

Judicial Clerkship Manual

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY



SCHOOL OF LAW

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Judicial Clerkship Manual

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Faye Bracey, Assistant Dean

1. What is a judicial clerkship?

American judges traditionally hire new or recent law school graduates as law clerks. Most clerkships are for a single year, which most commonly runs from the summer or fall after graduation until the following summer or fall. Because each judge decides for himself or herself how long the clerkship will last, some judges have clerkships that last two years, and one hears every once in a while of a judge with clerkships that run even longer, but most last only a year. There are thousands of judges in the country, most of whom hire clerks annually, which mean that thousands of clerkships open up each year for each crop of new law school graduates.

For nearly a century, clerking for a judge after law school has been considered a very prestigious thing to do. The better the law school, the more interest in clerking there is likely to be among students, and the more likely those students are to get the available positions. The leading practitioners in most any field of law -- whether in private practice, in government, in public interest, or in academia -- were likely to have been law clerks before they began practicing.

In nearly all courts, each judge runs his or her chambers independently of the other judges on the court. Each judge uses law clerks in his or her own way, and the process of applying for clerkships may also differ a bit from judge to judge. But most clerkships have some basic features in common. These are discussed below.

2. What do law clerks do?

Many things that judges do, law clerks do too. Clerks often write the first drafts of opinions. In appellate courts, clerks usually write memos for the judge before oral argument, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of what is said in the opposing briefs, and suggesting what the decision should look like. In trial courts, clerks usually help the judge manage all phases of the litigation, including motion practice, discovery disputes, settlement conferences, jury selection, and of course the trial itself.

The work of a law clerk is, in short, the work of a judge. Appellate judges spend much of their time on research and writing, and so do clerks to appellate judges. Trial judges spend much of their time supervising trials and dealing with lawyers, in addition to substantial research and writing, and so do clerks to trial judges.

Many judges give speeches, write books or articles, and so on. Law clerks will help the judge with these tasks as well. Whenever you see a speech given by a judge or an article under a judge's name, the odds are good that a clerk wrote the first draft.

The word "clerk" is unfortunately a misnomer. It does not describe the work very well. What makes things even more confusing to non-lawyers is that every court has a "clerk's office," where real clerical employees -- not law clerks -- file and stamp documents. If you become a law clerk, you'll find yourself spending some time explaining to your relatives exactly what you're doing. Lawyers know the difference.

3. What kinds of judges hire law clerks?

Almost all kinds. Here is a list of the types of judges who normally hire law clerks.

A. Federal courts

1. Circuit judges. The U.S. Courts of Appeals, often called "circuit courts" because of the way they are organized, are the intermediate appellate courts in the federal system. (The highest appellate court is of course the U.S. Supreme Court, but the Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court don't hire law clerks straight out of school.) The country is divided geographically into 12 judicial circuits, each of which has one federal Court of Appeals. The circuits are organized like this: First Circuit = ME, NH, MA, RI Second Circuit = NY, VT, CT Third Circuit = PA, NJ, DE Fourth Circuit = VA, WV, NC, SC Fifth Circuit = TX, LA, MS Sixth Circuit = MI, OH, KY, TN Seventh Circuit = WI, IL, IN Eighth Circuit = ND, SD, NE, MN, IA, MO, AR Ninth Circuit = WA, OR, CA, MT, ID, NV, AZ, AK, HI Tenth Circuit = WY, UT, CO, NM, KS, OK Eleventh Circuit = FL, GA, AL D.C. Circuit = DC The First Circuit is the smallest; it has only a few judges. The largest circuit, the Ninth, has more than 30. In each circuit, the judges hear appeals in panels of three. A circuit judge's chambers will be located somewhere within the circuit, but that location does not affect the cases the judge will hear. If a case arises in Texas, for instance, it will be heard by three Fifth Circuit judges, but those three will be randomly selected from the pool of all Fifth Circuit judges. Different circuits often have different caseloads. For example, the District of Columbia Circuit handles a large number of administrative cases, but not as many criminal law cases. The Second Circuit tends to have a lot of financial and corporate cases. The Sixth Circuit has a high volume of labor-law cases. Active judges typically hire three or four law clerks. The Chief Judge may have four or five clerks. Senior Judges vary in the number of clerks they hire depending upon the size of the caseloads they maintain (anywhere from one to three clerks). Many federal judges have begun hiring "career clerks" to fill one spot in their chambers. This obviously will reduce the number of positions available for temporary clerkships for new law school graduates.

