An Introduction to Judicial Clerkships
Table of Contents

I. Overview .......................................................................................................................... 3
II. Why Pursue a Clerkship? ................................................................................................. 3
III. What Are My Chances? .................................................................................................. 4
IV. Types of Clerkships ......................................................................................................... 4
V. Deciding Where to Apply ................................................................................................. 6
VI. Compiling Application Materials .................................................................................... 7
VII. The Application Process .................................................................................................. 10
VIII. Using OSCAR ............................................................................................................... 11
IX. Interviews ........................................................................................................................ 12
X. Offers .................................................................................................................................. 12
XI. Other Resources .............................................................................................................. 13
I. Overview

A clerkship can be an invaluable professional experience for recent law graduates, and the faculty at UConn School of Law and the Career Planning Center are committed to assisting you throughout the application process. Toward that goal, we have established the Clerkship Advising Program, which consists of a series of public events on clerkships, written and online materials, and individual advising.

To participate in the Clerkship Advising Program, students should fill out the Clerkship Registration Form and set up an initial meeting with Michele Hoff (michele.hoff@law.uconn.edu) in Career Planning. For students pursuing federal clerkships, we ask that you submit the form and have this meeting before Friday, December 6, 2013. For students pursuing state clerkships, the deadline is Friday, February 28, 2014. Each student will be paired with a faculty advisor and will meet with that faculty advisor at least once during the application process. Students are also welcome to contact Professor Molly Land (molly.land@law.uconn.edu), Chair of the Clerkship Committee, with any questions. Students participating in the Program will be eligible to apply for reimbursement of expenses they incur during the application process.

The timing for applying for clerkships has changed in recent years. This year, some federal judges, especially those in the most competitive jurisdictions, already began interviewing and hiring their clerks for the 2015-2016 term in the fall semester of 2013. We recommend that students check OSCAR for information about each judge’s hiring preferences and apply as soon as a vacancy is posted. The Connecticut Supreme Court will begin considering applications as soon as 2L spring grades are available. Students should have their application materials ready to be sent in late May. State court appellate and trial level clerkship applications (both in Connecticut and elsewhere) tend to be later than the federal courts or state supreme courts. Typically, students will apply to state appellate and trial court clerkships in late summer / early fall of their 3L year.

II. Why Pursue a Clerkship?

A great experience: Clerking is an opportunity unlike anything that you have done in law school or will be able to do in your professional career. New law school graduates gain an inside perspective on how courts make decisions, getting the chance to participate in the judicial process and learn the law from the inside before many of their peers have come anywhere near a courtroom. In addition, a law clerk often serves as a close advisor to a judge, developing a mentoring relationship that can last a lifetime. Law clerks do work that is both relevant and meaningful. They help judges make real decisions that directly affect people’s lives. While a clerkship opportunity provides significant professional development, it is also an enjoyable and intensely rewarding experience. Clerks commonly point to their clerkships as one of the best and most interesting experiences of their legal careers.

Mentorship: For most clerks, the clerkship year results in a mentorship relationship that often lasts for life. Many judges have had interesting and prominent legal careers before joining the bench. That experience is enhanced by their years on the bench. As one of only two to four clerks, you will almost always work closely with the judge and get to know him or her quite well. Many judges get to know their clerks personally as well as professionally and take their role as mentor quite seriously.

Education: A clerkship offers the chance for intense post-graduate education free from the pressure of the billable hour. Although the type of work performed by clerks will vary depending on the court and judge, it almost always involves complex substantive legal issues and affords clerks the opportunity to analyze and articulate a variety of legal issues in different substantive areas at an early stage of their careers. Clerks learn the difference between effective and ineffective advocacy from reading briefs and observing
trials and oral arguments, and assessing the effects of this advocacy on the judge’s decision-making. This information serves as a solid foundation for the clerk’s own practical lawyering skills as he or she leaves the clerkship.

