

Federal Clerkship Application Guide 2018 (Camden Campus)

General Information

The information in this document applies to Federal District Court Clerkships (including clerkships with Bankruptcy and Magistrate Judges).

When To Apply

Federal judges accept applications at various times. In general, students should plan to apply as soon as possible and continue to apply on a rolling basis as judges post vacancy announcements. Students should submit applications to judges *who are accepting applications* as soon as applications materials are ready.

How to Find Vacancies

The Online System for Clerkships Application and Review, <https://oscar.uscourts.gov/home>, (OSCAR) contains profile information (name, court, location) on all federal judges, and many federal judges and appellate staff attorney offices use OSCAR to post law clerk positions and accept electronic applications. However, not all federal judges supply OSCAR with their clerkship hiring information and additional steps may need to be taken to determine their clerkship hiring needs.

Application Methods

- OSCAR: Many Federal Judges accept applications only via OSCAR.
- Paper: To apply for clerkships with Federal Judges not accepting applications through OSCAR, paper applications must be submitted via regular mail. The Center for Career Development will mail these applications for you.

Application Deadlines

Application deadlines vary depending on each judge's individual preferences; however, all federal clerkship applications should be submitted to openings as soon as they are ready. As this is an exceedingly competitive application process, you should prepare your materials well in advance so that you can submit them as soon as clerkship openings are posted or learned about.

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Application Materials

Resume
Cover letter
Transcript(s)
2 – 3 letters of recommendation
Writing sample

The Application Process

Self-Evaluation.

Determine the courts to which you want to apply. Federal clerkships are extremely competitive and many district judges only hire law clerks who have two or more years of practice experience. Discuss with your professors whether they are comfortable recommending you for particular levels of clerkships. The federal magistrates, senior judges, bankruptcy and federal administrative courts (such as immigration and labor courts), may be slightly less competitive than federal district judges, based on the positions Rutgers students have obtained in the past. U.S. Court of Appeals clerkships are generally the most competitive and those judges typically seek graduates who have clerked, or are presently clerking at a U.S. District Court, and who graduated at or near the top of their class. Please also note that while some large firms offer judicial clerkship bonuses, many do so only for federal clerkships.

- GPA: You will need strong academic credentials.*
- Law Review: This is a very important credential for many judges since clerkships involve extensive writing. Some judges may consider work as an Legal Writing Teaching Assistant, work as an Research Assistant (especially if you are given a contribution acknowledgment), your own piece published in an academic or law journal publication, research and writing an extensive piece through a job, internship or volunteer position, or other significant writing prior to law school.
- Advanced Moot Courts: Moot Court is another experience that many judges look for, especially if you advanced in the competition or received a best brief or best oralist award.
- Number of Applications: You should apply to as many judges as you wish, within reason. However, **you should not apply to any judge from whom you would not accept a position if one is offered.**

* Students should refer to the hiring information provided in judges' OSCAR profiles and meet with a Career counselor to discuss in greater detail.

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Letters of Recommendation

Recommendation letters may be written by law school faculty, employers (current or former), or college professors. It is strongly recommended that at least two of your letters of recommendation are written by law school faculty. When asking someone to write you a letter of recommendation, give the potential recommender an updated copy of your resume, including your 2L summer position, if possible, your unofficial law school transcript, and a list of judges to whom you plan to apply (or at least a list of Courts). **Do not be surprised if a law school faculty member declines to write a letter of recommendation for a particular court.** Faculty members are well aware of the hiring criteria for each court, and many are legitimately reluctant to write a letter in support of a candidate whose credentials are not in line with past hires or do not meet the qualifications listed in OSCAR. Keep in mind that by supporting a student's candidacy, a recommender necessarily places his/her reputation on the line.

1. The Center for Career Development coordinates faculty letters of recommendation (LORs) for judicial clerkship applications. Students must secure a Recommender Agreement Form from each faculty member who has agreed to write a letter of recommendation. Recommender Agreement Forms are due to the Center for Career Development as soon as possible.
2. Remembering to say "thank you." After the applications are complete, students should thank their faculty recommenders! Also, students must be sure to keep them posted once the application process is underway – they want to be updated about student progress. It's a great way for students to demonstrate their appreciation for the time the faculty members took and keeps them in the loop, which can be very helpful.

