Letter from Former Student

Name: Sharla Dunroe  
Judge: Russell W. Bench, Utah Court of Appeals  
June 2003-present (for an indefinite period of time)

A clerkship is an amazing opportunity for a few reasons.

Judicial clerks are exposed to different types of law. For someone who isn't sure what type of law to practice, a clerkship is very helpful. Also, for those who are certain as to which type of law they wish to practice, and have devoted themselves to learning/practicing a particular type of law during law school, a clerkship helps them to see whether they might be open to practicing different types of law in addition to their field of interest, thereby opening up job opportunities.

While appellate clerks may not have the opportunity to see trial practice, they are exposed to the entire case from start to finish because they review the record on appeal.

Clerks are exposed to a variety of different lawyers and lawyering styles--both good and bad.

Clerks discover what is persuasive to a judge, and they are able to see how a judicial decision is made.

Clerks hone their reading, researching, and writing skills.

At the very most, appellate clerks work 8 hours a day. Clerks have time to think through legal issues and to think about legal strategy.

Clerks read a lot of law and become familiar with what the law actually is.

Clerks form a network, both with other clerks and with judges.

Clerkships are, for the most part, very relaxing. It's a very nice break after three grueling years of law school.

The bad part about a clerkship is that it doesn't pay well, but as a state or federal employee, the benefits are usually very good.

As for obtaining a clerkship, unfortunately, I don't have many suggestions. Mine sort of fell in my lap. I never aspired to a clerkship, nor wanted one, but I have been the recipient of many benefits because of it. I do know that grades usually play a pretty big part, but some judges aren't as big of sticklers as others. And, the way a judge chooses a clerk is as diverse as the judging itself.