2. District judges. The district courts are the trial courts in the federal system. Each state contains anywhere from one to four districts. (Texas, for example, has four-- Eastern in Tyler, Western in San Antonio, Northern in Dallas and Southern in Houston.) Each district court is made up of many district judges. District judges hear cases individually. Each federal district judge typically has two law clerks, although the chief judge may have three, and senior judges may have fewer than two. Some district court judges offer only two-year clerkships, while others offer one-year terms.

3. Magistrates. The position of federal magistrate was created to help reduce the workload of the district judges. Upon consent of the parties, a federal magistrate's powers are identical to those of a district judge in all civil cases and in non-felony criminal cases. Magistrates thus do most of what district judges do -- they conduct civil and criminal trials (except felonies), and handle aspects of cases being tried by the district judges (often things like preliminary injunction hearings, summary judgment motions, and so on). Each federal magistrate typically has one law clerk.

4. Bankruptcy judges. Each district has a few bankruptcy judges. Like the name suggests, bankruptcy judges specialize in hearing bankruptcy cases. The work of a bankruptcy judge is not as narrow as you might think, however, because all sorts of issues can pop up in bankruptcy cases. Each federal bankruptcy judge typically has one law clerk. The chief bankruptcy judge may have two.

5. Other specialized judges. The federal court system includes many other specialized courts. These include: (a) the Court of Federal Claims, in Washington, which hears suits against the federal government; (b) the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (not to be confused with the D.C. Circuit!), in Washington, which hears appeals from the Court of Federal Claims as well as appeals from the district courts in patent cases; (c) the Court of Veterans Appeals, in Washington, which hears appeals from decisions of the Veterans Administration; (d) the Tax Court, in Washington, which unsurprisingly hears tax cases; and (e) the Court of International Trade, in New York, which hears just the sort of cases you'd expect. Judges on the Federal Circuit each have three law clerks. The other specialized judges each have two.

6. What are "senior judges" and "chief judges"? When a district judge or a circuit judge gets to be a certain age (the exact age depends on how long he or she has been a judge), the judge is entitled to become a "senior judge." From then on, the judge can handle as many or as few cases as the judge likes. Some senior judges keep a full caseload. Some do almost no work at all. And some are in between. The number of clerks a senior judge hires depends on the judge's caseload. Judges with a full caseload get the full number of clerks; judges with a fractional caseload get whatever number of clerks seems appropriate. Clerking for a senior judge who is still active is not very different from clerking for an ordinary judge. The best way to learn which senior judges are still active and thus still hiring law clerks is to call the clerk of the court and ask. Each federal circuit court and district court has a "chief judge." The chief judge is simply the judge who has been on the court the longest without getting too old. State courts also have chief judges; the procedure for determining the chief judge varies from state to state. A

chief judge does the same kind of work as any other judge, and also has some additional administrative responsibilities. In the federal courts, a chief judge gets to hire an additional law clerk, so the chief judge of a circuit court gets four, and the chief judge of a district court gets three. Clerking for a chief judge is not very different from clerking for an ordinary judge. From the perspective of a student applying for clerkships, the only difference between the chief judge and the other judges is that you'll need to address your letter to Chief Judge So-and-so rather than Judge So-and-so. Because different judges become chief judge every so often, be sure you are using an up-to-date source of information. In case of doubt, you can always call the clerk of the court and ask.

