Summer Judicial Internships: Application Steps

(Note: This document, with live links, is available on the Office of Public Service website. Go to www.lawschool.cornell.edu. Click Public Service tab > Career Planning tab > resources link. Username: cls\career-web; Password: office-2k. The document is in the first section, General Reference: Cornell Specific.)

1. **Geography**

Define your geographic target area(s).

Select locations where you can live cheaply or for free.

If you can afford to do so, consider locations where you’d like to live after graduation, but to which you don’t yet have strong ties. This is a good way to show future employers that you want to work in that area.

2. **Federal Judges**

Focus on federal district court judges, federal magistrate judges, and federal bankruptcy judges.

District court judges hear civil and criminal cases at every stage of the litigation process.

Federal magistrate judges perform many functions similar to those performed by district court judges, but they do not have the authority to make final decisions.

Each federal district court has a bankruptcy court. The U.S. bankruptcy courts have jurisdiction over claims arising under the federal bankruptcy laws.

Federal court of appeals judges typically do not hire summer interns.

Determine which federal district court judges, magistrates and bankruptcy judges sit within a reasonable commuting distance of where you will be living. Go to Symplicity and click on the Clerkship tab. There, type in your preferred city or state to find federal judges in those locations. (To log on to Symplicity, your username is your NetID. If you have misplaced the password we emailed to you, click “Forgot Password” and a new one will be sent to you via email.)
3. **State Judges**

State court judges at the trial level, appellate level and on courts of last resort all hire summer interns. At the trial level, focus on trial courts of general jurisdiction, as opposed to limited jurisdiction, so you are exposed to a range of subject matters.

Determine your state’s court structure, as no two states are alike. Go to the BNA Directory, select your state, then click on the Court Structure Chart at the top of the page. (username: bean; password: sprout)

Identify the judges who sit in your geographic area. Judges in the courts of last resort and at the appellate level are included in the Symplicity database. Information on trial-level judges is available on the BNA Directory.

4. **Create a Mailing List**

For all judges listed in Symplicity, after running your search, export the results to an Excel spreadsheet. For state trial-level judges found in the BNA Directory, you will need to create your mailing list from the information provided on the site.

5. **Draft your resume and cover letter**

Review your documents with one of the counselors in the Office of Public Service or the Career Services Office. Counselors will be available to meet with you in person or by phone over winter break, other than the week between Christmas and New Year’s Day, when the University is closed. For appointments with Dean Comstock or Liz Peck, contact Molly Brewton. Lisa Carberry schedules appointments for Dean DeRosa.

6. **Timing**

For the most competitive courts, especially federal district courts in major cities like New York, you may want to send your applications in early to mid-December so that you can interview with those judges after exams are over. For other courts, sending out your applications during the break, in late December or early January, should give you sufficient time to interview with judges before you return to campus. In some cases, judges will interview internship candidates by phone, so interviews after second semester classes have started may not interfere with your class work.