

Some Notes on Clerkship Interviews

If you receive a request to interview, please let the Office of Judicial Clerkships know. We often have information from former clerks or the judges themselves that will be helpful to you ahead of your interview. Below, please find information on some of the most common interview issues.

Timing: Under the Federal Law Clerk Hiring Plan, judges may begin contacting you to schedule interviews on Monday, September 13, and may begin interviewing you on Thursday, September 16. You would be wise to schedule as many interviews as you can on the very first day of interviewing, because judges sometimes fill clerkship spots as soon as they find good candidates and cancel the interviews of people planning to meet with them later in the week. This may mean traveling to two or more cities on September 16, so plan accordingly. The Law School also has videoconferencing equipment that you can use for clerkship interviews, but in-person interviews are better.

Off-cycle interviews: If you apply to state or local courts, it is possible that you will receive interview requests ahead of Labor Day. If you would not be prepared to take these interviews, you should think carefully before you send your applications. In addition, every year, some federal judges ask students to interview early. If this happens to you, please contact judicialclerkships@virginia.edu for advice about how to handle the situation.

Leveraging interview requests: Once you are offered an interview, you should contact every other judge in the area where your interview will take place to see if they would like to interview you as well. You can define “area” loosely; for example, if you are traveling to Milwaukee and want to call Chicago judges to say that you will be “nearby” on a certain date, that is perfectly fine. Judges understand that you will want to save on travel expenses by seeing as many of them as possible in a particular area on one trip, and you will find that you can sometimes drum up additional interviews by letting a judge know that someone else is interested in you. Do not be put off if some courts are not receptive. Every chambers is different, but every year students have success with this technique.

Preparation: Prepare for a clerkship interview by reading over the clerkship interview surveys available online to see what judges have asked candidates in the past. If your judge does not appear in these surveys, then read through the frequently asked questions section of this website and prepare assuming that your judge will ask the hardest questions that you see. Make sure you read the judge’s biography and, if you can, contact past UVA clerks from that chambers. You would also be wise to search on Westlaw or Lexis for opinions by your judge from the last several years so that you have an idea of what is normally on the judge’s docket. Read through one or two of the opinions to get a sense of the judge’s writing style. Make sure you are prepared to answer questions about anything that appears in your application materials – this includes old jobs, school activities and details in your writing sample. Also have a few good questions for the judge at the end of your interview. You are welcome to contact the Office of Judicial Clerkships to request a “mock interview” to prepare you for the real thing.