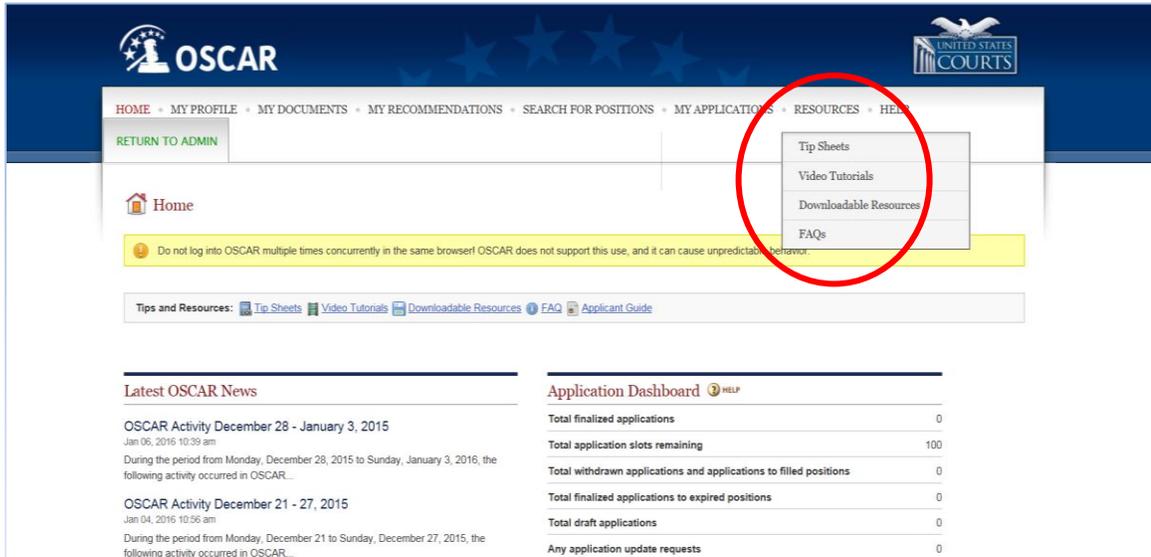
Register in Oscar & Search for Positions

The Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR - <https://oscar.symlicity.com/>) is the starting point when applying for federal clerkships. OSCAR serves as a centralized resource for notice of available federal clerkships and clerkship application information. All federal judges are listed in OSCAR. Judges are able to indicate whether they are hiring or not and, if they are hiring, whether they prefer to receive electronic or paper applications. ***It is important to note that although judges are routinely encouraged to update their OSCAR profiles with current information, not all do so.*** For some judges, the information may be scant or out of date; other judges opt not to include any information in OSCAR (appearing grayed out in the system). If, after reviewing OSCAR, there is no information regarding a judge's hiring preferences or plans, applicants can contact a judge's chambers directly to inquire if a judge is hiring for the next or any subsequent clerkship term.

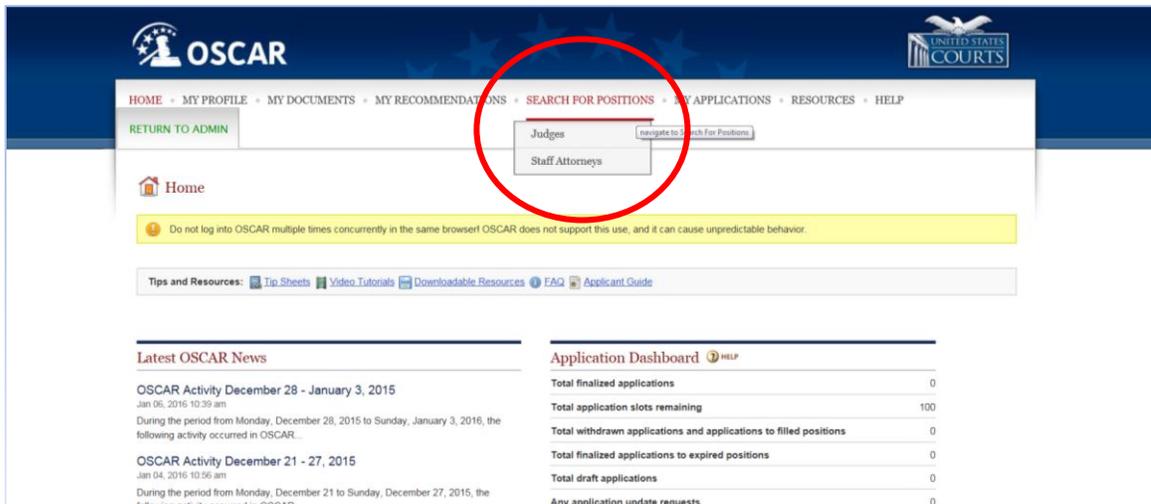
1. To start the federal clerkship application process, applicants should register and complete an OSCAR profile by going to: <https://oscar.symlicity.com/home> and clicking on the "Register Now" link under "Are You Applying?"

