

Dean's Column



BY DEAN DANIEL W. HAMILTON,
UNLV WILLIAM S. BOYD SCHOOL OF LAW

THE APPEAL OF JUDICIAL CLERKSHIPS

The creation of a new Nevada Court of Appeals is not only a leap forward for Nevada jurisprudence, but also a new opportunity for practicing lawyers in the state and, most importantly from my perspective, for law students. For attorneys, appellate work means engagement with often-sophisticated legal issues, in a variety of contexts and on wide-ranging topics, before the state's leading jurists. For law students, an appellate clerkship represents a chance to observe some of the state's best lawyers wrestling with challenging questions, and to work with judges whose opinions and decisions add to our state's jurisprudence.

Boyd students are fortunate to be part of a legal community that understands the value of post-graduate clerkships — for both the bench and bar and students. And Boyd graduates are especially well-prepared to serve our state — as well as the federal courts — as clerks. During their first year, our nationally ranked Lawyering Process program immerses law students in a learning environment where they

actively engage, not only in traditional research and writing tasks, but also in simulations and collaborative exercises where judgment is exercised and issues of professionalism explored. Second- and third-year Lawyering Process classes like Judicial Writing and Advanced Appellate Advocacy allow students interested in clerkships to develop the analytical, research and writing skills that will help them excel in their work with judges. Our Career Development Office, from the first year forward, educates students on the role of a law clerk, advising students to seek particular judicial internships or externships during law school that correlate with their short- or long-term career goals and that may lead to post-graduate clerkships.

Students who want to pursue clerkships also benefit from classes and other interactions with our adjunct faculty, which includes some of the best litigators in town (and in the state). Our adjunct faculty members include federal magistrate, bankruptcy, district court and appellate judges, state district, appellate and Supreme Court judges, current Ninth Circuit clerks, district attorneys, former U.S. Attorneys, former Nevada Supreme Court clerks, former public defenders and other experienced litigators who appear frequently on both civil and criminal matters before the Nevada Supreme Court and federal courts of appeal. One of our adjuncts and alumni, Seth Floyd, Boyd class of 2010, served as co-counsel for Nevadans for a Court of Appeals, a group dedicated to raising the funds that supported the successful campaign to create an

intermediate court of appeals. Outside of the classroom, Boyd students interact with judges who participate in the law school's Jurist-in-Residence program and observe appellate advocates when the Nevada Court of Appeals and Ninth Circuit hold hearings at the law school. Whether in the classroom or at events and competitions, Boyd students learn first-hand from attorneys who have made significant contributions to Nevada law; our adjuncts and distinguished visitors serve as models of engaged and active professionals to our students.

The externship program also plays an important role in preparing students for clerkships. Judicial externs work in both federal and state courts; their field work is coupled with class seminars where students share their experiences and are assigned tasks that help develop their understanding of lawyers' ethical obligations.

All this preparation has paid off. Between 15 and 25 percent of the students in each of Boyd's last four graduating classes have accepted judicial clerkships following graduation, with the highest percentage (nearly 25 percent) in the class of 2015. A 2014 article in *U.S. News & World Report* recognized Boyd as having the sixth-highest percentage of graduates from law schools across the country accepting state judicial clerkships. And, our influence is expanding. While several of our graduates have clerked for Ninth Circuit judges in Nevada, one of our 2015 graduates has recently accepted a position to clerk for a Ninth Circuit judge in Alaska.

Boyd graduates have clerked in district courts around the state, as well as the Nevada Supreme Court. We are especially well represented at the Nevada Court of Appeals, with eight graduates having already clerked or accepted clerkships there. Amy Yonesawa, a 2011 Boyd graduate and current clerk for Judge Jerome Tao of the Nevada Court of Appeals, Department 1, credits her experience at Boyd with her readiness to succeed in her judicial clerkship: "Boyd does an excellent job preparing graduates for judicial clerkships, through both its doctrinal courses and the hands-on opportunities provided by the Lawyering Process program, the externship program and simulation classes like Trial Advocacy."

Judicial clerkships present unique opportunities for our students and graduates to learn from our judiciary and experienced practitioners. After our students spend years in the classroom, a clerkship is the ideal way to put all they have learned to use. This is another way our graduates serve Nevada and how Nevada, in turn, supports our graduates. **NL**

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