**Career advancement:** A clerkship of ANY kind is an invaluable credential in a new attorney’s legal career. Especially in a tight job market, a clerkship is a credential that helps differentiate you from other recent law school graduates. It is attractive to all types of legal employers and helps build career-long contacts through your co-clerks and others who clerked for your judge, as well as your fellow clerks in the same building or court system. You may also get to know the lawyers who practice before the court where you clerk. Above all, you will establish a relationship with your judge, which may be one of the most valuable contacts of your career. Given the value of a clerkship, many law firm employers will defer the post-graduation start date for a student who receives an offer of permanent employment to enable the student to accept a clerkship. Firms may also allow a leave of absence of one to two years in order for young associates to complete a clerkship. Students should ask about their respective firm’s policy on judicial clerkships to determine if their start date may be deferred.

**III. What Are My Chances?**

As long as you are flexible about what type of clerkship you look for, clerking is open to many students. While the majority of federal and state Supreme Court clerks from UConn are in the top quintile of their class and serve on law review, many students who clerk for state appellate courts, bankruptcy courts, magistrate judges, and others are not. Students with grades below the top quintile have also on occasion obtained highly sought-after clerkships generally due to other qualifications, such as work experience, excellence in a particular subject area, or contacts forged while completing a judicial externship or internship. More commonly, students with grades in the upper half of the class have been successful in obtaining state appellate and other clerkships as well as non-Article III federal clerkships. Many judges care about the entire package reflected in a student’s application, including prior work experience, demonstrated excellence in a particular area, a commitment to the region, and interpersonal skills, to name just some factors. In particular, judges on courts with specialized jurisdiction, such as federal bankruptcy courts, look for a genuine interest and knowledge in the area of law practiced in the court.

Most students historically have clerked right after graduation from law school. Recently, however, judges have become more interested in candidates with one to three years of work experience. In particular, many Federal judges are hiring clerks who either complete another clerkship first or spend some years in practice. Similarly, judges in areas with heavy corporate dockets often look for clerks with some experience in the area of law. This means that students who prefer to begin a job immediately or are unsuccessful in an initial attempt to secure a clerkship should consider the possibility of applying or re-applying to clerk once they have a few years of work experience. Clerking can be a great way to make a career transition (from private to public sector, for example) two to five years after law school graduation.

**IV. Types of Clerkships**

**Federal Courts of Appeals:** Most federal circuit judges hire three or four clerks for one year terms. Appellate court clerks spend most of their time reading briefs, doing legal research, writing memoranda, drafting opinions for their judges, and attending oral arguments. Federal court of appeals clerkships are best suited to students who wish to enter appellate practice or academia.

**Federal District Courts:** Most federal district judges hire two clerks for a term of one or two years. District judges often have a few hundred cases on their dockets at any given time, and clerks regularly do some or
all of the following tasks: talk with attorneys about case status; attend status and settlement meetings with attorneys; attend hearings and trials; conduct legal research; prepare research memoranda for the judge; write rough drafts of opinions and orders. These clerkships are ideal for prospective litigators.

**State Supreme Courts:** Most state Supreme Court justices hire two to three clerks for a term of one to two years. State Supreme Courts generally have discretionary dockets, meaning they can select the most interesting or challenging cases for review, examine cases that have caused confusion in the lower courts, interpret new law, or push the boundaries of pre-existing jurisprudence. The work of state Supreme Court clerks is similar to that of appellate clerks, often with the addition of writing bench memoranda that go to every member of the court and writing memoranda on petitions to the court to hear cases. State Supreme Court clerkships are ideal for those who are interested in appellate law or expect to have a state law practice.

**State Appellate Courts:** Some state appellate judges hire clerks, typically one or two, for terms of one to two years. State appellate court clerks do work that is similar to federal appellate court clerks. The state intermediate courts of appeal hear a wide range of cases that cover a variety of state law issues, including contracts, family law, criminal law, and torts. State appellate court clerkships are ideal for those interested in appellate law who expect to have a state court practice.

