

## Letter from BYU Advancement Vice President and Former Law School Dean Kevin J Worthen

My two years as a judicial clerk were extremely interesting and rewarding, and I would recommend that students pursue clerkship options based solely on the personal satisfaction they will receive during the experience. However, the longer I am away from the actual clerkship, the more I have come to appreciate the positive impact that a judicial clerkship can have on a person's life and career in ways that I had not anticipated while clerking.

First, clerking is a great educational experience, at either the trial or appellate level. It gives recent graduates a chance to see how arguments and cases are actually presented in court, and more importantly, how judges respond to the different tactics and styles that attorneys employ. It also gives the clerks an opportunity to struggle with real, live legal issues for themselves, as they work to assist the judge in making the correct decision. No first year trial attorney has spent as much time or been involved in a variety of trials as a judicial clerk for a trial judge. The educational experience is simply unparalleled.

Second, a clerk often creates a lifetime network of friends and professional acquaintances who can have a positive impact on the course of a clerk's future career. The people with whom a clerk works, especially judges and other clerks, are either in influential positions—in the case of judges—or often headed in that direction—in the case of clerks. Some of the clerks whom I came to know well while clerking are now serving as federal appellate judges, advisors to the President, and yes, even law professors. An ongoing relationship with such persons and with the judge (who, after all, had enough political clout to obtain a judicial appointment) can often lead to exciting career opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable.

Finally, a judicial clerkship provides a person with a unique and valuable experience that is increasingly difficult to find in the legal community—the opportunity to work with a true mentor. Most judges treat their clerks almost like their children—taking time to help them understand what is going on, pointing out ways in which they can improve, and sharing with them the valuable lessons they have learned from their vast experience in law and in life. And this mentoring relationship continues, and even deepens in some cases, after the clerkship ends. I have often faced critical career or legal decisions, and have found the advice invaluable. I recently heard one of his former clerks refer to the judge as his “father-in-law.” I am sure countless other clerks consider “their” judges as their fathers and others in the law because of the lifelong bond that was formed during the clerkship.

These and other positive aspects of a clerkship are available to judicial clerks at any level of the state and federal court systems. I wholeheartedly encourage students to do all they can to secure them for themselves.

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*Dean Worthen clerked for Judge Malcolm R. Wilkey, U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia from 1982 to 1983, and for Justice Byron R. White the following year.*