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- a. When creating your profile, it is recommended that you opt to receive reminders (alerts) about new clerkship openings.
2. OSCAR allows you to search for law clerk positions, as well as appellate staff attorney positions. Searches can be performed using the basic search functions or the “Advanced Search” tab. For detailed instructions on how to use the system’s various search tools, applicants can access tip sheets and video tutorials under the “Resources” tab.



3. Start your search under the “Search for Positions” tab, clicking on “Judges.”



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4. Once there, you can search the “Judges List” or use the “Advanced Search” functions.



The “Judges List” contains a listing of federal circuit court, district court, magistrate and bankruptcy judges, as well as specialty courts. Using the basic search on the “Judges List” page, applicants can search for open positions, application method (i.e., electronic or paper) and clerkship type (e.g., career clerk, term clerk, etc.). Using the “Advanced Search” feature, applicants can search by court or location and for positions with specialized work experience and legal experience requirements. It is strongly recommended that you use broad parameters to identify judges to whom you wish to apply. A narrow search may end up excluding the names of judges to whom you will want to apply.

5. Select the judges to whom you wish to apply and determine when those judges want to receive applications and which of those judges wish to receive electronic applications and which judges prefer to receive paper applications.

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#	Last Name	First Name	Type of Judge	Court	City	Apply Online	Application Methods	Date Profile Modified
	Berlehsman	William	District Judge	United States District Court, Eastern District of Kentucky	Covington			Jul 24, 2015
Clerkship Information								
<input type="checkbox"/> Term Law Clerk-Chambers 1 Year Term Start: 9/1/2016 Term End: 9/1/2017 Accepting Applications: n/a Filled								
<input type="checkbox"/> Term Law Clerk-Chambers 1 Year Term Start: 9/1/2016 Term End: 9/2/2017 Accepting Applications: n/a Filled								
	Berlon	Anne	Magistrate Judge	United States District Court, Western District of Texas	El Paso			Sep 17, 2015
Clerkship Information								
<input type="checkbox"/> Term Law Clerk-Chambers 2 Years Term Start: 8/8/2016 Term End: 8/7/2018 Accepting Applications: Expired								
	Berzon	Marsha	Circuit Judge	United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit	San Francisco			Jul 13, 2015
Clerkship Information								
<input type="checkbox"/> Term Law Clerk-Chambers 1 Year Term Start: 6/12/2017 Term End: 6/15/2018 Accepting Applications: 6/22/2015 - 9/30/2016 Available								
<input type="checkbox"/> Term Law Clerk-Chambers 1 Year Term Start: 8/14/2017 Term End: 8/17/2018 Accepting Applications: 6/22/2015 - 9/30/2016 Available								
	Besosa	Francisco	District Judge	United States District Court, District of Puerto Rico	San Juan			n/a
	Beyer	Laura	Bankruptcy Judge	United States Bankruptcy Court, Fourth Circuit	Charlotte			Oct 20, 2015
	Bianchini	Victor	Magistrate Judge	United States District Court, Central District of California	Los Angeles			n/a
	Bianco	Joseph	District Judge	United States District Court, Eastern District of New York	Central Islip			Sep 28, 2015
Clerkship Information								
<input type="checkbox"/> Term Law Clerk-Chambers 1 Year Term Start: 10/1/2017 Term End: 9/30/2018 Accepting Applications: n/a Filled								
	Biery	Fred	District Judge	United States District Court, Western District of Texas	San Antonio			n/a
	Bioers	Neal	District Judge	United States District Court,	Oxford			n/a

