

New Jersey State Appellate/Supreme Court Clerkship Application Guide 2018 (Camden Campus)

General Information

The information in this document applies to second-year law students who plan to apply for post-graduate NJ State Appellate/Supreme Court Clerkships.

The New Jersey Supreme Court is the state's highest appellate court. It is composed of a chief justice and six associate justices. As the highest appellate court, the Supreme Court reviews cases from the lower courts. The Appellate Division of the Superior Court is New Jersey's intermediate appellate court. It is generally comprised of 32 judges who sit in two or three judge panels chosen from parts consisting of four judges. Appellate Division judges hear appeals from decisions of the trial courts, the Tax Court and state administrative agencies.

When to Apply

The NJ judiciary has announced that judges will accept applications for 2019-20 court term clerkships beginning in June of 2018. The exact dates will be made available as soon as they are released by the New Jersey Courts. Judges typically begin contacting candidates for interviews within the week that applications are submitted.

The Center for Career Development will collect applications for NJ Appellate Division and Supreme Court clerkship applications in early June. Students who want to participate in the Center for Career Development mailing should deliver **ASSEMBLED** applications to the office **June 7 – June 11, 2018**. Specific times and location to be announced via the Law School Newsletter and Announcements later in the spring. Applications will be delivered to the judges on the due date.

In June 2017, the New Jersey Judiciary introduced a web-based clerkship application portal to enable students to apply directly for law clerk opportunities. To use the portal, students must create an account and follow the instructions in the portal to search for judges and upload the documents required for each application.

While most of the judges in the state are now using the portal, some are not, and the Center for Career Development encourages students to apply for Supreme Court and Appellate Division clerkships via the mailing to avoid any problems with the new online system. If you choose to apply via the portal, please have all your application materials ready to upload the day the portal opens for applications. Please see the New Jersey State Trial Court Clerkship Application Guide for more details on applying via the portal.

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OTHER STATE COURTS

The timing and application process for clerkships in other states varies. If you are interested in applying for a clerkship in any state other than New Jersey, you can find application information in the 2018 Guide to State Judicial Clerkships produced by Vermont Law School. The Guide is accessible to all Rutgers law students on-line at:

<http://forms.vermontlaw.edu/career/guides>

username: maple

password: leaf

*Please note that the username and password are lowercase. A PDF printable version of the entire Guide and PDF printable versions of individual state information are available.

NALP has also produced a guide titled "Insight & Inside Information Guide for Select State Court Clerkships," which is posted in the Document Library under the Resources tab in Symplicity.

Application Timeline

Date	Task
ASAP	Read all clerkship application materials and instructions thoroughly.
ASAP	Choose recommenders and request Letters of Recommendation (LOR's); Meet with your Career Counselor as needed.
April 6 th	Deadline to submit the Faculty Recommender Agreement form to the Center for Career Development. Email completed form to lor@camlaw.rutgers.edu .
April 30 th	Deadline to submit spreadsheet of judges to Center for Career Development. Email spreadsheet, along with a list of recommenders, to lor@camlaw.rutgers.edu .
May 11 th	All LORs are due to the Center for Career Development. Recommenders will email LORs to lor@camlaw.rutgers.edu .
May	Prepare all application materials (resume, cover letter, writing sample, print unofficial transcripts once all grades are reported). Pick up clear pocket sleeves at Career Planning.
June 7- 11	Deliver and sort applications at Career Planning for delivery to judges.
Mid June	Judges may begin contacting students, at which time they can schedule interviews.

The Application Process

1. **Self-evaluation.** Determine the courts to which you want to apply. **Discuss with your professors whether they are comfortable recommending you for particular levels of clerkships (see step 3).**
 - GPA. While there are no published GPA requirements, you will probably need a GPA of at least 3.4 to be considered for a New Jersey State Appellate clerkship; for NJ State Supreme Court clerkships you will need at least a 3.6. (Some state courts are not as competitive as New Jersey).*
 - Law Journal. This is a very important credential for many judges, *particularly those at the appellate level* since those 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.**
2. **Choose recommenders, complete and submit the Faculty Recommender Agreement Form by April 6th**

You will need 2 – 3 letters of recommendations. If you have not already done so, you should request letters **as soon as possible**. Recommendation letters may be written by law school faculty, employers (current or former), or college professors. **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 some may be legitimately reluctant to write a letter in support of a candidate whose credentials do not meet the court's minimum qualifications. Keep in mind that by supporting a student's candidacy, a recommender necessarily places her reputation on the line.

