A Catalyst for Success

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Even now, having taken senior status as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals, Third Circuit, Hon. Julio M. Fuentes ’75 hires law clerks and summer interns – every year, four of each.

And even now he looks west from his chambers in Newark, N.J., to Buffalo when he’s deciding whom to bring aboard.

Five UB School of Law graduates have clerked for Fuentes – an intensive one-year posting and a prestigious position that can serve as a springboard to major career advances. And the judge has accepted nearly three dozen UB Law students into his internship program, a formal program that involves research and writing, exposure to the federal court system and a lot of face time with the law clerks and Fuentes himself.

“I look forward to having clerks and interns from Buffalo, and I take in as many as I can,” Fuentes says.

The internship program, aimed especially at students in their 2L summer, is “very academic,” the judge says. “The interns have writing requirements – they write two draft opinions each, under the supervision of the law clerks. They also observe proceedings in the district court, they watch jury selection, they see opening and closing statements and the examination of witnesses. And they go with me when the Court of Appeals sits in Philadelphia, to watch the oral arguments there.”

The program, he says, is “really meant to give them a boost,” just as his own legal career was shaped in part by his early exposure to Erie County’s Pre-Trial Release Program where he worked part-time during his first two years in law school. “That was an extraordinary experience for me,” he says, “and I hope that the interns get that same kind of experience.”

He works with Marc R. Davies ’03 in the School of Law’s Career Services Office to find promising students, then interviews them by Skype to choose the next crop of interns.

By contrast, he estimates he gets 400 or 500 applications each year for the four year-long clerkships. About two-thirds of the successful applicants, Fuentes says, have been out of law school for a few years, either practicing litigation or clerking in a district court.

Those he has hired as UB School of Law graduates, he says, “do very well. They’re just as good as those who graduated from the major law schools – they work very hard, and they’re very smart.”

Judge Fuentes with Molly F. Spakowski ’19, Joshua S. Wallace ’19 and Margaret McKenzie ’19
Nicole Grasso ’17 had just one year of law school under her belt when she interned with Fuentes.

“I don’t even think I realized what I was getting myself into, but you just want the best thing that’s going to help you in the legal profession. Everyone told me, you really can’t pass this up. The judge gave us exposure to all of his docket, a lot of different practice areas. We were responsible for writing squibs – brief write-ups for the judge about incoming cases. It really helped with our writing, because you had to get pages and pages of motion papers into a one-page paper for him.”

Matthew Paris ’17 had finished his second year at UB School of Law when he joined three other Buffalo law students as Fuentes’ interns.

“It was a great environment to work in. We primarily worked with the law clerks, who were awesome. The position is very intimidating, but the judge is just so welcoming that it made us all feel comfortable. He was very accessible – we had a lot of interactions with him, and on Fridays we would all eat lunch together with the judge.”

After her clerkship with Fuentes, Jennifer Pacella ’08 joined the law faculty at Baruch College, City University of New York.

“Because the clerkship is just one year, it has to lead to something else by nature. It’s a great credential to have when you’re moving into academia – it’s looked highly upon. It absolutely helped me to get noticed. “I think it’s wonderful that he’s committed to taking on students from his alma mater. The whole clerkship is a fascinating, wonderful opportunity that is very rare. It’s of immense value to anyone who is lucky enough to be chosen.”

Patrick Reinikainen ’12 clerked for a U.S. District Court judge in the Southern District of New York and worked in law practice before clerking for Fuentes. He now works at the New York City office of Ropes & Gray LLP.

“As clerks, we worked very closely with Judge Fuentes on a daily basis. Through that process, I learned an incredible amount about writing and legal analysis. I also had the opportunity to observe some of the country’s top oral advocates in court as they argued important and often novel legal issues.”

...I admire the judge’s commitment to the law school, as well as the interest that he takes in his clerks and interns and their career development. It was both the opportunity of a lifetime and a great honor to have clerked for Judge Fuentes.”
— Patrick Reinikainen ’12

How YOU Can Help

Need a bright and talented addition to your team?

Hire a UB School of Law student or graduate and help launch a legal career.

To post a job or schedule an on- or off-campus interview, contact:

Marc R. Davies ’03
Associate Director for Career Services
(716) 645-3707
mrdavies@buffalo.edu
law.buffalo.edu/cso