Apply in hard-copy

Apply electronically

Preparing your Application Materials

- **Resume.** Update your resume and have it reviewed by your Career Counselor.
- **Cover Letter.** Prepare an original cover letter with a header that matches your resume. Do not copy any samples. Your cover letter should be in your own voice and provide some insight into who you are and what your goals are. Don't try to copy anyone else's style. All cover letters should be individualized as much as possible: why do you want to work for that particular court and judge. Tell the judge what you can bring to the position, not what a clerkship can do for you. Judges are particularly interested in your research and writing abilities, as evidenced by your academic activities and relevant work experience. If you have a particular tie to the jurisdiction in which the judge sits, you should mention that in your letter. Judges do read cover letters, and many judges view your letter as a writing sample.

Your cover letters should always be individually addressed to the judges with their correct titles. The judge's name in the addressee section should be as follows: "The Honorable I. M. Able," or "The Honorable I. M. Able, Chief Judge," or "The Honorable I. M. Able, Chief Justice." You should greet the judge as follows: "Dear Judge Able," or "Dear Justice Able," or "Dear Chief Judge Able," or "Dear Chief Justice Able." You should always close your letter with "Respectfully". NEVER send any letters that are addressed simply "Dear Judge." All cover letters must be individually addressed.

A mail merge is a time saving process by which a document (such as a cover letter) and a data source (such as a spreadsheet of contact information) are merged together. The result is individual letters addressed to each contact in the data source. Instructions for Word Mail Merge can be found on the Career Development website under Judicial Clerkships. Helpful instructional videos on how to complete a mail merge, in both PC and Mac operating systems, can be found on YouTube as well. NOTE that the list of judges in Symplicity is **NOT** intended to be a list of all *available* clerkship openings. You must check OSCAR to determine if a particular Federal judge is hiring.

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- Transcripts. OSCAR requires you to create “Grade Sheets” instead of uploading unofficial transcripts. You will need to enter each course and grade from law school as well as your undergraduate degree and any other degree-granting program. Otherwise, send a copy of your unofficial transcript, unless an official transcript is specifically requested. You may download your unofficial transcript from the Rutgers website and make photocopies for each paper application.
- Writing sample. You should submit your best and most polished written work. Length should be approximately 5-15 pages unless a judge expresses otherwise. You may take an excerpt from a longer piece of work or you may submit a few short pieces of work. A brief or memo from a practice setting, an advanced moot court brief (e.g., Hunter or Cohn Moot Court) or a scholarly writing, such as a law review article are all appropriate writing samples. If you wish to use something that you produced at a job or internship, you should contact your supervisor beforehand to make sure they have no objections. The supervisor may require you to redact any identifying or confidential information before submitting it to anyone. If you wish to use a publication, include a statement regarding how much editing was done to it. Avoid using writing samples that were heavily edited by others.

Submitting Your Clerkship Applications

Federal judges, who are currently hiring 2L /3LE students, will be accepting applications **either** online through OSCAR, or in hard-copy. There are a small group of judges who direct students to email them to an address designated for clerkship applications (see “Judge Details” or “Clerkships List” in a judge’s OSCAR profile).

Paper Application Procedures

For each paper application, the following steps should be followed:

1. Compile an application packet that includes all of the materials requested by the judge other than your faculty letters of recommendation.¹
2. Create an Excel file with **Symlicity**² listing the name(s) and address(es) for each judge to whom you are submitting an application by following these steps:
 - a. Log into Symlicity and click on the “Clerkships” tab in the menu at the top of the screen
 - b. Search for the judge(s) to whom you are applying
 - c. Select each judge by putting a check mark in the box in the far left column next to the judge’s last name
 - d. Click on the “Export to Excel” box at the top of that column

¹ Check OSCAR to determine each judge’s application criteria and required application materials. If no information is listed, it is recommended that an application packet include a cover letter, resume, transcript, writing sample and 2-3 letters of recommendation.