**Federal Magistrates:** Federal magistrate judges typically hire one clerk for a term of one or two years. Magistrate judges are appointed by the federal district judges of a particular court and serve terms of eight years. Magistrate judges conduct a wide range of judicial proceedings to expedite the disposition of cases headed to the U.S. District Courts. Magistrate judges’ specific duties vary greatly. Some conduct criminal hearings, such as guilty pleas or detention hearings, while others handle strictly civil work, often complex litigation. Magistrate clerkships are a great learning opportunity because they are often fast-paced and can involve a significant amount of time in court.

**State Trial Courts:** State trial clerks often work in a pool to be shared by all of the judges of the court. Clerking for a state trial court can be an excellent way to learn about the state’s law and its legal community and to gain valuable legal research and writing experience. State trial level clerkships are a great experience for students who plan to become prosecutors or public defenders in a particular state, or for anyone interested in litigation more generally.

**Specialized State and Federal Courts:** There are many clerkship opportunities with federal and state court judges who sit on more specialized courts. These courts, such as the federal bankruptcy courts, the U.S. Tax Courts, state family law courts, or juvenile courts, often hire clerks. If you have a particular interest in one of these areas of law, a clerkship can be a great way to launch your career. You will learn a large amount of substantive law in the area in a short time, and you will also have access to the judges and attorneys who practice in a particular community.

**Staff Attorney Positions:** Law clerks who serve many judges or an entire court are commonly referred to as staff attorneys, staff counsel or pro se law clerks. These positions can be found in both the federal and state court systems. The duties and term length of staff attorney positions vary by state and court. For example, staff attorneys employed by the Connecticut Superior Court serve a pool of judges and perform tasks similar to those of a typical state trial law clerk.

**Administrative Law Clerks:** Administrative law judges are independent, impartial triers of fact in formal administrative hearings. Over 30 federal government agencies employ administrative law judges and hundreds of state agencies do so as well. Some administrative law judges hire recent law school graduates as law clerks for either a specific term or on a permanent basis.
Tribal Court Clerks: Of the approximate 500 federally recognized Native American tribes in the country, more than 200 have independently established their own tribal courts to address the legal needs of their members. Tribal courts are as varied as the tribes themselves and range from tradition-based systems with little or no written rules to systems nearly as formal as state and federal courts. Each tribe independently determines how to set up its system and what rules and procedures will apply. Many hear disputes analogous to those raised in the state trial system and offer the opportunity for recent law graduates to clerk for a period of one to two years.

Judicial Fellows Program: Although technically not a clerkship, the Judicial Fellowship Program offers an exceptional opportunity to work in the federal court system and gain experience similar to that of a federal court law clerk. This program involves a one-year appointment for a candidate with at least one postgraduate degree and two or more years of professional experience. Fellows are assigned to the United States Supreme Court, Federal Judicial Center, Administrative Office of the United States Courts, or the United States Sentencing Commission.

V. Deciding Where to Apply

Selecting judges is a difficult and time consuming process. Below are several guidelines to keep in mind in identifying judges to whom you wish to apply and a list of research resources is included later in this manual. It is critical, however, that you do not, under any circumstances, apply to a judge for whom you would not want to clerk. Doing so wastes not only your time, but also the judge’s time and can ultimately injure your reputation as well as that of the Law School.

Competitiveness: It is difficult to know exactly how competitive any clerkship will be in any given year. Generally speaking, federal circuit court clerkships are the most competitive, followed by federal district court clerkships and state Supreme Court clerkships, followed by federal non-Article III clerkships and other state court clerkships. Of course, there are exceptions to this general ordering. For example, clerkships with district court judges in certain very popular parts of the country may be more difficult to secure than clerkships with circuit court judges in less sought-after geographic locations. Clerkships with some state Supreme Courts may also be harder to get than clerkships with some federal district judges, again depending on geography and the reputation of the court.

Type of Work: It is not always the best career move to simply look for the most competitive clerkship. If your ultimate goal is to be a prosecutor or defense attorney, a clerkship in a trial court will provide more relevant experience than a clerkship in an appellate court. If you plan to practice with a firm doing business primarily in state court, experience in the state system may be more valuable than in the federal courts. No matter where you apply, be prepared to explain to a judge why you chose his or her court.

