STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

DIVERSITY CLERKSHIP PROGRAM

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About the Program

The State Bar's Diversity Clerkship Program is a limited-term, paid summer employment opportunity that affords students from all backgrounds the opportunity to build skills and knowledge essential to the practice of law. It is an employer-student assignment program where students are assigned to private law firms, corporate legal departments, and governmental agencies.

Student Eligibility

First year Marquette University Law School and University of Wisconsin Law School students from all backgrounds who are in good standing may apply. Successful applicants should demonstrate a commitment to diversity and a record of academic achievement. You can find the State Bar's definition of diversity on the Diversity Clerkship Program website.

Program Goals

- Enhance law student academic education with practical, real 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

Employer Elligibility

Employers provide the same salary, work experience, and social opportunities to our clerkship students as they provide to any of their other summer associates. All labor and employment laws relating to hiring a student through the program must be followed. The program requires employers to provide students with periodic evaluations during the summer and an exit interview at the end of the clerkship term.

Employment

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

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

Student Selection Process

Interested first year law students meeting the eligibility requirements should apply to the program at the beginning of the second semester. Clerkship materials and applications are available at www.wisbar.org/dcp. The application features a personal statement selection where each applicant can showcase their commitment and explain how their experiences would bring a unique perspective to employers. 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:

- Experiences demonstrating a unique perspective if selected
- 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
- Demonstrated ability in legal research and writing
- Interview evaluations commissioned by selection committee

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 gives the program's screening committee insight into how their experiences reflect their commitment and how they would bring a unique perspective if selected. Diversity means including people with differing characteristics, beliefs, experiences, interests, and viewpoints. Diversity promotes an environment in which all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their differences and without regard to stereotypes, and helps to ensure a better understanding and consideration of the needs and viewpoints of others with whom we interact.

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

- Has demonstrated through experiences how they would add a unique perspective if selected.
- Hopes to contribute to diversity in the future.

When preparing your personal statement (maximum 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 (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?

Frequently Asked Questions

How Can I Apply?

Eligible students must complete an official Diversity Clerkship Program Application Form with requested documentation along with a personal statement. Please see the Personal Statement Guidelines for more information. Applications are submitted through Symplicity. Application materials can be obtained through the career services office of Marquette and UW-Madison 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.

What is the Diversity Clerkship Recognition Reception?

Each year, the State Bar's Diversity Inclusion & Oversight Committee plans a recognition reception honoring past and present Diversity Clerkship employers and law clerks. Please see the Key Dates section for this year's Diversity Clerkship Recognition Reception dates. All employers and students are encouraged to come to this evening of celebration.

How Many Positions are Available?

The number of positions varies from year to year and depends on the extent of employer participation. Historically, the program has paired an average of 20-25 law students with employers per year.

When do I have to Committ to the Program?

Once notified that you have been selected, you will be given a short time to decide whether to accept our invitation. A firm commitment to the program is essential to preserve the integrity of the program.

How are Students and Employers Assigned?

Our employer roster parallels the varied employment opportunities available in a real world. Selected students who commit to accepting an 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 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 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 from all backgrounds. Employers are eager to introduce first-year law students to their organizations. The clerkships seek to include students with unique perspectives and from all backgrounds 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. Employers are asked to provide the student with the same salary, work experience, and social opportunities as provided to their other summer associates.

Where Can I Go with Any Questions I Have?

Any questions you have regarding your application or the application process can be directed to your Career Services Center or Jacque Evans, the State Bar Diversity and Inclusion Specialist. Any questions you have once your application and application materials have been submitted can be directed to Jacque Evans. Past program clerks are excellent sources of information as well.

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

Hear from some Diversity Clerkship Program Alumni

"My experience with mentorship through the program was truly exceptional. Through the program, I connected with current law students, DCP alumni, and employers across Wisconsin all with the common goal of creating an inclusive legal community. As a new Wisconsinsite myself, I was looking for ways to [expand] my professional network and contribute to diversity in my area and the DCP exceeded my expectations. The mentorship experiences I gained from the DCP gave me the doses of support and confidences I needed to excel my education in career and law and I am incredibly grateful for this program."

— Hannah Chin, City of Madison Attorneys Office

"I'm so thankful for my office, Law Office of Odalo J. Ohiku, and the DCP and the State Bar for just having this opportunity for us law students because it's been so beneficial to me and something I've learned so much from and something that I'm going to carry with me as I go on my journey as a lawyer."

— Jennifer Martinez, Ohiku Law Office

2026 Employers

- Hall, Render, Killian, Heath & Lyman, P.C.
- Keyes & Fox LLP
- Law Forward
- Madison City Attorney's Office
- Milwaukee City Attorney's Office
- Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company
- Office of Lawyer Regulation
- Ohiku Law Office
- Quartz Health Solutions
- Regal Rexnord Corporation
- Stafford and Rosenbaum, LLP
- TruStage
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Key Dates for the 2026 Program

October 21, 2025
Marquette Law School Information Session

October 22, 2025
UW-Madison Law School Information Session

December 22, 2025
Employer Commitment Deadline

January 9, 2025
Law Student Application Deadline

January 15, 2025
Volunteer Lawyer Interviews

February 10, 2026
Deadline for Students to Commit to Program

February 24 & 26, 2026
In-Person Employer-Student Interviews

March 13, 2026
Assignments Sent to Students and Employers

May 13, 2026
Soft Skills Workshop

July 30, 2026
Diversity Clerkship Program Reception

Behind the Scenes

The Diversity Clerkship Program is an initiative of the State Bar of Wisconsin. The State Bar's Diversity Inclusion & Oversight Committee oversees the program with the help of State Bar staff. Committee members recruit employers and students for the program, a selection committee meets to select students to participate in the program, and a matching committee determines the employer-student clerkship assignments.

Judge Kori Ashley
Diversity & Inclusion Oversight Committee Co-Chair

Marisol González Castillo
Diversity & Inclusion Oversight Committee Co-Chair

Monica Cail
Diversity Clerkship Program Co-Chair

Meghan Villalpando
Diversity Clerkship Program Co-Chair

Diversity & Inclusion Oversight Committee Members 2025-2026

Hon. Kori Ashley
Samuel Bach-Hanson
James Block
Monica Cail
Iris Christenson
Abigail Churchill
Jessica Delgado
Marisol González Castillo
Saveon Grenell
Michael Shull
Meghan Villalpando

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