² Do not create your Excel file of judges in OSCAR as they will not contain the judges’ addresses, which will be needed for your LORs and cover letters.

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- e. Once the Excel file has been generated, save it with a name that includes your name and the date of the list
 - f. Send the list to lor@camlaw.rutgers.edu. Also, keep a copy of it for yourself, which you can use to mail merge your cover letters. **Please be sure that your spreadsheets are accurate and complete, and comply with the formatting in the spreadsheets downloadable from Symplicity.**
3. Outside recommenders: Please ask your outside recommenders to email their letter to lor@camlaw.rutgers.edu with the subject "Letter of Recommendation for Student Name." The letter of recommendation must be sent to the Center for Career Development directly from the employer. A signed PDF copy of the letter is preferred, but an unsigned Word/WordPerfect document is acceptable. These recommenders can use the salutation "Your Honor." These letters will not be mail merged. They will instead be photocopied for inclusion with your applications, and/or uploaded if you are applying to judges who accept online/OSCAR applications.
 4. Bring each completed application packet to the Center for Career Development in an unsealed, 10 x 13 (self-sealing, if possible), envelope that is labeled and ready to mail to each judge, but DO NOT include postage or a return address. Place the following items in the envelope (unless the judge's listing on OSCAR requests different materials):
 - ___ cover letter
 - ___ resume
 - ___ transcript
 - ___ writing sample(s)
 - ___ other requested materials
 5. **Deliver your prepared PAPER applications to the Center for Career Development** during regular business hours when they are complete. The CCD will insert your Letters of Recommendation into the envelope, seal and mail it.

**** Applications that are submitted, along with the corresponding Excel file, will be processed and placed in the mail within one week of the submission.****

Online Application Procedures

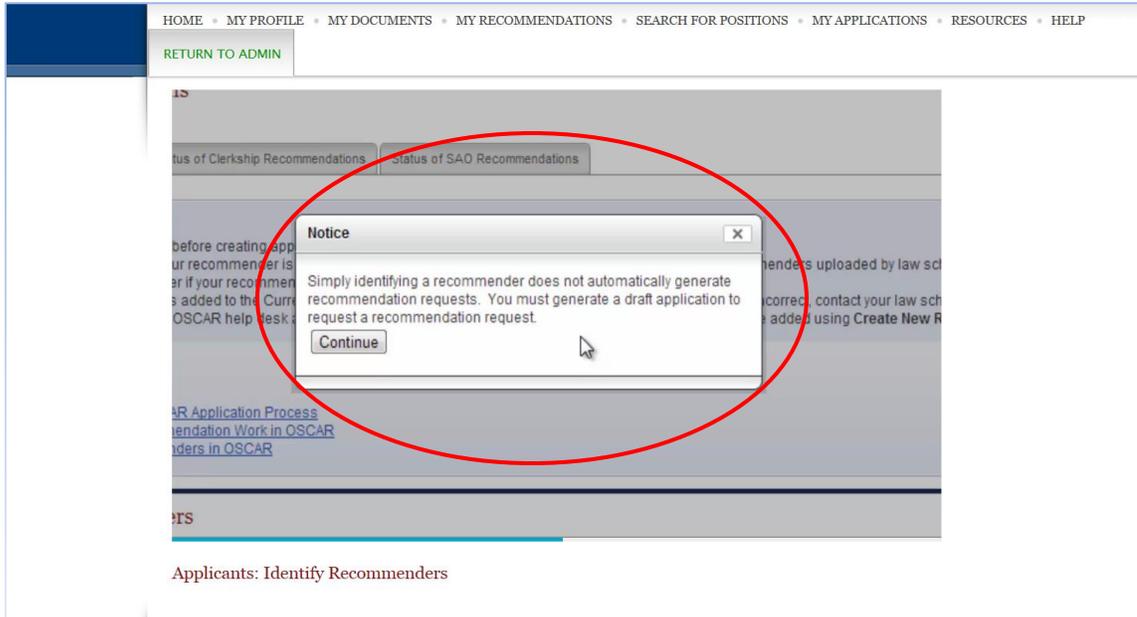
You must apply through OSCAR to any federal judge who has indicated he or she wants to receive applications online by following these steps:

1. Before you can apply, you must upload your application materials in the "My Documents" section of the system. OSCAR will house up to 3 resumes, 25 different cover letters, 3 writing samples, 2 law school, 3 undergraduate and 3 other "grade sheets" (see below). All documents must be in PDF format in order to be uploaded. Scanned documents are not accepted. All documents uploaded to OSCAR must be less than 300KB in size.
 - a. Resumes - Your resume must be in the system in order to create an application for any judge.