Duration of Clerkship: Most judges require a one-year term for their judicial clerks, but some require a two-year commitment. If you do not wish to clerk for two years, you should check on the length of the clerkship term before you apply to the judge. Never assume a clerkship is for one year without checking. Terms for federal clerkships are listed on OSCAR for participating judges. Information about state clerkships can be found on the Vermont Guide to State Judicial Clerkships (see Other Resources) and on individual court websites.

Location: Location is very important to many students in applying for clerkships. The most competitive geographic regions tend to be the District of Columbia, New York, Boston, Chicago, and California. Students are well advised to direct their applications outside of these highly competitive areas, and especially to geographic areas where they have ties. Judges, particularly state judges, are often interested in candidates who have a connection to their state (and especially those potentially interested in practicing
there). If you are serious about obtaining a clerkship, think very carefully about where to apply. You may be well served by expanding your geographic horizons in the short term. The rewards of a great clerkship experience will likely outweigh any drawbacks of living and working for a year in a place where you don’t intend to live permanently.

Senior Judges: The federal courts and some state courts give judges the option of taking “senior status.” Typically judges on senior status have a reduced caseload, and they will almost always have a reduced administrative load. Depending on the number of cases they hear, though, senior judges remain eligible to hire at least one law clerk (and some continue to hire the full complement of clerks and to shoulder a full caseload).

Number of Applications: Federal judges receive thousands of applications for three or four positions. Although state judges may receive fewer applications, they are still inundated with potential candidates. It is wise, therefore, to think carefully about where to apply. In addition, OSCAR (the electronic application platform for federal clerkships) allows you to have submitted only 100 applications at any one time. (As positions are filled, you will be able to add new applications.) Be savvy and target courts where you think you have a good shot based on your credentials, your skills, or your connection to the region. If you are aiming for a specialized court or a state appellate or trial level clerkship, targeting is crucial because those judges are more interested in areas of your resume like demonstrated interest in the subject matter and geographic ties.

Multiple Judges on Same Court: It is common and acceptable to apply to multiple judges on the same court. In fact, there may be an advantage to applying to a number of judges on a single court or in a particular region. If one judge offers you an interview, you may be able to call the other judges in the vicinity to whom you applied and request interviews with them while you are in the area. It is important to do some research before applying blindly to all judges in a given court or region. Certain judges are outstanding and most are great to work for, but there are perhaps a few who have developed reputations for being particularly difficult. You may wish to avoid applying to those judges.

VI. Compiling Application Materials

A. Cover Letter

General Advice: The cover letter should be short and sweet. MAKE SURE it contains no mistakes of any kind. A typo or a missing punctuation mark will likely cause your application to go straight into the reject pile.

Geographic information: If you are applying to a region where you have a particular connection, this is the place to highlight that tie. This should be done in three sentences or less. Often, it can be accomplished in one sentence. Only do this if your connection is strong. For example, don’t mention that your second cousin lives in the state.

Reason for applying to a specific court/judge: If it is not obvious why you are applying to a particular court, explain briefly why you are applying. It goes without saying why you would apply to state supreme, federal appellate and district courts. For other courts, it is often good to explain why you believe you are a good fit, either because of your subject-matter interest or because of ties to the state (see above).

Recommenders: Provide names of your recommenders in your cover letter in the form, “letters of recommendation from Professors X, Y and Z are enclosed.” If you have cleared it with a recommender,
you may mention that that person would be happy to speak to the judge and give the recommender’s phone number. Do not do this unless you have cleared it with your recommender.

Other information: Provide other information if it is both true and relevant. If you plan to practice in the judge’s city, you may say you strongly expect to practice there (only if this is true!). If you are applying to a limited geographic area because of family commitments, you may mention this fact. If a judge is your first choice, you may say so along with the reason why.

B. Resume

Format: Generally, your resume should be no more than one page. (A two-page resume may be appropriate in individual cases, especially for those with prior professional experience.) Make sure that the font is not tiny and is readable. You may use the same resume format that you use to apply for jobs. Judges may be traditional so it is best to avoid artsy layouts.