Give recommenders an updated copy of your resume. You will also need to supply your recommenders with a list of judges to whom you are applying or at the very least a list of Courts. You can download a spreadsheet of NJ State Appellate & Supreme Court judges from Symplicity (under Resources: Document Library).

* Students should meet with a CCD counselor to discuss in greater detail.

3. Email your spreadsheet of judges to the Center for Career Development at lor@camlaw.rutgers.edu by April 30th.

Use the subject line "LOR Request - Your Full Name." In the body of the email include the names of all recommenders and indicate whether each person is a Rutgers Law faculty member. Attach your spreadsheet of judges to your email. You can download a spreadsheet of NJ State Appellate & Supreme Court judges from Symplicity (under Resources: Document Library). Please be sure that your spreadsheets are accurate and complete, and comply with the formatting in the spreadsheets downloadable from Symplicity.

- Rutgers Law Recommenders: Letters written by Rutgers Law faculty will be mail merged (using the spreadsheet you download and will email to lor@camlaw.rutgers.edu) and printed by Career Planning for inclusion in your applications. If your spreadsheets are incomplete or contain errors this will delay the process, and perhaps result in applications missing crucial LOR's. **The deadline for faculty to submit letters to the Center for Career Development is May 11th.**
- 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" no later than May 11th. *A signed PDF copy of the letter is preferred*, but an unsigned word 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. **The deadline for outside recommenders to submit letters to the Center for Career Development is May 11th.**

4. Prepare Transcripts, Resumes, Cover Letters and Writing Samples.

- Resume. Update your resume and have it reviewed by your career counselor. Resume paper is recommended.
- 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.

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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.

- Transcripts. Send a copy of your unofficial transcript. . (NJ state judges do not require official transcripts at the application stage.) 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. 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 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. *Please discuss your choice of writing sample with your career planning counselor.*

5. Mail merge cover letters. 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 Planning 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.

- a. Spreadsheets. You can download a spreadsheet of NJ State Appellate & Supreme Court judges from Symplicity (under Resources: Document Library). **Please be sure that your spreadsheets are accurate and complete, and comply with the formatting in the spreadsheets downloadable from Symplicity.**

6. Prepare your applications. Pick up clear pocket sleeves for your applications at the Center for Career Development beginning in May 2018. Please be prepared with the exact number of pocket sleeves you will need.

7. Assemble applications. Be sure to include in each application:

- ___ cover letter
- ___ resume
- ___ unofficial law school transcripts
- ___ writing sample (please print on both sides)

Place each application in clear pocket sleeve. Arrange your applications alphabetically. This will make sorting your applications much easier.

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Be prepared to spend some time physically sorting and submitting your applications.

You will need to place each application in the appropriate binder for each judge. Depending on the number of judges you apply to, this could take some time. To make this process easier, pre-sort your applications alphabetically. Career Planning will insert your letters of recommendation into the binders and the applications will be delivered to the courts so that they will be received on **the due date in June 2018**.

- 8. Interviews.** Judges typically begin contacting students within the week of the due date, at which time they can schedule 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 or AY position), e-mail your recommenders an updated resume.

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.

If the judge requests an interview, you should prepare yourself beforehand by finding out as much about the judge as you can. Since judges are public figures, they can usually be researched on the internet and in legal publications. You may also research published opinions on Westlaw and Lexis. Also talk to professors, Career Planning, 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.

- 9. 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. Try to space out your clerkship interviews more than 48 hours apart so that, if you accept an offer from one judge, you will not be canceling an interview with another judge at the last minute.

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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 receive an offer from one judge but are still waiting to hear from a judge in a more preferable location or court *with whom you have already interviewed*, it is permissible to say something like: "I just interviewed with Judge B, and would like to give her the courtesy of a telephone call to let her know I received an offer from you before I respond." Then call Judge B to say that you have an offer and must respond as soon as possible. Of course, if Judge B is not prepared to make a decision, then you must decide. Some judges will be upset by this, a few may even withdraw their offers at this point, but most are usually willing to defer for a short time to another judge (typically 1-2 days, or, at the most, one week).

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 Planning 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 School of Law – Camden applicants and the reputation of the law school.

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.

- 10. 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 Career Planning know ASAP. This will allow us to have updated information for your classmates on which judges are still interviewing.