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- b. Transcripts/Grade Sheets - OSCAR requires that you create an online grade sheet. Scanned or other transcripts cannot be uploaded to OSCAR.
 - c. Cover Letters – There are two ways to upload cover letters:
 - i. You can save your cover letters in separate PDF files and upload them into OSCAR. This approach is useful if you are writing individual cover letters for certain judges that you want to upload individually. The system will hold up to 25 cover letters. Once you submit a cover letter as part of an application (as per 4.f. below), you can delete the document from the “My Documents” section to make room for an additional PDF file and it will remain attached to the application.
 - ii. You can use the online editor in OSCAR. This approach is useful when using one cover letter for multiple judges. The online editor will insert merge fields (i.e., each judge’s name and address) and create a separate letter for each judge.
 - d. Writing Samples – OSCAR will house up to 3 writing samples per applicant.
2. Next, applicants should select recommenders to be able to request letters of recommendation for each application.
 - a. For faculty recommenders, click on the “Choose Faculty Recommender” button, select him or her in the pull-down under “Choose Faculty Recommender” and click the “Add to My Recommenders” button. If you do not see one of your faculty recommenders in the pull-down list, **DO NOT** type in his or her information in the “+ Create New Recommender” section. Instead, contact the Center for Career Development and we will have your faculty recommender added to the pull-down list.
 - b. For any recommenders outside of the faculty, you should search under “Search All Recommenders” to see if they are already listed in the system. If they are, then select them from the pull-down and click on “+ Add to My Recommenders.” If they are not in the database, you must enter their information in the “Create New Recommender” section.
 - c. NOTE: Once you select your recommenders, you will see the following:

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Accordingly, you must follow the below steps to make sure that a recommendation request is sent to your recommenders for your clerkship applications.

3. Next, applicants must “Create a Draft Application” for each judge. ****You must begin an application for EACH judge to whom you wish to apply to allow your faculty letters of recommendation to be uploaded for each judge.****

To create an application, you must:

- a. Click on the judge’s name
- b. Select the Clerkship List sub-tab for that judge and click on “View and Apply.”
- c. Review the specifics of the clerkship position listed under the “Position Details” sub-tab.
- d. On the right side of the page, there will be “Build an Application” instructions.
- e. You must upload at least one document (i.e., your resume) to begin building your application.
- f. Select from each pull-down all of the documents you wish to submit as part of your application (each of which must have already been uploaded in the “My Documents” section).
- g. A list of your recommenders will appear at the bottom of the column. Add or remove the check mark next to any recommender – recommenders with check marks will receive a recommendation request for that judge. Your default recommenders will already have check marks next to their names; however you can delete or add any recommenders you previously selected under the “My Recommendations” tab.
- h. When you have attached all documents and identified your recommenders, click “+ Create Draft Application” to save the application as a draft. **This step will also generate a recommendation request for your recommenders.**

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****Requests for uploading of faculty letters of recommendation are generally handled within 72 hours, as long as the Center for Career Development has the letter.****

- i. Then email lor@camlaw.rutgers.edu with the subject line **"OSCAR Upload Request"**. In the body of the email include your full name and the name of your recommender(s). **It is your responsibility to verify on OSCAR that your LORs were uploaded to each and every application and, if necessary, request that LORs be uploaded for any new applications you create after your LORs were uploaded.**
- j. If you want to make any edits to your application, click edit and save as "update application." **DO NOT FINALIZE your application until you are sure you no longer want to make any changes.**
- k. After you have uploaded all necessary documents into the OSCAR system, it is a good idea to print out a PDF version of your application as chambers would view it to confirm the judge information is correct and all your documents render properly in the OSCAR system.
- l. Click on the "Finalize Application" button once you no longer wish to make any changes. If you do not click on this button your application will never be seen by the judge. **HOWEVER**, once you click the "Finalize Application" button, your application will be immediately released to the judge and you will no longer be able to make any changes, including to your recommendation requests. **NOTE:** Letters of recommendation may be uploaded after an applicant has finalized an application.

