

Diversity Clerkship Program



About the Program

The State Bar's Diversity Clerkship Program is a limited-term, summer employment opportunity that affords first-year Marquette University Law School and University of Wisconsin Law School students with diverse backgrounds the opportunity to build legal practice skills and knowledge. It is an employer-student assignment program where students are assigned to private law firms, corporate legal departments and governmental agencies. Student clerks gain practical legal experience, and participating employers obtain valuable legal support.

Eligibility

First-year Marquette University Law School and University of Wisconsin Law School students with diverse backgrounds who are in good standing may apply. Successful applicants demonstrate a commitment to diversity and a record of academic achievement.

Program Goals

- Provide legal employers with access to first-year law students with diverse backgrounds from Wisconsin law schools
- Enhance law student academic education with practical, real-business legal work experience
- Expose law students to varied legal employment opportunities
- Provide full-time, limited-term summer clerkship experiences with premier legal organizations
- Provide a program-wide networking opportunity for students and employers to connect

Employment

Our employer roster changes from year to year. We primarily recruit employers from Wisconsin, and a majority of our employers are located in Madison and Milwaukee. We occasionally have employers located in small to medium-sized Wisconsin cities or out of state.

As a first-year law student, your exposure to legal practice is very limited. A clerkship experience enables you to build your general practice skills and expand your legal knowledge and experience base. Our employers represent a wide spectrum of legal employment options – law firm, governmental agency, and in-house counsel. We recruit a broad representation of employers that reflect the real-world legal environment.

A successful and satisfying clerkship experience requires an open mind and a great deal of flexibility on your part. You need to be absolutely committed to accepting a clerkship assignment with any of our employers—despite locale and legal focus. While there is no guarantee that students or employers will be granted their top preference, we make every attempt to maximize employer and student preferences. We have found that most law students who enter a clerkship with preconceived doubts about a particular area of practice or employer come away feeling pleasantly surprised about their experience.

Should you be fortunate to receive an employer assignment and accept it, we ask that you follow your commitment through with enthusiasm and vigor. Backing out of an assignment after accepting it causes disruption within the program and may deprive another interested law student who sought the same opportunity. We want to maintain good relations with participating employers who have graciously offered to fund a summer job opportunity.

Our employers commit only to hiring a student for a limited period of time during the summer. Outside of the program, however, employers and students are free to negotiate continuing employment.

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State Bar Sponsorship

The Diversity Clerkship Program is an initiative of the State Bar of Wisconsin. The State Bar's Diversity Inclusion and Oversight Committee oversees the program with the help of State Bar staff. Members of this committee assist in the recruitment of employers and students and work with the program's selection

committee. A selection committee also determines the employer-student assignments and conducts on-going program evaluations.

For more information about the program, please contact Megan Zurbriggen, State Bar of Wisconsin, (608) 250-6083 / mzurbriggen@wisbar.org or Atty. Andrew J. Chevez, achevez@wi.rr.com.

Student Selection Process

Interested first year law students meeting the eligibility requirements apply to the program at the beginning of the second semester. Clerkship materials and applications are available at www.wisbar.org/dcp. The application includes a personal statement section that allows each applicant an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to diversity.

After the application and interview process, students are assigned an employer. During the summer, students are placed in a real-world business setting performing legal research, legal writing, and other legal skills learned during the first year of law school course work.

The selection committee, composed of practicing attorneys, considers the following criteria when evaluating qualifications and selecting participants:

- Commitment to diversity
- Probability of success, as measured by maturity, judgment, motivation, and ability to relate to others
- Academic achievement in law school and prior to law school
- Proficiency in English - oral and written
- Ability in legal research and writing
- Previous work experience and volunteer activities
- Interview evaluations by selection committee

"My placement at the Law Offices of Thomas P. Stilp far exceeded my expectations. My introduction to the world of civil litigation was absolutely fantastic. I gained valuable experience in legal writing and research as well insight into the inner workings of the civil system. The people at Stilp were very friendly and helpful. I truly loved my job this summer."

Angela Harden
Clerked at Law Offices of Thomas P. Stilp

"As a law clerk for the City Attorney of Madison, I worked on a variety of legal issues dealing with land use, property, bankruptcy, and general municipal law. The office provided a supportive and encouraging environment where I was able to further develop my legal research, writing, and oral advocacy skills. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience."

Andre Scott
Clerked at Madison City Attorney Office

Diversity Clerkship Program



What Students Want to Know

How can I apply?

Eligible students must complete an official Diversity Clerkship Program Application Form with re-requested documentation along with a personal statement. Please see the Personal Statement Guidelines for more information. Application materials can be obtained through the career services office of Marquette and UW Law Schools or at www.wisbar.org/dcp.

What are the basic requirements of a clerkship?