7. What are "staff attorneys"? The federal circuit courts all hire a pool of staff attorneys (sometimes called "staff law clerks"), who do the same sort of work as law clerks but who are not assigned to any individual judge. The circuits vary in how the staff attorneys are utilized. Staff attorneys usually have less contact with judges than law clerks do, and for that reason there is usually a bit less prestige attached to the position, but on the other hand the competition in applying for the position is not as stiff, and the pay is the same. New judges sometimes hire law clerks from among the staff attorneys, so the position can be an indirect route to a clerkship.

B. State courts

Every state is different, so it is harder to generalize about judges in state courts.

1. State supreme courts. Most state supreme court judges hire law clerks each year. There are a few states where a clerkship for a supreme court judge is a career position rather than a one-year or two-year stint; in such states, there are obviously many fewer openings each year. If you are interested in the supreme court of a particular state, you should call the clerk of that court and ask if the judges hire law clerks. Many state supreme courts also hire a pool of staff attorneys. As with the federal circuit courts, the competition for these positions is stiff.

2. Lower state courts. All but the smallest states have intermediate appellate courts. The judges on some of these courts hire law clerks each year, but on some the clerkship is a career position. Again, it's best to call the clerk of the court and ask. Some intermediate state appellate courts hire staff attorneys as well; while you are calling the clerk of the court, you might as well ask about these positions too. Every state has trial courts. In some states, the trial court judges hire law clerks and/or staff attorneys. The clerk of each court is again the best source of information.

3. What are the pros and cons of clerking?

Like most things in life, clerking has its good points and its bad points. The good far outweighs the bad for most people, but everyone is different, and you're the only one who knows what's best for you.

A. Pros

1. Nearly everyone who has clerked describes the job as a fascinating experience. The country is full of lawyers who look back on their clerkship as the best job they ever had.
2. You learn more about how the legal system actually works than it would be possible to learn doing anything else.
3. You get a credential on your resume that will help you for the rest of your career, no matter where you go or what you do.
4. You get to know a judge very well after working closely with the judge for a year. That's worthwhile in itself, but it also gives you a person with clout who will be in your corner for the rest of your career, telling potential employers how great you are.

B. Cons

1. The most serious downside to clerking is that you don't make as much money as you might at other jobs. In the federal courts, salaries vary slightly according to the cost of living in the city where you are located, but they are all generally

between \$40,000 and \$50,000. Salaries in the state courts vary from state to state, generally within the same range. Over the course of your life, there's a good chance that clerking will raise your income by more than you forgo in the first year, but some people legitimately feel constrained by the debt they face upon graduation.

2. A clerkship occasionally makes it difficult to accept a permanent job offer from the employer for whom you worked in the summer between your second and third years of school. Most employers are happy to let you delay the commencement of a permanent job for a year in order to clerk, because they realize the practical educational value of the clerkship. (Some of the larger law firms even provide bonuses for people who have clerked but some employers, especially very small law firms, are unable to hold a position open for a year.) The clerkship will most likely open up even more job possibilities, but students who are already certain about where they want to work may need to check with their future employer. If you are uncertain about how to approach this issue with employers be sure to talk to the Career Services Office.

3. Clerkships will all involve significant writing. This is especially true of clerkships in appellate courts, but even clerks for trial judges have to write. Some people just hate writing; for them, a clerkship would not be much fun.

5. What qualifications are judges looking for? What are my chances?

Because each judge, with rare exceptions, makes hiring decisions separately, it is difficult to generalize about what judges are looking for. Most judges consider grades extremely important, but some don't. Most value law review or other professional writing experience very highly, but some don't. Most will place emphasis on your recommendations, or your prior work experience, or your personality, but some won't. Just about everyone has something good to say about himself or herself; chances are there will be a judge who will find that information impressive. In this respect, applying for a clerkship is no different from applying for any other kind of job.