Writing experience: Writing is an important part of most clerkships so if you have won any writing prizes, are working on a student note, or have journal experience, make sure to highlight it.

Currentness: Make sure your resume is updated to reflect any upcoming employment or recent internships/externships. If you include a prospective job, there is no need to include a descriptor since you have not yet done the work.

C. Writing Sample

Required: Most judges require a writing sample and some will require two. Send a writing sample unless a judge specifically requests otherwise.

Your best work: The most important feature of a writing sample is that it be flawless (including the citations) and well-written. It is less important what type of work it is. When choosing among options for writing samples, keep in mind that judges generally prefer to see work that shows legal reasoning and analysis. If you use something you prepared for a class, you can—and in fact should—edit it further to make sure it is your very best work.

No more than 15 pages: As a general rule, do not submit a sample that is more than 15 pages. This often means that you will excerpt 8-15 continuous pages from a longer piece. Since some judges require a shorter writing sample—often no more than ten pages—it is essential that applicants look up each judge’s specific requirements.

Cover Page: Every writing sample should have its own cover page that provides a brief description of the background facts of the writing sample, the document’s use when you drafted it, a brief a statement ensuring it is your own work, and a statement that you obtained permission to use it as a writing sample. This cover page should match your resume and cover letter in format and style.

Self-edited: Some judges require that the writing sample be edited only by you. Make sure you comply with that directive. All students should consider indicating on the cover page of the writing sample that it is unedited and represents their own work product (only if this is true!).

Work done for an employer: It is crucial that you receive permission from your employer before using this work as a writing sample. It is your responsibility to redact any information that is confidential or client-sensitive. Make sure to indicate on the cover page that you are submitting it with permission from your employer.
D. Transcript

Required: All federal judges and most state judges require a law school transcript. Unless otherwise instructed, you should include this with your application.

Unofficial: For most applications, your unofficial law school transcript is acceptable. Official transcripts become unreadable when photocopied, so unless an official transcript is required, use an unofficial transcript instead of photocopies of an official transcript.

Undergraduate: Some judges also require an undergraduate transcript. Make sure to note this and request these transcripts in advance. It may take your undergraduate institution some time to mail you your transcript.

E. Letters of Recommendation

How many: Most judges require three letters of recommendation. At least two of these letters should typically come from full-time law school faculty members.

Who to ask: In deciding which professors to ask, think both about the grades you received in the class and about how well the professor knows you. The most effective letters of recommendation for clerkships are very detailed and include in-depth discussion of your abilities in legal writing and analysis. The best letters are generally longer than for other jobs (often 3-4 pages in length). A professor who knows you better—either because you spoke more in class, went to office hours, or had some other interactions—but in whose class you received a lower grade, may be able to write a stronger recommendation than a professor in whose class you received an “A” but who had no other interaction with you. If you have questions about which recommenders to approach, please discuss this with your clerkship advisor.

Non-faculty: As a general rule, recommendations from non-faculty are less helpful than those from faculty members. There are obvious exceptions to this, for example, if the person has a personal relationship with the judge to which you are applying or can write a very detailed letter of recommendation. A partner in a law firm who has worked with many recent graduates or students and is willing to say that you stand out may also be able to write a helpful letter. Be aware that non-faculty members are often unfamiliar with the rigorous deadlines of the clerkship process.

Information for recommenders: It is your responsibility to give your recommenders the information they need to write a good letter. When you meet with the recommender, bring your transcript, resume, and any other information that he or she might find useful in composing a letter about you. If you wrote a paper in the professor’s class, give him or her another copy. Recommenders may ask you to provide other information that will be particularly helpful to them—make sure you do this as soon as possible. You should also be prepared to discuss which courts you plan to apply to and why.

Faculty limits on letters: Some faculty members may limit the number of letters they will write for you or they may agree to write to some judges/courts but not others. Some professors, for instance, will not recommend more than one student to the same judge. This makes it essential that you come prepared with your potential judge list and that you are ready to talk that list over with your recommender well in advance.

