

Office of Career Services

TO: **Recommenders for Loyola Law Students**

FROM: **Maureen Looker, Associate Director of Career Services**

DATE: **May 5, 2008**

SUBJECT: **Judicial Clerkship recommendation letters**

Thank you for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation for a Loyola law student applying for judicial clerkships. The letters of recommendation can be the determinative factor for a judicial clerkship applicant. To help you with what can be a confusing process, please see the following instructions below. We are happy to answer any questions that may arise. Please feel free to contact Maureen Looker at 312-915-7160 or mlooker@luc.edu should you have any questions.

In the past, we have received questions about the content of the letters of recommendation. To assist you, we have included a few suggestions to help you get started (pages 3-5 of this memo). These are meant to be examples only; we would like to avoid recommenders using the same language in their letters and strongly encourage recommenders to personalize the letters as much as possible.

In terms of the actual printing and processing of the letters, applications are handled two ways. Some judges accept traditional paper applications that we send through the mail. Other judges accept applications online through a system called OSCAR (Online System for Clerkship Application and Review).

The law students are compiling excel spreadsheets with the names and addresses of the judges to whom they plan to apply. The spreadsheets will be used to create a mail merge to individualize the letters of recommendation to the various judges. The students will create one spreadsheet for paper applications and a second spreadsheet for OSCAR applications. These materials are to be compiled by the students by June 16, 2008.

Paper Applications:

If you plan to use your own administrative staff to prepare the letters of recommendation, please ask the student for their excel spreadsheets in order to perform a mail merge. Your letters should be submitted to our office (or to the student) in sealed envelopes by **August 15, 2008**.

If you prefer to have Loyola's administrative staff assist you in printing the letters of recommendation, please contact LaTrina Porter at lporter@luc.edu to discuss the details

(i.e. letterhead, signatures, etc). Please submit your letter to LaTrina by **July 15, 2008** in electronic format (Word Perfect or Word).

OSCAR Applications:

If you plan to use your own administrative staff to prepare the letters of recommendation you will need to upload the letters into the OSCAR system by **August 15, 2008**.

If you prefer to have Loyola's administrative staff assist you in uploading the letters of recommendation, please contact LaTrina Porter at lporter@luc.edu to discuss the details (i.e. letterhead, signatures, etc). Please submit your letter to LaTrina by **July 15, 2008** in electronic format (Word Perfect or Word).

Information on OSCAR

OSCAR username and password:

1. In order to upload your letters to OSCAR, you will need a username and password.
2. You will be sent a username and password via email from OSCAR.
3. If you are writing letters of recommendation for more than one student, you will receive only the one email with your username and password.

There are two ways to upload recommendation letters in OSCAR:

1. Upload the letter as a .pdf document. Using the batch option you can upload a single letter to multiple judges (To Whom it May Concern letter) or upload each individual letter to each judge as a .pdf file; or
2. Create the letter using the online editor in OSCAR. This function allows you to complete a merge, which allows you to type one letter that will be personalized with each judge's name and address using the field options. See the OSCAR Recommender User Guide for additional information.

To access the OSCAR Recommender User Guide:

1. Go to OSCAR website <http://oscar.dcd.uscourts.gov/>
2. Select Resources tab.
3. Select Recommender Resources.
4. Select Recommender User Guide.

OSCAR Help Desk can be reached at 202-354-3005 or oscar-support@ao.uscourts.gov.

Sample Content for Judicial Clerkship Recommendation Letters

Introductory Paragraph Samples:

- I am pleased to recommend Jane Doe for a judicial clerkship position.
- I am writing on behalf of Mr. John Doe who is applying for a judicial clerkship with you. Joe was a student in my _____ class during his first year of law school.
- It is indeed a pleasure to write in support of Jane Doe's application for a position as a judicial clerk in your chambers.
- John Doe has asked me to write a letter of recommendation concerning his application for employment as a judicial clerk, and I am pleased to do so.
- I have been asked to write a letter in support of John Doe's application for a position as a judicial clerk in your chambers.

Descriptive Paragraph Samples:

