

Serving as a paralegal intern at Burns & Levinson LLP this past summer has been a truly eye-opening and enjoyable experience. Prior to my internship, I had developed a strong interest in the law and the American legal system through Boston University's pre-law extracurricular activities and select courses. However, as I considered pursuing a legal career, I realized that I knew little about the typical workload and experiences of a practicing lawyer as well as the general nature of a law firm environment. My internship at Burns & Levinson provided answers to these questions while also enabling me to learn about and directly assist with the stages of family law cases.

Based in the firm's Private Client Group, I received assignments simultaneously from paralegals, associates, and partners in each of the Group's three subsections: Trusts & Estates, Domestic Relations, and Fiduciary Litigation. This arrangement ensured that I was always occupied with several projects at once, and allowed me to gain exposure to trust administration, estate planning, divorce, guardianship, and other family matters throughout the course of the summer. I was also able to discover and take on more work in the areas that were of greatest interest to me as I progressed through the internship.

While at first I was assigned mostly legal administrative tasks such as compiling and updating binders with pleadings documents, identifying relevant information in financial statements, and redacting privileged material, I was able to assume roles requiring increasing amounts of responsibility as the weeks passed. After working with a paralegal to complete all necessary documents for a petition for temporary guardianship, I was asked to draft motions and petitions for various matters independently. Through this experience, I obtained a solid understanding of the petition process for family cases and gained familiarity with the language commonly implemented in these types of documents. I was also able to work with attorneys to form strategies for presenting the clients' situations through these written materials that would most effectively convince the court to decide in their favor. It was fascinating to witness firsthand how the argumentative writing skills that I have developed as a student in the humanities could be put into practice in a legal setting, and I found being directly involved in the process extremely satisfying.

Additionally, I was pleased to meet and interact with the firm's clients by serving as a witness in estate planning matters and following up with clients over the phone and through email about new developments. Near the end of my internship, I was provided the opportunity to practice my petition-writing and client relations skills in a higher-stakes setting when I was placed in charge of the paralegal work for an emergency guardianship matter. Over the course of just a few days, I prepared all necessary petition documents to be presented to the court while remaining in close contact with the clients to ensure that the written information accurately reflected their circumstances and needs. It was truly gratifying when temporary guardianship was granted in time, much to the clients' relief.

Along with assisting with particular cases, I was also asked by several attorneys to create interoffice research memos about specific new amendments to state and federal laws relevant to Private Client Group matters, allowing me to gain valuable experience locating and reading passed and proposed legislation. The information from these memos was shared with the entire Private Client Group along with other legal updates during departmental lunch meetings, in which I was invited to participate.

Overall, I was pleasantly surprised by the sociable and collaborative atmosphere that I found at Burns & Levinson. Employees of all levels at the firm were eager to introduce themselves when I first arrived, and

everyone with whom I worked took care to ensure that expectations were clear and reasonable and to answer any questions I had. At one point during the summer, one of the paralegals passed on an assignment to me from an associate at the firm whom I had never met. After I completed the task, the associate came around my office to introduce himself and thank me for my work. It was extremely kind of him to take time out of his very busy schedule to do this, and I found that most if not all of the other firm members were similarly supportive. I was also able to get to know the firm's summer associates through training sessions and firm-wide community service activities, who, as current law students, were happy to provide me with tips for law school and the application process.

Another valuable component of my internship at Burns & Levinson was my frequent visits to Suffolk Probate and Family Court, where I made filings and obtained updates on the status of cases within the court system. I also received opportunities to attend hearings at the court, where I could observe attorneys, not limited to those from Burns & Levinson, presenting their cases to a judge. I was deeply impressed by the judges' knowledge and command of the room, and after watching them in action, I aspire to perhaps one day fulfill such a role myself.

My internship at Burns & Levinson has provided me with a concrete understanding of what working in a law firm entails. From participating in the program, I am now confident that a legal career is the path I should pursue.