Process: For federal judges accepting applications through OSCAR, your letters will be sent electronically together with your application. For judges accepting only paper applications, your letters should be included in the application packet. You will need to contact faculty support staff members to make
arrangements to pick up your prepared letters of recommendation in time to mail them as part of your application packet.

In some cases, recommenders will prefer to send recommendations directly to judges. If that is the case, applicants must ensure that their basic application materials precede the letters and indicate the contact information for each recommender.

VII. The Application Process

A. Federal Clerkships

Federal court judges typically accept application through OSCAR, in hard copy, or both. Students should start by registering with OSCAR, which is a federally-run online application system for federal clerkships (Online System for Clerkship Application and Review). Every federal judge may be listed on OSCAR, but not all accept applications through OSCAR. Most judges indicate on OSCAR whether they accept paper applications, e-mailed applications, OSCAR applications, or faxed applications.

As of November 2013, judges can post an opening on OSCAR at any time. We recommend that students check OSCAR for information about each judge’s hiring preferences and apply as soon as a vacancy is posted. Check with the Career Planning Center and your clerkship advisor for additional information about particular courts, especially in Connecticut.

Even after the peak season clerkship hiring season ends, some clerkship opportunities will remain. Keep your recommenders, the Career Planning Center, and the Clerkship Committee aware that you are on the market, and they may be able to let you know of suitable opportunities. Clerkship opportunities will be posted to OSCAR and occasionally to Symplicity throughout the year.

 Judges whose nominations are pending, or who have just been confirmed, will need clerks when they take the bench. For judges nominated in the spring of your final year, you might be the perfect candidate to be a clerk when they open chambers. To track new nominations, you can consult the Office of Legal Policy website or take advantage of the websites maintained as a public service by various schools. You may apply once the judge is nominated. Many nominees, however, will not make clerkship decisions until they are confirmed, so apply again when the judge is confirmed.

B. State Clerkships

State court application procedures do not follow a uniform system. Most state courts do a good job publicizing application guidelines and timing requirements via their web sites and other communication vehicles. The Guide to State Judicial Clerkship Procedures, published by Vermont Law School (http://forms.vermontlaw.edu/career/guides), is also an excellent resource for state court clerkship information. The Guide is password protected; login information is available in the Internet Resources Booklet which can be found under the Resources tab on Symplicity.

Most applicants will submit their application materials for state court clerkships in hard copy. It is critical to research each court’s or judge’s application requirements to ensure that you are submitting all requested materials in the proper format. Generally, state court judges will receive materials in one of three ways:

Direct Application: Applicants will address materials to each individual judge. This method tends to be the most popular among state court judges.
Packet Application: Applicants will submit materials to a centralized contact at the court and application materials will be circulated to all the judges on the court who are hiring. In this method, the applicant may be asked to submit multiple copies of all applications materials to the court. Usually the central contact will be the Chief Judge or a Court Administrator who oversees the hiring process. The Connecticut Appellate Court and the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court both use a form of this method for their judicial clerkship hiring.

Interview Program Application: Applicants will be required to submit their materials through a job fair, formal interview program or on-campus interview process. Applicants will then be asked to schedule an interview with court representatives through the interview program. Many state trial level courts, including those in Connecticut and Massachusetts, use this method.

VIII. Using OSCAR

The OSCAR website includes a detailed User Guide that will describe the application process for you. Please consult this resource, but a few additional comments are included here to get you started.

- You must create an account on OSCAR. Once you have created an account, you can begin applying to judges.

- OSCAR allows you to use an “online editor” to compose cover letters that will be automatically personalized (“mail-merged”) for each judge to whom you apply. All other documents must be in PDF form. Even though the letters are not specially formatted and do not appear on letterhead, judges are who accept applications through OSCAR are used to receiving cover letters generated with the online editor and it is acceptable and in fact recommended that you prepare your letters in this way.