◆ **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Federal judges can update their profiles in OSCAR and post open positions at any time. Some judges, who do not appear to want online applications, may post their preference for receiving applications through OSCAR at a later time. **It is important that you continue to check OSCAR and monitor whether any particular judge posts a new position and/or posts a preference for online applications through OSCAR.**

Interviews

If you are contacted for an interview, alert your recommenders ASAP so that they will be prepared when the judge calls. If your resume has changed (e.g., with an Externship position), e-mail your recommenders an updated resume.

Judges, especially federal judges, are inundated with applications every year, but most judges interview only a handful of applicants. Some judges have their current law clerk(s) pre-screen applications and assist in selecting applicants to be interviewed. In many courts, the current law clerk(s) may interview you first before you actually meet the judge.

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If the judge requests an interview, you should prepare yourself beforehand by finding out as much about the judge as you can. The Center for Career Development has resources with biographical and other information about many judges. There are also sources of biographical information on judges available through the CCD (through the CCD website in Camden under Services for Students: Career Pathways: Judicial Clerkships and through the Symplicity Document Library in Newark). Since judges are public figures, they can also be researched on the internet and in legal publications. You may also research published opinions on Westlaw and Lexis. Also talk to professors, the CCD, and other students or graduates who previously worked for or are acquainted with the judge.

Send out a thank you letter, not just an email, after an interview. Many judges consider it rude if they do not hear from you.

Fill out an Interview Evaluation for each judge with whom you interview in your Symplicity account under Clerkships: Interview Evaluation.

Accepting an Offer

Accepting Offers. Offers for judicial clerkships are not like other job offers. It is not unusual for applicants to be offered clerkships at the first interview and many judges expect an answer on the spot. At most, expect to have twenty-four hours in which to accept. Be aware that requests for an extension might not be looked upon favorably by the judge.

It is not wise to turn down a judge when she or he offers you a clerkship. If you do not want to work in a particular location or in a particular court, do not apply! Do not interview for a position that you would not accept immediately if offered.

If you receive an offer from a judge, you should accept it, unless you have a good reason not to that you could not have anticipated at the time of the interview. Turning down an offer in the hopes of getting a "better" one may backfire. Judges talk to each other about clerkship applicants, and word will spread quickly regarding an applicant who declined an offer. Each offer should be taken seriously, and a delay in answering needs to be handled diplomatically. Moreover, rejecting an offer may have repercussions for future Rutgers applicants. In any case, it is unlikely that a judge will leave an offer open for more than a day or so without cause.

If you know, after interviewing with a judge, that you would not accept an offer from him or her even if it is the only offer you receive, you should withdraw your name from consideration immediately by telephone. Withdrawing before receiving an offer will usually not affect future opportunities. If, however, you withdraw an application after interviewing, additional interviews and acceptances in that same court need to be handled with care. Discuss this with Career Development before acting.

Once you have accepted an offer, you have made a commitment that must be honored. Failing to honor your commitment is personally unprofessional and can have very negative consequences for future Rutgers Law School applicants and the reputation of the law school.

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Once you accept an offer from a judge, make sure you call or write to all the judges with whom you interviewed, to immediately withdraw from consideration. This practice should also be followed if you change your mind about wanting a clerkship in a court to which you have applied. You may also want to accept a clerkship formally by writing to the judge, even after accepting verbally. The letter can be short and to the point, telling the judge how much you look forward to working with them in the upcoming year, and perhaps detailing when you will be in touch to set your starting date.

Etiquette

Let your recommenders know how your interviews are going (an e-mail is fine). If you accept a position, let your recommenders know by sending either an e-mail or a thank-you card. Also, let the Center for Career Development know ASAP by filling out a Graduate Employment Survey through your Symplicity account. This will allow us to have updated information for your classmates on which judges are still interviewing.