- John Doe was a student of mine in _____ during the 2007-08 academic year. Although I had over a hundred students in _____ that year, I clearly remember his performance as an excellent student. The extent of my contact with him makes me confident in my assessment of his abilities.
- I have come to know Jane as a student in my _____ course. Without question, she was one of the top three students taking the course. This course places the primary responsibility of "putting the black-letter law together" on the student so that class time can be devoted to developing the student's analytical skills through the case method. Jane demonstrated depth in her understanding of the cases and sophistication in her employment of legal doctrine.
- Jane's resume clearly demonstrates her academic qualifications, which are outstanding. Beyond that, in my course she demonstrated a healthy, perceptive skepticism in her approach to the subject matter. In a large class, her comments and questions were always pointedly and helpfully relevant. She did not occupy class time unduly with her interests, but per word uttered in class, I can think of no student who contributed more to the success of the course.
- John's performance and contributions in class were superior. In my judgment, he is a bright, articulate and incisive student. Although somewhat reserved, he is not timid in taking positions or expressing himself. He was one of the few students that year who received extra credit on his final grade based on the quality of his classroom participation. John's performance on his final exams was excellent and he ranked near the top of the class.
- John was a student in my _____ class during his second year of law school. Because there were fewer than 40 students in the class, I had the opportunity to become more fully acquainted with John and the other students than did professors teaching larger classes. I was very impressed with John's performance in class, in his legal writing assignments, and on his examinations. Although John is a quiet person, he made many significant contributions to our class discussions. He was always well prepared and took a keen interest in our class discussions. All of John's _____ assignments were well written and his final legal

- memorandum was one of the top two or three I received that year. John received a grade of 88 on his final exam which was one of the highest grades received.
- Beyond that, Jane's experience as a teaching assistant in journalism is apparent in all of her writings. Law school exams are not known for their literary quality; Jane's are the exception. In sum, I can think of few students who would be able to offer more to a judge in search of a clerk.
 - Jane is active in various student organizations. She works very well with others probably because she is a sincere and honest person. She is enthusiastic and hard working and is very much respected by the faculty and students alike. She is a mature person who takes her responsibilities seriously.
 - Jane is one of the top students in my class. She received the highest grade in the class during the fall semester; one of the highest grades I have ever awarded. Jane's class participation indicates an enthusiasm for the study of law and a skill in legal reasoning. Jane is also active in several student organizations, including the Public Interest Law Society, and work's part time for a local law firm. Jane is well liked by her fellow students.
 - John was a student in my ____ class this past semester. His frequent and enthusiastic participation in class discussion as well as his probing inquiries outside of class demonstrated the seriousness and dedication with which he approaches the study of law. On a personal note, John possesses a quick wit and warm personality.
 - Jane is an intelligent and conscientious student. The written work she did for my class (four assignments) was always well above average. She displayed an ability to express her ideas clearly and concisely on paper. Jane is also very articulate in the classroom setting.
 - On a more personal basis, I have found Jane to be a gracious individual with a warm smile and a delightful sense of humor and perspective. She is one of those rare individuals that one senses is headed for certain success.
 - As a student in my _____ class, John has distinguished himself with consistency of preparation, obvious grasp of issues, clarity of reasoning, and an ability to express himself in front of his classmates. He was always keenly interested in the subject matter, and was quick to initiate discussion of important topics. His examination results were consistent with his high class standing.
 - I have known Jane Doe for over a year and have been very impressed by her intelligence and enthusiasm. She is a very bright, well-read individual who strives for excellence in all she does. She is articulate, and displays the ability to think clearly and creatively on her feet. She is very motivated and approaches work in a conscientious and hard-working manner. She has a sincere desire to continue her education and has the intelligence and motivation to perform at a high level.
 - Jane Doe has compiled a remarkable record at Loyola University Chicago School of Law. Scholastically, she has achieved the highest laurels. She has been an editor of the Loyola Law Journal and has been extremely active in curricular and extracurricular affairs. She has achieved a status of renown among her peers and a reputation for excellence with the faculty and the administration.

- John Doe is well-liked by his classmates and has demonstrated on several occasions that he is willing to do more than is required. As an academic tutor for my course, he has conducted class review sessions and received reviews that he did an outstanding job. His work on law review is additional evidence of his positive attitude toward the study of law, and his work as a leader of the student bar association demonstrates both his willingness to contribute and the high esteem in which he is generally held.

Concluding paragraph samples:

- Jane Doe can be best described as intelligent, sincere and hard working. As a former law clerk to a federal district judge, I know that she has the ability and desire to be a very capable judicial clerk. I highly recommend Jane for a clerkship in your chambers.
- For all these reasons, I can highly recommend Jane Doe without reservation for your chambers. I know that she will perform well and be an asset to your chambers. Please feel free to contact me regarding this letter or my impression of Jane.
- In summary, I believe that John would be an excellent choice as a judicial clerk. He has demonstrated a high level of competence and exhibits a temperament that ideally suits him for the position he seeks. I recommend him to you without reservation.
- I am extremely supportive of John Doe, and I am confident that he would make an outstanding judicial clerk in your chambers. I highly recommend him to you, and if I may be of further assistance please contact me.
- Few predictions can be made without absolute assuredness. In this instance, I am absolutely certain that your choice of Jane Doe as your clerk will be a decision you will long cherish having made.
- John Doe is a well rounded person and a fine and dedicated student. He is certain to be an asset to your chambers and I highly recommend that you consider him seriously for a position as your clerk.
- John would be an asset to the legal profession in any capacity. I am certain that he would be a worthy addition to your staff. I recommend him wholeheartedly.