

## WOLVERINE BAR ASSOCIATION



### SUMMER CLERKSHIP PROGRAM GUIDE

The Wolverine Bar Association (“WBA”) was established by a number of African American attorney’s during the 1930’s. However, its roots came much earlier, in 1919, when the Harlan Law Club was formed by black attorneys in the Detroit area who were excluded from other bar associations because of discrimination. The name recognized U.S. Supreme Court Justice John M. Harlan, who pushed for equity for all. His philosophy was exemplified in the dissenting opinion of the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court Case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). The Wolverine Bar Association replaced the Harlan Law Club and expanded its influence from Detroit to the entire “Wolverine” state. The Wolverine Bar Association, like its predecessor the Harlan Law Club, is a powerful mechanism by which African American attorneys in Michigan address the unique and distinct needs of their community for legal service, representation, and protection.

Nearly two decades ago, the Summer Clerkship Program (“SCP”) began in cooperation with the WBA. To date, the program has placed more than 300 students from underrepresented demographic groups and economically disadvantaged backgrounds in summer clerkships with top-rated Michigan Law Firms. Participating firms and corporations pay the SCP interns’ salaries directly, while the WBA incurs the program costs for interview workshops, training, and receptions.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

WBA strives to increase the number of attorneys who are committed to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in the legal profession, and can bring a diversity of perspectives, based on life experiences, while employed in well-respected positions, such as partners, associates, in-house counsel, and judicial clerks in Southeastern Michigan. In line with this goal, the Summer Clerkship was created.

In partnership with several law firms and corporations, the Summer Clerkship Program places first-year law students in clerkship positions that will provide opportunities to establish a network of contacts, develop practice skills, and acquire other benefits. Working in a challenging professional environment will allow the participants to gain the skills necessary to launch a successful legal career. The Program provides participating employers an opportunity additional mechanism to affirm their individual commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, while simultaneously underscoring the importance of promoting diversity in the legal community, at-large. Some Law firm placements are also available for second and third-year students as well, through the Judicial Externship Program.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

WBA accepts, encourages, and considers applicants of all backgrounds. Eligibility for the Summer Clerkship is as follows:

To be eligible to participate in the SCP program, an applicants must: (i) demonstrate a commitment to the mission of the WBA, which *may*

include, but is not limited to, life experiences as a member of an underrepresented demographic group; (ii) be in good standing at their law school his or her law school; (iii) demonstrate strong research, writing and analytical abilities (iv) have ties to Southeastern Michigan and a desire to practice in metropolitan Detroit after completing law school; (v) have completed a legal writing course before the clerkship begins; (vi) by the time the clerkship starts, have completed **no more than 30 credit hours** toward graduation; and (vii) expect to graduate no later than May 2028 (Dual degree and part-time students must complete the applicable portions of the application).

## **DUAL PROGRAM EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

Acceptance into **both** the Summer Clerkship Program and Judicial Externship Program may qualify a student to participate in our dual program, where the students split their summers between a firm and a federal judge. Acceptance into both the Summer Clerkship Program and Judicial Externship Program provides students the opportunity to split their summers between a firm and a federal judge.

Students accepted into the dual program will spend a minimum of 160 hours in chambers with their assigned judge and approximately eight 8 weeks with a law firm/company. Students interested in working at JEP firms may also split their summer. JEP partners with several law firms that accept referrals from the program. Partner firms include: The Miller Law Firm, P.C.; Brooks Kushman P.C.; Pitt McGehee; and Maddin Hauser.

If you're not interested in splitting your summer, please select the option on the form to opt-out

## **APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

If you wish to be considered for the 2026 Summer Clerkship you must submit the following materials **no later than noon 12:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time), on Saturday, January 31, 2026:**

- Submit completed electronic application form(s). (Links to the applications for both Programs may be found below.)
- A short cover letter explaining your (i) career goals and how you believe participating in the Program will further those goals; (ii) commitment to practicing law in Michigan and connection to the Southeastern Michigan, and (iii) commitment to service through the WBA. Please note that an applicant may be required to further substantiate their ties to Southeastern Michigan during the application and interview processes.
- A current resume.
- An official or unofficial copy of your law school transcript. If an unofficial transcript is not available by the application deadline, you must provide a letter from each professor, on the school's letterhead, reflecting your performance in each course. Applicants who are selected to interview with the Program's Committee must bring a copy of their transcript to the interview.
- A writing sample **not exceeding five (5) pages in length**, double-spaced, in the form of a legal memorandum or brief, showing the applicant's ability to identify and analyze legal issues. The writing sample may be an excerpt from a larger project, if clearly identified as such. The writing sample should demonstrate your legal analytical skills. The writing sample should not contain any comments or markings from your professor/instructor.
- Two letters of recommendation from current or former employers, professors, or someone familiar with your work ethic, character, and judgment.
- One-page statement exploring how you would advance the historical and current mission of the WBA.

This year's applications are available electronically. Applicants are required to submit all application materials as a **single PDF** following the completion of the online application.

### **SELECTION PROCESS**

Due to the volume of applications received, the Committee will complete an initial evaluation of each candidate based upon the application package and the criteria listed below. Candidates selected to interview with the Committee will be notified by e-mail no later than February 10, 2026. Interviews are scheduled to be held Saturday, February 21, 2026 (in-person or via Zoom). Applicants will be scheduled for one 20 to 30-minute interview. Each virtual interviewee should plan to log on at least fifteen (15) minutes before their scheduled interviews in case there are any technical issues

Although the Committee does consider an applicant's class ranking and grade point average, other factors, including the applicant's work history, undergraduate record, extracurricular activities, and oral and written communication skills are also reviewed. After completion of all interviews, the Committee will select applicants for placement with the participating employers. Decisions on acceptance into the Program and Placement will be communicated via email no later than seven (7) days following the interviews.

The selected candidates will be **required** to attend the formal SCP/JEP Training Seminar on Saturday, May 16, 2026, prior to starting their summer programs.

### **PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS**

Participating employers accept the candidate selected for placement by the Committee. It is expected that participants will be given the same type of work assignments and be paid the same salary as other clerks or summer associates at the firm or company. If you are selected by a participating employer, you will be treated and evaluated in accordance with the standards and guidelines established by the participating employer and are not to be accorded any special treatment. Although not required, employers are encouraged to consider the applicants for

employment as a summer associate the following year if warranted by the applicant's performance and the employer's hiring needs. Some firms have recruitment policies that require participants to re-apply to participate in the firm's summer program the following year. Some of the 2025 participating employers are\*:

Bodman PLC	Dykema Gossett PLLC	Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn LLP	Dickinson Wright PLLC
Plunkett Cooney, P.C.	Butzel Long PC	Miller, Canfield, Paddock & Stone, P.L.C.	Warner, Norcross, & Judd LLP

\* Participating law firms are subject to change.

\*\*Inquiries about the application process for the Summer Clerkship Program may be directed to Deja Davis at [dmdavis@lplegal.com](mailto:dmdavis@lplegal.com).

\*\*\*Inquiries about the application process for the Judicial Externship Program may be directed to Danielle Smart at [daniellesmart12@gmail.com](mailto:daniellesmart12@gmail.com) and James Johnson at [johnsonj@millercanfield.com](mailto:johnsonj@millercanfield.com).