

“Speaking as a judge who has law clerks, for me the most important aspect of it is it keeps me in touch with the brand new generation of lawyers and keeps me up to date with what the new members of our profession are thinking, wearing, listening to -- and a little bit on the vernacular.”

Justice Frank Sullivan, Jr., State of Indiana Supreme Court (Co-chair, ABA Judicial Clerkship Program {JCP}, 2002-2005)

“I am very thankful for the program because I had the chance to learn about the whole process and benefits of being a judicial clerk. Through the program, I was able to reevaluate and expand my career options and I am now seriously contemplating of starting my legal career as a judicial clerk. Moreover, the program gave me the chance to meet and network with excellent people in the legal community.”

Marc Aldwin M. Landoy, University of Detroit Mercy (JCP 2009 Participant)

“Thank you so much for the wonderful learning experience. I so much enjoyed the Judges, Lawyers, and the 'experience'. The ABA did a great thing, and I am glad to be a student member. This definitely showed me how much I need to continue to be active in the ABA starting now.”

Linda L. Smith, University of Tulsa (JCP 2009 Participant)

“All of the programs were well organized, very informative, and extremely beneficial. After the program I used the new information and new skill set as I pursued a summer clerkship. With the help of this program and its participants, I am pleased to say I was offered a summer clerkship at the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.”

David Michel Patin, Jr., Texas Wesleyan University (JCP 2009 Participant)

For additional information about the ABA Judicial Clerkship Program contact Robin Rone at 312/988-5137, roner@staff.abanet.org; or Sharon Tindall at 312/988-5642, tindalls@staff.abanet.org



American Bar Association Judicial Clerkship Program

*Judges and Law Students:
Building Relationships that Work*

Presented by:

ABA Council for Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Educational
Pipeline

ABA Judicial Division

DIVERSITY & JUDICIAL CLERKSHIPS

In recent years, many areas of the legal profession have made pursuing diversity a priority objective. In judges' chambers, however, diversity among judicial clerks remains disproportionately low. This realization is troubling, particularly for the American Bar Association (ABA) because it is a glaring contradiction to the ABA's Goal III Eliminate Bias and Enhance Diversity: *promote full and equal participation in the association, our profession, and the justice system of all persons. Eliminate bias in the legal profession and the Justice System.* To address this problem, the ABA launched the Judicial Clerkship Program (JCP) in February 2001. The ABA Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession and the ABA Judicial Division developed JCP to provide practical steps to improve diversity among judicial clerks.

LAW SCHOOLS & JUDICIAL CLERKSHIPS

Many law schools have also recognized the ominous nature of this problem. Without fair access to judicial clerkships, both law schools and their graduates lose significant opportunities. For recent law school graduates, serving as a judicial law clerk is a mark of distinction and honor that advances their future career opportunities. Former law clerks generally have an advantage when pursuing careers in academia, in government as high-level appointees, as litigators in prestigious areas of the private sector, and in securing appointments to the bench. Law schools with a high percentage of graduates securing coveted

clerkships also benefit. For example, having a significant number of judicial clerks among its alumni will assist a law school in its student recruitment efforts and fundraising programs.

ABA JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP PROGRAM

The Judicial Clerkship Program encourages students to pursue clerkship opportunities while introducing judges to students whom they might not ordinarily consider as potential clerks. JCP is designed to bring judges and law students of color together through structured networking activities. Students demonstrate their knowledge and research skills in a small group setting while interacting with the judges in a team-building project. Students also receive practical information from judges and former judicial clerks on how to secure a clerkship position.

JCP's mission is to foster relationships between judges and law students of color. JCP objectives include:

- To encourage more law students of color to apply for clerkship positions.
- To encourage all levels of judges to pursue more diverse representation among their judicial clerks.
- To provide students and judges with opportunities for meaningful interaction in a small-group setting.
- To allow students to learn directly from judges how best to present themselves as clerkship applicants.

- To provide opportunities for students to meet a wide variety of lawyers who are active in the American Bar Association.
- To establish a support system for students of color who are pursuing clerkship positions.

The Judicial Clerkship Program takes place during the ABA Midyear Meeting. Over the course of three days, students and judges work together on research and writing projects that allow them to explore the judge/clerk relationship and working experience. The students receive additional information from panel presentations and former judicial law clerks who interact with the students throughout the program. The students participate in numerous networking opportunities with judges, lawyers, and other ABA members. These include receptions and meal functions with the ABA Judicial Division, as well as attendance at the Spirit of Excellence Awards Luncheon (hosted by the ABA Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession).

After the Midyear Meeting program, the JCP law schools, students, and judges can continue interaction via list serves that are developed for each group. Another service offered to JCP students is "E-mentoring," which provides the students with e-mail access to lawyers of color who are former judicial law clerks. Via the JCP student list serve, students receive a listing of lawyers who have volunteered to answer questions and provide input on their experiences as judicial law clerks.

THE PROCESS

To ensure the desired ratio between participating judges and students, JCP is designed to accommodate a limited number of law schools. Membership in the ABA Judicial Clerkship Program requires selected law schools to:

1. Commit to pay the annual fee of \$3,000 for three years.
2. For each year of membership in the program, commit to send (and underwrite the costs for) four to six law students who have demonstrated knowledge of and involvement with racial and ethnic minority communities.
3. Select participating students using a criteria developed by the school. Students who have already secured clerkship positions are not eligible to participate in the program. We suggest consideration of students who may not already be likely candidates for clerkships or may not even be considering clerkships. First and second year students are preferable. Each participating school should strive to select a racially and ethnically diverse group of students to participate in the program.

The ABA appreciates the generous contribution of LexisNexis, which donates all computers and Lexis access for the ABA Judicial Clerkship Program.