2017 Clerks Reflect on the Diversity Clerkship Program

Maryam Najam

In 2017, the ABA Business Law Section Diversity Clerkship Program selected 8 finalists nationwide to clerk in business courts. The Diversity Clerkship Program focuses on exposing rising second and third year law students to business law and business litigation in various cities and industries. I had the unique opportunity to work with the Honorable Nancy Allf in Las Vegas. As my clerkship ends, I reflect on the valuable insights I have gained over the summer. Additionally, I interviewed my fellow Diversity Clerkship Scholars to reflect on our experiences in the program.

Assignments

All of the clerks were able to observe oral arguments in court, write bench memoranda to assist judges with hearings, and research statutes and case law to analyze issues before the court. Malcolm Torino enjoyed Vice Chancellor Tamika Montgomery-Reeves’s approach to easing the steep learning curve in business courts. Torino states he started off working on isolated issues and slowly transitioned to working on more complex and interrelated litigation matters. Maryam Najam and Ashley Moya were appreciative of the “open door policy” of their judges. The clerks were encouraged to ask for further explanation on rulings and freely discuss the reasoning with the judges directly. This allowed the clerks to access the expansive judicial and legal experience of each judge and analyze how the judge’s experience in the legal field assists in rulings. Additionally, each clerk was exposed to different industries in each location. In Las Vegas, clerk Maryam Najam worked on real estate Homeowners Association litigation. In Pittsburgh, clerk Ashley Moya was exposed to litigation in the construction industry. Overall, the clerks enjoyed analyzing legal issues and various business matters concerning the application of the law.

Insight into Business Courts and Business Litigation

Clerking in business courts allowed the diversity scholars to gain unique insight into legal developments that are changing the business landscape. Michelle Bae stated that her clerkship experience in the Commercial Division of the Nassau County Supreme Court provided an invaluable chance to learn about how the court provides an efficient forum for the resolution of complex commercial disputes. Additionally, the diverse range of business matters in court allowed greater opportunities for learning and growth. Michelle Bae stated that “having a chance to observe detailed procedures such as pre-trial conferences, trials, and settlement conferences challenged me to think and ask questions on aspects that I did not think about before. For example, I learned that the court performs a crucial role in giving guidance to the parties to move the case forward.” Additionally, clerks observed the “lifespan of a case” and different motions that can be made in business litigation. The clerks were challenged to broaden
their understanding of business litigation and develop a big picture view of current emerging and evolving legal issues in business law.

Valuable Takeaways from the Clerkship Program

Justin Schilling states that one of the most valuable aspects of his clerkship was observing different kinds of advocacy and learning how to be an effective attorney. Schilling observed that the high caliber of attorneys in business court were often well prepared and skillful in simplifying complex business matters down to a few core legal issues. Similarly, Ashley Moya stated that working with a judge allowed her to see the level of professionalism that is expected of attorneys in and out of court when interacting with the judge and court staff. Maryam Najam states that her clerkship experience was enhanced by networking opportunities, allowing her to observe the formal and informal relationships amongst the legal community. Additionally, Maliq Kendricks enjoyed being able to improve and further cultivate his research and writing skills. All of the Diversity Clerks found feedback on their written work to be valuable in refining their legal research and writing skills throughout the course of the clerkship. Overall, the Diversity Clerkship created a strong foundation in legal work and business litigation for future legal endeavors.

Background on Diversity Scholars:

Michelle EunJung Bae- University of Illinois College of Law, Clerk for Judge Timothy Driscoll in New York, NY

Michelle Bae worked in the legal department of Citi Korea prior to attending law school. Her experience at Citi in corporate governance matters and launching a banking product sparked her interest in business law.

Maliq Kendricks- University of Nevada Las Vegas Boyd School of Law, Clerk for Judge Elizabeth Gonzalez in Las Vegas, NV

Maliq Kendricks hopes to work with international corporations after law school. He hopes to contribute his perspective as an African American to foster diversity in the legal field.

Ashley Moya- Southern Illinois University, Clerk for Judge Christine Ward in Pittsburgh, PA

Ashley Moya aspires to be a judge one day and is from Miami, Florida. Her first language is Spanish, and she hopes to bring her unique perspective as a Latin American to the legal field.

Maryam Najam- Columbia Law School, Clerk for Judge Nancy Allf in Las Vegas, NV

Maryam Najam worked in banking and finance prior to attending law school. Her interest in business law developed while working with the legal team during her time in corporate finance. She hopes to be a litigator and utilize her passion for business analysis to shape emerging business trends in the legal field.
Justin Schilling- Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law, *Clerk for Judge Sean Wallace in Upper Marlboro, MD*

Justin Schilling has had a lifelong interest in business and originally wanted to pursue an MBA. He pursued law school to combine his passion for research and writing and business. He appreciates the challenging nature of business litigation.

Malcolm Torino- Brigham Young University Law School, *Clerk for Vice Chancellor Tamika Montgomery-Reeves in Wilmington, DE*

Malcolm Torino worked with patents prior to law school. He did not have any exposure to business law prior to his clerkship, however the experience in the program has trained him with the work ethic for other types of professions in the legal field.