

Reflections on the BCLC Diversity Clerkship Program: A Judge's Perspective

Judge Nancy Allf

The ABA Business Law Section sponsors a Diversity Clerkship Program to further our mission of encouraging diversity in the Section by fostering a welcoming environment and promoting full and equal participation by all lawyers, including Diverse Lawyers. In the summer of 2017, I had the distinct honor of having the placement of Maryam Najam as a Diversity Clerk in District Court for Clark County, Nevada.

The program objectives were clear, so my staff and I assembled with the intent to implement them. My law clerk Daven Cameron pitched in to assist Maryam in learning how to prepare bench memoranda, using our preferred format. This required Maryam to research cases and the history of pending matters. While she worked primarily with the law clerk, I was available to her. In addition, we worked to make sure Maryam was able to see arguments on matters in which she had participated. We took care to discuss and explain rulings after court. She was also included in preparation for and attendance at court mediations conducted in Business Court and other civil cases. She was also able to observe trials and jury selection. She learned how we provide enhanced case management in Business Court cases, and gained insight into the preparation of orders and written decisions.

Since networking is also an objective of the program, and Nevada has a unified state bar, we made sure she was exposed to local bar association events, specialty bar association events, and State Bar events, plus local community events such as the annual Anti-Defamation League Jurisprudence luncheon. She attended the year-end dinner for our local American Inns of Court chapter, where she met members of the judiciary, bar leaders, and justices from our appellate court, and learned about the history of our very young and small legal community. She was offered a tour of the new Supreme Court building and was invited to lunch by Kristina Pickering, a justice on the Nevada Supreme Court. She met our Chief Justice Michael Cherry, who gave her a personalized photo of the Court. She attended a luncheon sponsored by the Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys and heard a presentation on pro bono service by Justice Michael Douglas from the Nevada Supreme Court. She attended a monthly luncheon held by the Clark County Bar Association, where the speaker was John Guedry, the president of a local bank, who spoke about education and vocational training, including workforce development and STEM training needed to support business expansion plans in Southern Nevada. The presentation also emphasized the need to leverage assets in industry targets and expand business opportunities in our community. She met Mr. Guedry and his daughter Jacqueline, who is currently pursuing a JD/MBA at the Boyd College of Law.

Finally, to enhance her networking opportunities Maryam attended the Court's monthly Civil Bench bar luncheon, a quarterly Business Court Bench Bar luncheon, and a Civil Judges meeting, at which she was introduced and the Diversity Clerk program was explained.

At the end of her eight week clerkship, I marveled at how fast the time went. But most importantly, when Maryam told me just how much she'd learned about the practice of Business Law from her clerkship, I realized that I had learned as much from the experience as she had.