Overview of Federal Judicial Clerkship Applications
University of Maryland School of Law
Career Development Office (CDO)

For federal clerkship applicants entering their final year of law school, most applications are “due” the day after Labor Day in early September. According to the “Law Clerk Hiring Plan,” (see https://oscar.symplicity.com in the Resources section) this is the first date that most federal judges begin to review student applications.

When thinking about federal clerkship applications, first identify the court(s) to which you want to apply. You can use the law school’s Symplicity site, which features a Clerkship module. In this module, every Circuit, District, Magistrate, Court of Federal Claims, Federal Circuit and Court of International Trade judge is listed in alphabetical order. You can search judges by circuit, district, or city. Use “Batch Options” to create an Excel spreadsheet of judges to whom you wish to apply. The spreadsheet will contain judges’ names, court names, and addresses. Depending on the court, the CDO may be able to provide you a spreadsheet as well, so please inquire as to specific courts.

Along with creating this spreadsheet, go to OSCAR (https://oscar.symplicity.com), which is the centralized source of application information for federal clerkships and is also a vehicle for applying to many federal clerkships (see below for a full discussion of OSCAR). Using OSCAR, you can create a list of judges to see whether they are hiring and how: many judges will accept online applications through the OSCAR system, while others may accept paper applications (fax or e-mail applications are less likely). It also is possible that some judges on your spreadsheet are not hiring for 2011. You will use OSCAR to set up online applications for those judges accepting online through the OSCAR system.

The spreadsheet you created is important for paper application judges: you will provide this spreadsheet to your recommenders for creating letters of recommendation; you will use it to create a mail merge for your cover letters and address labels (contact the CDO for instructions); and you must also provide the spreadsheet to the CDO, if you want the CDO to mail out your federal clerkship applications via Federal Express for receipt in judges’ chambers the day after Labor Day in early September (in accordance with the Law Clerk Hiring Plan).

For both online and paper application judges, please be sure that the judges to whom you are applying are hiring for 2011. Sometimes, judges have a profile in OSCAR but are not hiring for 2011. Check OSCAR and contact Toni St. John in the CDO if you are unsure. The CDO will only mail out applications if we are sure the judge is hiring.

Paper applications:

For those judges accepting a traditional paper application, the CDO will mail out those applications for applicants via Federal Express for delivery in the judges’ chambers the day after
Labor Day (September 7, 2010). If you wish the CDO to FedEx these applications for you, there are several things you must do:

1) Research judges early in the summer, so that you can provide CDO the spreadsheet of the paper application judges to whom you are applying by July 30th. If you do not turn in the information by this date, we cannot promise to mail your applications in a timely manner.

2) Provide your recommenders with this spreadsheet as soon as possible, so that they can produce letters of recommendation, individually addressed to each judge and sealed in envelopes. You must approach your professors or other recommenders by April 30th in order to give them enough time to produce the letters. Also, be sure to discuss the timing of this with your recommender’s assistant or secretary, who may be the one responsible for producing the letters and stuffing and sealing the envelopes – it can be a time-consuming process, and you must respect their time and effort on your behalf. **You cannot leave this until July or August – it does not give your recommender enough time to produce the letters for you, and summer is a difficult time to reach people!**

3) To produce multiple cover letters or envelope labels addressed to each individual judge, applicants can use their Excel spreadsheet and create a mail merge document. If you do not know how to do this, the CDO can provide instructions.

4) Students can make copies of their official transcripts to include. Cover letters and resumes should be on resume-quality paper, while transcripts and writing samples can be on regular paper. Envelopes should be large enough to fit all the documents.

5) Provide CDO with the paper applications by August 20th. The applications must be complete, and you must seal and address the envelopes. Do not add postage - we will take care of that. When you bring in your applications, please fill out a Clerkship Mailing Form, listing the judges and the courts to which you are applying.

**OSCAR applications (Online):**

For those judges accepting online applications, applicants should do the following:

1) **Register for OSCAR:** The Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR) ([https://oscar.symplicity.com](https://oscar.symplicity.com)) is the centralized resource for federal judicial clerkships, including application information. OSCAR includes judges who choose to accept applications electronically through OSCAR and judges who want to receive only paper applications. Even if a judge is not accepting applications through this online system, the judge may post his or her application information in OSCAR, and inform applicants how to apply. Therefore, applicants should use OSCAR to identify clerkships as well as to apply.
OSCAR Version 6.0 (the version of OSCAR for the Class of 2011) will be available beginning May 21, 2010. At this time, the Class of 2011 will be able to access OSCAR to register, search for clerkships, and begin creating their applications. OSCAR has a User Guide and a Help Desk, and the CDO is available to answer any questions.

Please see the Judicial Clerkship Mailing Program Class of 2011 for the Critical Dates for Law Clerk Hiring and for the CDO. These dates include the first date federal judges can view your applications (usually the day after Labor Day), the first date and time when judges may contact applicants and schedule interviews, and the first date and time when interviews may be held and offers made.

The OSCAR Help Desk information (for technical questions) is as follows:

Help Desk Phone Line: 866-666-2120 or 202-502-3211

Help Desk Email: oscar-support@ao.uscourts.gov

1) **Search for judges/clerkships and build your applications:** Please refer to the OSCAR User Guide or contact the Help Desk or the CDO with any questions. Here is a basic overview:

- Use the search functions in the Clerkships section to identify clerkships for which you wish to apply.
- Use the folder functions in the Clerkships section to save and organize your search results.
- Upload the documents you plan to submit (cover letter, resume, etc.).
- Click on the View button next to an individual judge on your judge list to go to your application page for that judge.
- Designate each document that you want to submit to that judge.
- Type in the name and e-mail address of each of your recommenders (along with the e-mail address of each recommender’s assistant in the “cc” box).
- Click submit to trigger requests to your recommenders.

2) **Be sure to ask for letters of recommendation EARLY:** Recommenders, be they professors or outside the law school community, will upload their letters of recommendation to OSCAR. OSCAR will merge each letter into the applications. For example, if you have 25 applications in OSCAR, the recommender will upload one copy of the letter, and OSCAR will merge it into each of the 25 applications. However, they cannot upload the letter until you have created your applications in OSCAR. Each time
you add applications, the recommender will need to re-upload the letter to the system to be merged into the additional applications. For this reason, you must inform your recommenders if you add additional applications throughout the summer. **Please do not expect to add applications in August and have your recommender available to assist you!**

Please note that at our law school, the faculty assistants, in general, handle the task of uploading letters of recommendation. Adjunct professors, too, are assigned an assistant for this task. The assistants know to contact the CDO with any questions about the process. It is important that you communicate with the professors and their assistants about the process of writing and producing letters of recommendation and give them plenty of time to do so. **Approaching professors late in the summer to write letters of recommendation is not acceptable. Asking faculty assistants in August to upload letters to last-minute applications also is not acceptable.** Many staff and professors may be on vacation during summer months, so you need to communicate with them before the summer.

If your recommender is not a law school professor and not familiar with OSCAR, please have them contact the CDO, and we can provide assistance.

*If you have any questions regarding judicial clerkships or OSCAR, please contact Toni St. John (tstjohn@law.umaryland.edu) or LaShea Blake (lblake@law.umaryland.edu) in the Career Development Office, 410-706-2080.*