- You can have as many recommenders as you like listed in your pool. Use the pull-down menu to find both UConn faculty and non-faculty recommenders; only type in the recommender’s information if he or she is not already listed. If you add information manually, make sure the contact information is correct or OSCAR will not be able to communicate with your recommenders. All recommenders on your list are defaulted to appear on every application; you can change the defaults in your pool or edit individual applications. You must begin an application to a given judge in order for recommenders to be able to upload your letters of recommendation. The application can be in draft form, but until you actually create an application, the recommenders cannot do their part. The Career Planning Center will coordinate with faculty recommenders to upload letters to OSCAR.

- Use the search functions in the Clerkships section to create a list of clerkships for which you wish to apply. OSCAR includes information on clerkship vacancies and application requirements for each judge; this data is entered by each chambers. If no information is listed, it simply means that the judge has not posted the vacancy information yet.

- You can build your application for each clerkship by designating each document you want to submit to that judge; note that the resume is the only “required” document for purposes of creating an application in the system. Check your default recommenders and make any changes. Once you have finalized your materials and your faculty recommendations have been uploaded, you should click “finalize applications.” After this is clicked, you may not alter your application in any way. Judges will not be able to view your applications until this is clicked.
IX. Interviews

Timing: The amount of time between receipt of applications and scheduling of interviews varies greatly judge to judge. Please notify the Career Planning Center as soon as you are granted an interview with any judge. In addition to helping you to prepare, we can also seek out faculty members with connections to the judge or a faculty member who might be willing to shore up your application with a phone call.

Expenses: Unlike law firm interviewing, you will need to pay for your interview expenses. Students may minimize costs by consolidating interviews in a particular city to a single trip or combining interviews with a holiday visit or other professional obligation. But don’t be overly-deterred by these costs. Spending a modest amount of money on the interview process is part of your investment in what is often a special year and in a credential that will serve you well throughout your legal career.

In addition, the Law School has established a fund to help students defray some of the costs associated with applying for clerkships and attending interviews. Historically, the fund has provided a reimbursement (up to $750 per applicant) for expenses related to clerkship applications and travel associated with clerkship interviews. Applicants planning to seek reimbursement from the Judicial Clerkship Fund must satisfy all of the requirements of the Clerkship Advising Program in a timely fashion in order to be eligible for reimbursement.

Preparation: You should obviously spend a reasonable amount of time preparing in advance of the interview. You don’t need to read all of the opinions that the judge has written, but you should read some and have a sense of the judge’s basic style and outlook. You also should know the basics: when the judge went on the bench, who appointed him or her, and other biographical information. You should also check the collection of judicial clerkship interview surveys available on the clerkships webpage.

In addition to learning about the judge, you should give some thought to what you will say about yourself. You should be prepared to talk about anything on your resume, the substance of your writing sample, and any course you have taken in law school. Additionally, be prepared to answer questions about why you want to clerk, why you want to clerk on that specific court, how clerking will play into your career, and what you feel you can bring to a clerkship.

Dress as you would for a law firm interview. Some clerks routinely dress that way at the office and others wear jeans, but you should be attired professionally. Pay attention to the clerks and secretaries. They will often speak with the judge about their impressions of you, and you should treat your time with them as part of the interview. Clerks often can veto an applicant whom they do not like. It is standard procedure to send a thank you note to each individual with whom you interviewed within 24 hours of the interview.

X. Offers

You should not accept an interview if you would not accept an offer, if given, from a particular judge. Unlike firms and other legal employers, judges do not follow the NALP (Association of Legal Career Professionals) guidelines for timing of offers and acceptances. As a result, students do not have the freedom to gather multiple offers and then decide which to accept. In fact, it is considered impermissible and bad form to turn down one offer in hopes of obtaining another or to “shop” around offers. Certain judges actually will impose informal sanctions directed at the applicant (e.g., rescinding an offer and blacklisting with other judges) or at the Law School as an institution (e.g., judge resolves never to hire a clerk from the University of Connecticut School of Law). While not all judges take advantage of their power in this way and are kind enough to give applicants a few days to consider an offer (time to contact
other judges in which the applicant has an interest), many judges require that you accept an offer on the spot or within twenty-four hours.