Judges, like any other employers, occasionally have idiosyncratic preferences. Some judges prefer students from a particular law school (usually the school the judge attended, but sometimes just a school from which the judge has had good experience with clerks in the past). Every so often one hears of a judge who prefers clerks with prior connections to the city where the judge sits. If you have that sort of connection, you might want to mention it in your cover letter. But your lack of any prior connection with a place is usually no obstacle to landing a clerkship there. Law firms sometimes look for evidence of roots in a town, because they are investing in associates for the long term, and they don't want to hire someone who will move to a new city a year later. But judges are different. They know from the beginning that you will only be working for them for a year or two. They don't care whether you're going to move to a new city when you're done. In fact, a clerkship is a common way of trying out a new location; you know the job will only last a year or two, so if you decide not to stay permanently it will be easy to move.

Of all the factors that judges take into account in hiring clerks, grades are probably the most important, especially for clerkships with federal judges, where the competition is the stiffest. Here are some rules of thumb, to estimate your odds of getting a clerkship with particular types of judges. These are just guidelines; every year, students get clerkships that seemed, based on their grades, like long shots when they applied.

For federal circuit judges, the odds grow long against you if you are not in the top 20% of the class. For federal district judges and state supreme court judges, the odds grow long against you if you are not in the top 30% of the class. For federal magistrates and federal bankruptcy judges, the odds grow long against you if you are not in the top 40% of the class. For state lower court judges, the odds grow long against you if you are not in the top 50% of the class.

Within any of these categories, you can improve your chances dramatically by applying to judges in parts of the country that are less popular. It is much more difficult, for instance, to get a clerkship in San Francisco or Washington, DC, than it is to get one in Iowa or Louisiana, simply because most law students across the country would rather live in San Francisco or Washington. The competition in particular cities is also affected by the presence of particular law schools. Boston, for example, is a tough place to get a clerkship, because you're competing against the students from Harvard and all the other law schools in Boston who want to stay in town. Chicago is another tough place, because of the many schools there. Your odds are much better in most of the rest of the country.

Students who are citizens of foreign countries may be able to be employed as a federal law clerk. The Office of the Assistant

Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, U.S. Department of State, maintains the list of ally countries for purposes of restrictions on compensation of non-citizens by the federal government. The list of which countries are treaty-allied with the United States changes often and is not a matter of public record. If you are interested in clerking and are not a U.S. citizen, you must specifically inquire to learn if you are eligible. The general information number for the State Department is (202)647-6575; the phone number for the General Counsel's office at the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts is (202) 502-1100. The public law setting forth the treaty -allied requirement is P.L. 105-277 sec. 606.

6. How do I apply for a clerkship?

A. How many judges?

Because most judges hire only three or fewer law clerks per year and each judge hires individually, you'll probably want to apply to many judges simultaneously. The number of judges to whom students apply ranges from a few up to a few hundred. The average is probably somewhere between 50 and 100. If you are applying for federal judges, you may use the Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR) at <https://oscar.uscourts.gov/> It will save on postage costs but be aware of the really strict deadline for applying. The more judges you apply to, the better your chances of getting a clerkship. On the other hand, the more applications you send out, the higher the photocopying and postage costs, except for those through OSCAR.

B. Which judges?

In deciding on the judges to whom you will apply, you'll have to consider a few questions. Which parts of the country would you prefer to live in? Would you prefer to work for a trial judge or an appellate judge? What are your realistic chances of getting a clerkship with particular kinds of judges? You can use your answers to these questions to choose categories of judges. In the past, students have applied to categories like "every federal magistrate and state judge in the southwest," or "every judge, state and federal, in the Dallas and Houston metropolitan areas," or "every federal circuit judge in the country except the ones in the most popular cities." In deciding on parts of the country, bear in mind that to interview with the judge you will probably have to travel to the judge's chambers, and that you will have to pay the cost of travel yourself. It would be possible to narrow your pool of judges even further, by gathering biographical information on each judge, but that probably wouldn't be worth the effort if you are applying to more than a handful of judges. Once you get an interview, you will need to learn all you can about the individual judge. Some judges are liberal, some are conservative, and most are in between. The political leanings of the judge usually don't make much difference from the perspective of a law clerk because 99% of the cases have no clear left or right side. A clerkship will be, by and large, the same experience whether or not you and the judge share political beliefs. It is very rare to hear of a judge who only hires clerks of one party or the other. Some students, on the other hand, have very strong political beliefs, and would prefer to clerk for judges with similar beliefs. If you fall within this category, political affiliation would provide another way of defining the category of judges to whom you apply.

