

LAWYERS JOURNAL

More than 50 students to participate in ACBA Summer Clerkship Program

By Zandy Dudiak

More than 50 law students who identify as diverse will have the opportunity to experience what it is like to be an attorney through the annual ACBA Summer Clerkship Program.

"In a time when everything was so uncertain, our Pittsburgh area legal employers stepped up big," said Alysia Keating, ACBA Director of Diversity and Gender Equality.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, 45 employers are providing summer jobs for 52 students, up from 32 in 2020. Of those 45 employers, 24 are law firms, 15 are corporate legal departments and six are government agencies or nonprofits.

Keating said 16 employers are participating for the first time this year or for the first time since the program was restructured in 2019. All new employers were required to attend a virtual training session that covered program specifics as well as the topics of implicit bias and microaggressions.

Of the 51 students who accepted offers, 21 are from Pitt, 18 are from Duquesne, 11 are from Penn State and one is from WVU. A total of 72 students applied for the clerkships.

One participating employer and one non-participating employer are considering hiring an additional candidate from among those who weren't placed as well, Keating said.

All except the government-related clerkships and a nonprofit one will be paid positions. The ACBA will fund a \$2,000 stipend to one clerk each at the Public Defender's and District Attorney's offices.

The pandemic restrictions created a different feel for this year's hiring process, which was conducted remotely via Flo Recruit.

"We did everything virtually," Keating said. "We had virtual networking and met in virtual rooms."

The May 19 orientation for students was held via Zoom. Keating anticipates that most of the clerkships will be remote this summer.

"We thought it was very well organized," said attorney R.J. O'Hara, a partner at Flaherty & O'Hara, PC, a smaller downtown law firm that decided to participate in the clerkship program for the first time this year.

"I think that the interview process this year worked great," agreed Rachel Clark, associate counsel with the Corporate Legal Department of UPMC Corporate Services. "The platform that the ACBA used was excellent, and we didn't have any technical glitches."

Clark said Flo Recruit gave warnings to prevent interviews from going over the time limit.

"I think we may have saved some time, too," Clark continued. "I also enjoyed doing the interviews from the

comfort of my home. Overall, it was a great process that I think could continue even when the pandemic is over."

UPMC has participated in the clerkship program for more than a decade, providing one of the few health law opportunities in the Pittsburgh area. The students who work there get an opportunity to see the inner workings of a corporate legal department and get exposed to the types of legal issues that students may not see in a law firm, Clark said.

"The experience is not just health law, though, and so our interns get exposure in areas such as real estate, insurance, tax, mergers and acquisitions, family law, employment law and other areas of the law," she said. "UPMC benefits because we love all of the help that the interns provide – often with legal research and writing, and it is enjoyable to have fresh voices in our meetings."

The partners at Flaherty & O'Hara PC decided to take on a summer law clerk to broaden the diversity in the firm.

"We find that we don't get many people of color, who we think are historically underrepresented," said attorney R.J. O'Hara, partner, acknowledging there is a "rainbow of people" who could have been candidates for the clerkship.

In the end, the firm hired a young male with a disability. Flaherty & O'Hara also employs another student through Duquesne University School of Law's summer program.

O'Hara said the clerks will work five days a week. Given the situation with COVID-19, the number of in-office days may vary, although O'Hara points out that each of the 30 people in the office has been vaccinated.

Fallon Howard, a student at Duquesne hired by UPMC, said she applied to the clerkship program because she wanted to secure a summer job with a company that cares about diversity. The clerkship interviews were her first virtually so she was initially nervous about how they would go.

"All of the employers were very kind and I had an overall good experience with the remote interview process," she said. "All of the employers that are a part of this program have a commitment to diversity, which is very important to me."

Howard says she hopes to enhance her research and writing skills through her position with UPMC. She also hopes to build meaningful relationships with various UPMC employees and learn more about health law and corporate practice.

Lorrie Albert, ACBF Associate Executive Director, and her staff are working together with Keating to plan some joint programs/events for the ACBF summer fellows and the ACBA summer clerks, including some career sampler programs featuring attorneys practicing in different areas of law and some lunches with the judges. All programs will be

conducted on Zoom and will provide supplemental opportunities for education/professional development as well as networking with other students and ACBA members, Keating said.

Employers interested in participating in the 2022 program should contact Keating at akeating@acba.org. For more information about the program, visit ACBA.org/summer-clerkship. ■

2021 Summer Clerkship Program Employers

Allegheny County Children's Court
Allegheny County District Attorney's Office
Allegheny County Office of the Public Defender
Arconic Corporation*
Babst Calland Clements & Zomnir, P.C.
Bernstein-Burkley, P.C.*
Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC/PNC Bank
Cafardi Ferguson Wyrick Weis + Gabriel Ilc
Carlson Lynch, LLP
Caroselli Beachler & Coleman LLC
Cozen O'Connor
Crown Castle*
Dickie McCamey & Chilcote, P.C.
Disability Rights Pennsylvania*
Duquesne Light Company
Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott LLC
Edgar Snyder & Associates*
Flaherty & O'Hara, PC*
Gateway Health LLC
GNC Holdings, LLC*
Governor's Office of General Counsel –
PennDOT
Highmark Health
Jackson Kelly PLLC*
Koppers Inc.
Littler Mendelson, P.C.
Metz Lewis Brodman Must O'Keefe LLC
Meyer Unkovic & Scott LLP
Oxford Development Company*
Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations
PPG Industries, Inc.*
Robert Morris University*
Rothman Gordon, P.C.
Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis LLP*
Seton Hill University
Sherrard, German & Kelly, P.C.*
Spilman Thomas & Battle PLLC
Steptoe & Johnson PLLC
Strassburger McKenna Gutnick & Gefsky*
The Bank of New York Mellon
Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders LLP*
Tucker Arensberg, PC
United States Steel Corporation
UPMC Corporate Legal Department
Wabtec Corporation*
Zimmer Kunz PLLC

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