Understanding an employer's expectation is very important. At a minimum, you are expected to fulfill the full term of your clerkship. Subject to the employer's needs, you can expect your clerkship commitment to be around 10 weeks. Some employers may have longer clerkships while others may have shorter clerkships.

To avoid any problems, we request that you do not make any summer vacation plans until after you learn your employer's work expectations. Summer clerkships are intense and time-consuming. By necessity, your full-time focus and attention is on taking advantage of the summer's learning and working experience at your assigned organization.

Diversity Clerkship Recognition Reception

Each year, the State Bar's Diversity Inclusion and Oversight Committee plans a recognition reception honoring past and present Diversity Clerkship employers and law clerks. The reception is typically held in July. All employers and students are encouraged to come to this evening of celebration.

How many positions are available?

The number of positions vary from year to year and depend on the extent of employer participation. Historically, the program has paired an average of 15 to 20 law students with employers per year.

2016 Employers

- American Family Mutual Insurance Co. – Corporate
- Boardman & Clark LLP
- Clean Wisconsin
- CUNA Mutual Group
- Law Office of Odalo J. Ohiku
- Law Offices of Thomas P. Stilp
- Madison City Attorney Office
- Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.
- Rockwell Automation, Inc.
- SC Johnson & Son, Inc.
- Stafford Rosenbaum, LLP
- Thrivent Financial for Lutherans
- Wisconsin Department of Corrections

When do I have to commit to the program?

Once notified that you have been selected, you have approximately one week to decide whether or not to accept our invitation. A firm commitment to the program is essential at this time to preserve the integrity of the program. If selected to participate in the program, students are required to execute Authorization for Release of Information documents.

How are students and employers assigned?

Our employer roster parallels the varied employment opportunities available in the real world. Selected students who commit to accepting employer assignment participate in a final interview session where each student interviews with each employer. After this final interview session, both employers and students rank their assignment preferences from first to last.

Will my assignment be with one of my top employer assignment preferences?

We make every attempt to maximize employer and student preferences, however, there is no guarantee that students or employers will be granted their top preference. We have found that most law students who enter a clerkship with preconceived doubts about a particular area of practice or employer come away feeling pleasantly surprised about their experience. It is important to remember that all of the program's participating employers are fully committed to providing you with an excellent educational summer experience – with challenging and rewarding work that will build your practice skills and knowledge.

How do students learn about employers?

Once selected to participate, we supply students with information about our committed employers. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to do their own independent research.

Why do employers want to participate?

The State Bar of Wisconsin commits to helping legal organizations gain greater access to law students with diverse backgrounds. Employers are eager to introduce first-year law students to their organizations. The clerkships encourage diversity within the workforce and the legal profession.

Are students in the program all paid the same salary?

Each employer sets its own salary. Our roster of employers reflects the current legal employment market.

Can I expect future employment?

Our program is a limited, summer employment opportunity. Our employers commit only to hiring a student for a limited period of time during the summer.

Outside of the program, employers and students are free to negotiate continuing employment.

“The Diversity Clerkship Program afforded me an incredible opportunity to live and work in an environment I would not have otherwise considered. Additionally, the practical skills I learned while on the job have already proven invaluable, as have the professional relationships I was able to cultivate with attorneys in Madison, Milwaukee, and beyond.”

Claudia Tijerina
Clerked at CUNA Mutual Group

“My experience with the clerkship was chock-full of different interesting assignments. My legal writing assignments were very interesting – ranging from evaluating the DOC’s sick leave policy under FLSA to evaluating whether inmates may obtain proxy marriages through the state of Colorado. I was also able to sit in on various depositions and hearings. I wrote motions and heard my motions in front of a judge. Furthermore, all of the attorneys were very helpful, nice, and friendly. I genuinely felt that the office attorneys and paralegals were happy to have me working with them. Needless to say, I had a wonderful experience at the DOC. ”

Eugenia Lee
Clerked at Wisconsin Department of
Corrections



Personal Statement Guidelines

In addition to submitting an official Diversity Clerkship Program Application Form, each applicant must also submit a personal statement. An applicant's personal statement provides the program's screening committee with insight into an applicant's commitment to diversity.

The personal statement is an extremely important factor in the selection process and should reflect how an applicant has:

- Been affected by diversity
- Contributed to diversity
- Hopes to contribute to diversity in the future

When preparing your personal statement (500 words), consider responding to the following questions:

- What is unique, special, distinctive and/or impressive about you or your life story?
- What particulars in your life (personal or family, people or events) have shaped you or influenced your goals?
- What are unusual obstacles or hardships (for example, economic, familial or physical) in your life?
- How has your commitment to diversity influenced your decision to attend law school, and how do you think this commitment may influence your career as an attorney?

For more information or to apply, visit www.wisbar.org/dcp