C. Where can I find information about judges?

See the handout, *Judicial Clerkship Resources* available in the Career Services Office. Helpful hints are also in *Judging: A Book for Student Clerks* by Louis Sirico, Jr., and in *Behind the Bench: The Guide to Judicial Clerkships* by Debra M. Strauss. Both are available in the Judicial section of the Student Resource Center in the Office of Career Services.

D. When should I apply?

Check in with the Office of Career Services. They will have the dates for applying to the various courts.

According to the voluntary NALP guidelines, federal judges should refrain from accepting applications before Labor Day. These guidelines are not followed by all federal judges and are not observed by many state and other judges. If you are interested in obtaining a judicial clerkship it is important that you begin to lay the groundwork for your search **now**. You can do this by preparing your resume, selecting judges, obtaining transcripts, lining up faculty recommendations and familiarizing yourself with OSCAR (<https://oscar.uscourts.gov/>).

E. What materials should I send?

1. A cover letter. The cover letter should be one page only, with three paragraphs. Just explain that you are applying for a clerkship beginning after your graduation in, list the items you have included in the envelope, and give the judge a telephone number where you can be contacted. If you have something to say about yourself that will help your application, say it, especially if you can emphasize your strengths in research and writing, but don't include fluff just to make the letter longer. Judges are people just like you; if your letter sounds like fluff to you, it will probably sound like fluff to the judge. Many judges use their law clerks to help decide which applicants to interview, so bear in mind that your letter may be read by the judges' current clerks as well.

Addresses for the judges are in the reference resources mentioned above. The address should look something like this:

The Honorable Kathryn Crowder
U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut
(rest of address)

Your letter would then begin with "Dear Judge Crowder:" (or "Dear Chief Judge Crowder:" if she is the chief judge). In some states, the proper title is "Justice" rather than "Judge." This varies from state to state; you'll want to check before you print out the letters. In Texas, you address members of the Texas Supreme Court and members of the Texas Courts of Appeals (except for the Court of Criminal Appeals) as "Justice". For members of the Court of Criminal Appeals and all other Texas courts, the correct title is "Judge". In the federal courts, all the judges except the ones on the U.S. Supreme Court are simply called "Judge." If Judge Crowder is a senior judge, or a bankruptcy judge, she's still called "Judge Crowder."

A letter to a federal magistrate should be addressed like this:

The Honorable Clark Sable
United States Magistrate
U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas
(rest of address)

Your letter would then begin with "Dear Magistrate Sable:" (or "Dear Chief Magistrate Sable" if he is the chief magistrate).

Here are examples of the correct names of some of the courts to which students often apply for clerkships.

The Honorable Grace Alvarado
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit
("Dear Judge Alvarado:")

The Honorable Hector Gonzales
U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Texas
("Dear Judge Gonzales:")

The Honorable James Dean
Texas Supreme Court
("Dear Justice Dean:")

The Honorable Jason Montgomery
Texas Court of Criminal Appeals
("Dear Judge Montgomery":)

It is worth putting in a little extra time to make sure you have the judge's name and title and the name of the court exactly right.

2. A resume. You've written one before. There's nothing different about this one. You should emphasize accomplishments that suggest you are a good writer. List any publications.

3. A law school transcript. You don't have to order official transcripts for each judge. Order one, and then make photocopies for the judges. You don't need a college transcript.

