Brothers, Big Sisters ten hours weekly.

APPENDIX D: Writing Sample FAQs

Below are the answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about clerkship writing samples. If you have additional questions, or simply want additional information, please contact a clerkship advisor.

- **May I use a piece that I co-authored?** No. Your writing sample should be your own individual work. If you have nothing else, you must at least tell the judge that you wrote the writing sample with another student or lawyer. You may receive some feedback from your professor or the Writing Center, but your sample should not be directly edited by others, unless you note this in your cover memo.
- **May I use a piece that I drafted for my judge during my judicial internship?** A bench memo would be fine, as long as you get permission from the judge and note that permission in the cover sheet of the memo. A draft opinion or order, however, is not recommended. Even if the judge for whom you interned may not object, many judges to whom you may be applying may take issue with an intern, or even a clerk, suggesting that their contribution to the work of the chambers was their exclusive work product.
- **How long should it be?** Unless otherwise specified by the judge, your writing sample should generally be between 10-15 pages in length. If you are deciding between two equally strong pieces, send the shorter piece. If a lengthy piece represents your best work, either send it with a cover sheet suggesting a section to read if the reader cannot read the entire piece or excerpt it. Remember, once a judge is convinced of your writing abilities, they can always stop reading. If you choose to excerpt a longer piece, note on the cover sheet that your writing sample is an excerpt and provide any necessary contextual details in a clear and concise manner.
- **May I send an additional writing sample after I send my initial application?** If you produce a seminar paper or journal note after you have sent your initial application, you may send it along with a cover letter.

APPENDIX E: List of Georgetown Law Faculty who have Clerked

Below is a list of the current, active full-time faculty members who have clerked along with the courts and judges for whom they clerked. You should feel free to reach out to any of them if you want to learn more about their clerkship experiences. (Note: This list was last updated in September 2019.)

- **Kevin Arlyck** – U.S. Supreme Court (Sonia Sotomayor), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (Robert A. Katzmann)
- **Susan Bloch** – U.S. Supreme Court (Thurgood Marshall), U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit (Spottswood Robinson)
- **Sonya Bonneau** – U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York (Norman Mordue)
- **John R. Brooks II** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit (Norman H. Stahl)
- **Paul Butler** – U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York (Mary Johnson Lowe)
- **William W. Buzbee** – U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut (Jose A. Cabranes)
- **J. Peter Byrne** – U.S. Supreme Court (Lewis Powell), U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit (Frank Coffin)
- **Sheryll Cashin** – U.S. Supreme Court (Thurgood Marshall), U.S. Court of Appeals (Abner Mikva)
- **Michael Cedrone** – U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts (Edward F. Harrington)
- **Anupam Chander** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (William A. Norris), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (Jon Newman)
- **Julie Cohen** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (Stephen Reinhardt)
- **Sherman L. Cohn** – U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia (Charles Fahy)
- **David Cole** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit (Arlin Adams)
- **Mary DeRosa** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (Richard J. Cardamone)
- **Diana Roberto Donahoe** – U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia (George H. Revercomb)
- **Laura Donohue** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (John T. Noonan)
- **Peter Edelman** – U.S. Supreme Court (Arthur J. Goldberg), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (Henry J. Friendly)
- **Deborah Epstein** – U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania (Marvin Katz)
- **Lilian Faulhaber** – U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts (Robert E. Keeton and William G. Young)

- **Anne Fleming** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit (Marjorie O. Rendell), U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York (Miriam Goldman Cedarbaum)
- **Aderson Francois** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit (Leon Higginbotham)
- **Brian Galle** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (Robert A. Katzmann), U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey (Stephen M. Orlofsky)
- **J. Maria Glover** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit (J. Harvie Wilkinson III)
- **Erica Hashimoto** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit (David S. Tatel), U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia (Paul L. Friedman)
- **Lisa Heinzerling** – U.S. Supreme Court (William J. Brennan, Jr), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit (Richard A. Posner)
- **Shon Hopwood** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit (Janice Rogers Brown)
- **Neal K. Katyal** – U.S. Supreme Court (Stephen Breyer), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (Guido Calabresi)
- **Gregory Klass** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (Guido Calabresi)
- **Marty Lederman** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit (Frank M. Coffin), U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York (Jack B. Weinstein)
- **Adam Levitin** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit (Jane R. Roth)
- **Allegra McLeod** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (M. Margaret McKeown)
- **Susan McMahan** – U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia (Richard J. Leon)
- **Naomi Mezey** – U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California (Marilyn Hall Patel)
- **John Mikhail** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit (Rosemary Barkett)
- **Jonathan Molot** – U.S. Supreme Court (Stephen Breyer), U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit (Stephen Breyer)
- **Victoria Nourse** – U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York (Edward Weinfeld)
- **Paul Ohm** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (Betty Fletcher), U.S. District Court for the Central District of California (Mariana Pfaelzer)
- **Julie O'Sullivan** – U.S. Supreme Court (Sandra Day O'Connor), U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit (Chief Judge Levin Campbell)
- **Eloise Pasachoff** – U.S. Supreme Court (Sonia Sotomayor), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (Robert A. Katzmann), U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York (Jed S. Rakoff)
- **Gary Peller** – U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York (Morris Lasker)
- **Jonah Perlin** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (Robert A. Katzmann), U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia (Ellen Segal Huvelle)