One option is to try to schedule the interviews in order of preference – scheduling your interview with the judge you are most interested in first. You should be aware, however, that this strategy has some risk associated with it. Talk with a Career Planning Counselor or your faculty advisor about whatever strategy you intend to employ.

Once you accept an offer, your decision is final. It is extremely bad form for you to renege on the acceptance. Your actions will reflect badly on future UConn Law applicants, and it is possible that the second offer that you accepted will be revoked when the other employer learns of your actions.

If you accept an offer (or if you decide not to clerk), you should withdraw your pending applications. For chambers that have not been in touch with you, the standard procedure is simply to write a letter withdrawing your application. For judges with whom you have interviewed (or with whom you are scheduled to interview) but who have not yet gotten back to you with their decisions, you must immediately call their chambers, say how honored you were to have been considered, but report that you must withdraw your applications because you have accepted another offer.

**XI. Other Resources**

**A. Print Resources**

The American Bench *(Available in the Law Library)*
This reference provides a comprehensive guide to the American judiciary. The handbook combines biographical information on approximately 18,000 judges from all levels of federal and state courts with jurisdictional, structural and geographical information on the courts they serve.

Almanac of the Federal Judiciary, Volumes I and II *(Available in the Law Library)*
This two volume series is a great resource for the federal system. Volume I contains profiles and evaluations of all federal district court judges, bankruptcy judges and magistrate judges; volume II covers the federal circuit court judges and Supreme Court justices. For each judge listed, the volumes provide general information, publications, noteworthy rulings, media coverage, frank lawyer evaluations, and other information of interest to potential applicants. (Also available on Westlaw.)

BNA’s Directory of State and Federal Courts, Judges and Clerks *(Available in the Law Library)*
This is another great resource that provides directory information on federal and state judges; it also provides state court organizational charts.

Judicial Yellow Book *(Available in the Career Planning Center)*
This resource is a staple of any clerkship application process. It provides information on federal appellate, district and bankruptcy judges as well as judges of highest and appellate level state courts. The information provided includes biographical and contact information, nominating president for federal judges and information on the names and education of judicial law clerks.

Directory of Minority Judges of the United States *(Available in the Law Library)*
This resource provides biographical information on minority judges at all levels of the judiciary with listings by African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic and Native American judges. Tribal court judges are listed as well.
Judicial Staff Directory (Available on Westlaw)
A directory of federal court judges which includes biographical information on each judges, as well as lists of court personnel.

Federal Judges and Justices: A Current Listing of Nominations, Confirmations, Elevations, Resignations, and Retirements (Available in the Law Library)
A loose-leaf service that culls information from sources such as the Congressional Record, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, and news services.

Law Clerk Handbook (Available in the Law Library)
This handbook (written by a Fifth Circuit Judge and his former law clerk) provides an overview of the clerkship experience, the nuts and bolts of federal practice, court management, and tips on legal research and writing.

Behind the Bench: The Guide to Judicial Clerkships (Available in the Career Planning Center)
Debra M. Strauss, Esq., a national expert in the area of judicial clerkships, explains all aspects of clerkships from what law clerks do to how to prepare a successful application.

B. Internet Resources

forms.vermontlaw.edu/career/guides/index.cfm?
The Vermont Law School Guide to State Judicial Clerkships contains information on each state’s highest, appellate and trial court’s judicial application process as well as clerkship salaries and other useful information. (The login and password information is available on Symplicity.)

www.uscourts.gov
Home page for the federal judiciary; provides information on the U.S. Court System.

Site of The Third Branch, a monthly newsletter of the federal judiciary. Contains nominations and confirmations in each monthly Milestones section.

judiciary.senate.gov/nominations/
United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary Nominations and Confirmations listings.

www.justice.gov/olp/judicialnominations112.htm
United States Department of Justice list of Federal Judiciary nominations by the 112th Congress.

www.fjc.gov/
Federal Judicial Center website provides biographies of all federal judges since 1789 as well as court histories, landmark legislation and other educational materials.

University of Michigan Law School’s Judicial Nominations and Confirmations database.