4. Two or three letters of recommendation. At least two should be from members of the faculty. If any faculty members know you particularly well -- maybe you were in a seminar, maybe you were a research assistant -- those would be your best people to write recommendations. If no faculty members know you very well, don't worry. Pick two faculty members who you think could say good things about you. Don't be shy about asking for recommendations. Everyone on the faculty understands that you need recommendations and should be happy to cooperate.

Sometimes students send judges a third letter of recommendation as well. This could be from anyone, but it is most often from a former employer. If you have a credible third recommendation, send it; it couldn't hurt, but it is not necessary. Most students probably send only two.

5. A writing sample. Pick the best law-related thing you have written. It could be anything -- something you wrote for one of the journals, something you wrote for an employer over the summer, a seminar paper, something you wrote in Legal Research and Writing, etc. Remember that the point is to demonstrate that you are a good writer and a sharp thinker.

If you use something you wrote for an employer, be sure to get your employer's permission. You may have to change the names of clients or other people identified in what you wrote.

Edit your writing sample very carefully before you send it out. Make sure that citations are in proper form and that there are no typographical errors. Remember that the judge and/or law clerk who will be reading it will be, in most cases, a superb writer and editor. In your cover letter, explain what the writing sample is.

One final suggestion: It is best to mail all of your material together in a single envelope. If you have any new information you want to add to the application later, like a board position or better grades, you can send that out separately. Check with your career office of Career Services to see if they are doing a mail out to your judge.

7. How does the hiring process work?

With any luck, you'll get a telephone call from a judge (or more likely the judge's secretary) inviting you for an interview. The earlier you can make it to the judge's chambers, the more likely you will be to get the job, so if you can it's best to go on whatever day the judge suggests. You'll have to pay the cost of travel yourself. Sometimes out-of-town judges who are planning trips to the area will set up interviews for the day they will be in town, which will enable you to save on airfare. Judges in particularly remote locations sometimes conduct interviews over the phone, but this is unusual.

Because everyone understands the problem of travel costs, it is common for students who have set up interviews with one judge to call all the other judges in the same area to which they have applied and ask if they can set up additional interviews while they are in town. This tactic will save you from having to fly to the same city twice, and it will also increase your chances of obtaining an interview. As soon as you have an interview set up with Judge A, call up Judge B and explain to him (or more likely to his secretary) that you will be in town for an interview with Judge A and that you would like to meet with Judge B while you are there. Judge B may think there must be something good about you if Judge A has set up an interview. At the very least, your application will jump to the top of the pile. Then do the same for Judge C, Judge D, and so on. You'll want to call the judges before you buy your plane tickets, so you'll have maximum flexibility regarding interview dates.

Once you have set up an interview, learn everything you can about the judge. Consult all the reference sources listed above. Get on Lexis or Westlaw and read the judge's recent opinions.

When you meet the judge, don't be intimidated. There's no need to put on a fake stuffy persona. Judges are people just like you; the only difference between the judge and you is that the judge is probably older. Interviews with judges usually last

somewhere between a half-hour and an hour. As in any interview, you never know what sorts of questions you will be asked. It's best to be ready to discuss anything that you put on your resume, and anything in your writing sample. Because judges and law clerks work closely together, the judge will often be primarily concerned with finding out the sort of person you are. The usual suggestions apply: Be yourself, and don't act like a jerk.

Many judges have applicants interview with their current law clerks as well. The current clerks often have some input into hiring decisions, so take this part of the interview seriously too.

Some judges will make job offers right there on the spot at the end of the interview. Some will get back to you, usually within a few weeks. Once you get an offer, you normally won't have more than a few days to make a decision (some judges may want a more immediate response). This means that it's not worth going for an interview with a judge with whom you're pretty sure that you wouldn't accept a clerkship. If you get an offer, and there are other judges out there for whom you would rather work, call them up right away and explain your situation. They will be flattered. You might get a very quick interview. At worst, they'll decline the opportunity, and you can clerk for the judge who made the first offer.