- **Mitt Regan** – U.S. Supreme Court (William J. Brennan), U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit (Ruth Bader Ginsburg)
- **Jarrod Reich** – U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee (William J. Haynes)
- **Nicholas Quinn Rosenkranz** – U.S. Supreme Court (Anthony M. Kennedy), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit (Frank H. Easterbrook)
- **Julia Ross** – U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey (H. Lee Sarokin)
- **Tanina Rostain** - Connecticut Supreme Court (Ellen Ash Peters)
- **Peter Rubin** – U.S. Supreme Court (David H. Souter), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit (Collins J. Seitz)
- **Louis Michael Seidman** – U.S. Supreme Court (Thurgood Marshall), U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit (J. Skelly Wright)
- **Howard Shelanski** – U.S. Supreme Court (Antonin Scalia), U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit (Stephan F. Williams), U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania (Louis H. Pollak)
- **Stafford Smiley** – U.S. Tax Court (Arnold Raum)
- **Paul Smith** – U.S. Supreme Court (Lewis F. Powell, Jr.), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (James L. Oakes)
- **Brad Snyder** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (Dorothy W. Nelson)
- **Lawrence Solum** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (William A. Norris)
- **Jane E. Stromseth** – U.S. Supreme Court (Sandra Day O’Connor); U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia (Louis F. Oberdorfer)
- **Neel Sukhatme** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit (Ann Claire Williams), U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California (Vaughn R. Walker)
- **Madhavi Sunder** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (Harry Pregerson)
- **Peter Tague** – U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York (J. Walter Mansfield)
- **Joshua Teitelbaum** – U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York (Richard M. Berman)
- **John Thomas** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (Helen W. Nies)
- **William Treanor** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (James L. Oakes)
- **Carlos Vázquez** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (Stephen Reinhardt)
- **Urska Velikonja** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit (Stephen F. Williams)
- **Silas Wasserstrom** – U.S. Supreme Court (Potter Stewart), U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit (J. Skelly Wright)
- **Brian Wolfman** – U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit (R. Lanier Anderson III)

APPENDIX F: Sample Interview Questions

1. Questions the Judge or Clerks May Ask You

Questions about clerking:

- Why do you want to clerk?
- Why do you want to clerk HERE (for this judge and/or in this location)?
- Why do you want to clerk at this level (trial vs. appellate)?

*Cautionary note: do not say you are interested in clerking because you want to improve your research and writing skills. Your abilities in these areas should already be outstanding.

Questions about law school:

- What was your favorite / least favorite classes in law school and why?
- Which law school class did you find most difficult and why?
- Discuss your experience on the journal or moot court team.
- Why did you choose to attend law school?
- How have you liked attending Georgetown Law?
- *Note of caution: do not complain about your law school experience because a negative attitude might leave a judge and the clerks with the impression that you would not be enjoyable to work with.

Questions about your legal writing and work experience:

- Discuss a difficult legal problem you have worked on and explain how you ended up resolving it.
- How did you come up with the topic for your Note? What was the most challenging part of writing it? Tell me why you made [this particular argument/analysis] in your writing sample.
- Why did you decide to pursue an internship at [X] organization? What did you learn from working there?
- Tell me about the job you did at [X] prior to law school.

Questions about the law:

- Identify a case you have read that you think was wrongly decided and explain how you would have come out differently.
- Who is your favorite current (or former) Supreme Court Justice, and why?
- What is your favorite (or least favorite) Supreme Court case, and why?
- Describe your judicial constitutional philosophy or philosophy of statutory interpretation.
- How do you think the Supreme Court will rule in a particular pending case?
- What should a judge do if he/she disagrees with higher court precedence in a case?

Questions about your career:

- What type of legal career do you intend to pursue?
- How will a clerkship benefit you in your career?

Questions about your qualities as a potential law clerk:

- Why do you believe you are the best candidate for this position?
- Are you comfortable under pressure and juggling many different types of tasks? Can you provide examples of when you effectively did that?
- If I ask you to draft a decision in a particular way but you disagree with the outcome, what would you do?

Personal questions:

- Tell me about your ties to this area.
- Do you intend to stay in this area after your clerkship?
- Tell me about your family.
- Tell me something about yourself that is not on your resume.
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- Tell me about a book/movie you recently read/saw.
- What are some of your strengths and weaknesses?
- Tell me about someone who has had a profound impact on your life. And, why?

2. Questions You May Want to Ask the Judge or Clerks

Questions for the judge:

- What is a typical day like for a clerk in your chambers?
- How do you assign work to your clerks?
- What makes a law clerk in your chambers successful?
- If there is a trial or significant hearing, are you comfortable with the clerks observing it even if they are not assigned to the case?
- What do you most (or least) enjoy about being a judge?
- What do you most miss about the work you did before becoming a judge?
- You can also ask the judge about specific opinions - but only if you have adequately researched the opinion and are truly interested in discussing it in depth.
- Have your clerks followed a typical career trajectory after their time in your chambers?

Questions for the clerks:

- How are cases assigned among the clerks?
- Does the judge give feedback or guidance?
- How accessible is the judge to the clerks?
- With what types of administrative work do the clerks assist the judge?
- What is it like living in this city?
- Why did you decide to clerk?
- Have your career goals changed since you have been clerking?