If you interview with a judge and decide you not do want to work for this particular individual under any circumstances, withdraw yourself from consideration immediately, by phone and in writing. Withdrawing before receiving an offer usually will not impact future opportunities. If, however you are interviewing with other judges in the same jurisdiction you will need to tread very carefully. You should contact Career Services if you find yourself in this situation.

Always contact our Career Services Office. For assistance at any stage in the process.

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MSWord/I:/JudClkshpProg/Judicial Clerkship Manual

SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR A COVER LETTER FOR A JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP

Your name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Date

The Honorable First Name Last Name
Name of Court
Mailing Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Judge/Justice Last Name: (*see Section 6E herein to determine correct salutation*)

FIRST SECTION: The introductory paragraph should be used to attract attention and to identify yourself. Tell the judge why you are writing to them, name the position for which you are applying, and if applicable, tell them how you heard about the judicial clerkship, including if you were referred to the judge/justice.

SECOND SECTION: The second (and sometimes third depending on your credentials) paragraph should emphasize your qualifications and accomplishments. Sell yourself. Expound on your resume, noting your strengths and areas which would be of interest to the judge/justice. If you do not have much legal experience, draw upon the skills, such as leadership, attention to detail, diligence, research and writing, etc., that you have used in prior employment or extracurricular activities. Everything in this section should be positive. Do not draw attention to weaknesses.

THIRD SECTION: This is the closing and should be relatively short. Ask for an opportunity to meet (if appropriate). Indicate when you are available for an interview or a telephone call. Mention if you have a planned trip to the city (if it is outside of San Antonio) and the dates. Thank the judge/justice for his/her consideration.

Respectfully,

(Allow four lines for signature; sign with a pen)

Typewritten Name

Enclosure

SAMPLE COVER LETTER FOR A JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP (usually 10-12 font with about 1½" top margin)

Alexia A. Charles
20911 Cambridge Street
San Antonio, Texas 78555

May 13, 2008

The Honorable Clark Sable
US Magistrate
U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas
515 Rusk, Room 5555
Houston, Texas 77003

Dear Judge Sable:

I am a third year law student at St. Mary's University School of Law and am writing to express my interest in serving as your judicial law clerk during 2008-2009. The Honorable Robert Sanders of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas in Dallas, for whom I clerked during the summer of 2007, recommended that I contact you. He believed that the research I performed with regard to the corruption cases he was hearing would be valuable to your work as well.

My solid academic background, strong research and writing skills and my interest in litigation make me well suited to meet the demands of your courtroom. While in law school, I have maintained a 3.36 grade point average and rank in the top 6% of my class. As a first-year student, I received the second highest grade in my Legal Research and Writing class. Currently, I am the Articles Editor for the *Law Journal* and my comment, "Disparities in Federal Sentencing" has been accepted for publication in an upcoming issue. I also serve as a Student Bar Association Senator and am active in the Employment Law student group.

As my resume indicates, in addition to my clerkship with Judge Sanders, I worked at Wilson, Mendoza and Theis, LLP in San Antonio. While there, I drafted several motions, memoranda and orders, which required me to review case files, research relevant law and organize the results into a final piece. The experience allowed me to hone my skills while demonstrating my ability to handle multiple tasks efficiently. I also had an opportunity to observe several trials. Prior to law school, I worked as a market analyst for Excel, Inc., a public policy research institute in Austin. I was charged with researching, analyzing and presenting data that I collected on important issues of public policy affecting financial markets. At Excel, I learned the importance of organization and prioritization while developing strong interpersonal skills as I dealt with colleagues and superiors. I believe my academic foundation, coupled with my work experience and relevant skills, would make me a valuable asset to you.

I have enclosed a complete set of application materials including my resume, transcript and writing sample. Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 210-555-5555. I look forward to hearing from you and hope to have an opportunity to serve your chambers.

Respectfully,

Alexia A. Charles

Enclosure