The Chester County Bar Association’s 1L Diverse Law Student Summer Program has a Successful First Year!

In an effort to promote the practice of law in Chester County and to achieve greater diversity in our legal community, the Chester County Bar Association’s President, Craig A. Styer, established a “1L Diverse Law Student Summer Program”. This program was designed to afford first year law students who self-identify with those groups historically discriminated against on the basis of disability, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression or who otherwise comes from a disadvantaged background the opportunity for summer employment in the field of law. Styer believes “advancing diversity and inclusion is the right thing to do”.

Eleven candidates from area law schools were interviewed for four positions at the law firms of Fox Rothschild LLP, Gawthrop Greenwood, PC, Lamb McErlane PC and MacElree Harvey Ltd. The Chester County Bar Foundation also provided a grant to support a fifth student that worked with both the Domestic Violence Center of Chester County and Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania. During the 8-week program, these five students worked hands on with Chester County attorneys and also attended numerous speaking engagements with Judges from the Chester County Court of Common Pleas and the United State District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, the Chester County District Attorney’s office, prominent attorneys, as well as several social and networking events.

The summer program culminated with a reception held at the Chester County Bar Association where the students shared their experience with all those in attendance. Some of the comments they offered follow:
What did you gain from this experience?

“I gained a sense of what it is like to work in a law firm as an associate and exposure to areas of law that I would not have otherwise considered. I also gained a sense of just how welcoming and collegial the attorneys of Chester County are through my various interactions with the bar association and its members.” – Dean Lentzeres

“Through this experience, I have tremendous opportunities through the Chester County Bar Association's Diversity Program. In my position with Lamb McErlane, I observed depositions, hearings, and client meetings. I worked actively on real-life cases, drafting memoranda, pleadings, and correspondence. I am astounded by how much I have grown through my experience this summer-- personally, professionally, and academically.” – Brittany Deitch

“It was an invaluable opportunity to gain practical experience in a setting of the legal profession that is particularly difficult to gain entry into.” – Issac Jean-Pierre

“I gained a love for Chester County...[and] the opportunity to meet so many different people from lawyers to judges. I’ve learned about the area and the courthouse in this county” – Raven Trueheart

“I gained legal research, writing, and analysis experience. I knew very little about law firm work when I began this program – I knew that it sounded interesting to me, that I wanted to experience it, and I wanted to improve my legal writing skills” – Germain E. DeMartinis

What would you have been doing this summer if you hadn't had this opportunity?

“I have no idea what I would be doing this summer. I would probably be in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where I attend law school, working for a small firm or a solo practitioner. This opportunity brought me back home to Pennsylvania, where I plan to live and practice.”
– Brittany L. Dietch

“If not for this opportunity, I would not have had a paid position with a law firm this summer. My goal for this summer was to gain law firm experience; for a 1L (or 2LE in my case) to find a paid summer position with a law firm is rare.”- Germain E. DeMartinis

“If I had not had the opportunity to participate in the Chester County Bar Association's 1L Diversity Summer Internship Program, I most likely would have been working . . . in Philadelphia. This program opened my eyes to the enormous potential of Chester County to be a great place both to live and to practice law.”-Dean Lentzeres

“I honestly don’t know . . . . I probably wouldn’t have a paid internship. I would have sat in on some court cases to learn more about trial work and the court system.” –Raven Trueheart

“If it had it not been for this opportunity, I would have attempted to find legal work elsewhere, but would have been extremely likely that the position would be unpaid.”- Issac Jean-Pierre

How valuable were the connections you've made?
“I have met attorneys and judges from all walks of life whom I know will be an integral part of my professional network throughout my career.” – Dean Lentzeres

“The networking opportunity alone has been life-changing. I have enjoyed lunches with judges and attorneys, played softball with esteemed members of the Bar, and worked with the most intelligent, ambitious, and collegial lawyers I have ever known. I look forward to being a part of the Chester County legal community in the future.” – Brittany L. Dietch

“The connections I have made in Chester county have been extremely valuable. Everyone I have met have been friendly and helpful. I have learned so much from the different attorneys and judges I have met.” - Raven Trueheart

“I personally think that the connections made this summer will be invaluable for many years to come in both an academic and a professional context.” - Issac Jean-Pierre

“I’ve gained outstanding legal writing experience, been given opportunities to research and learn about interesting areas of law that were previously foreign to me, and maybe the most impressive part of this program are the connections I’ve made. I’ve personally shaken hands and had conversations with nine judges this summer – before this program I’ve never spoken to a single judge! I’ve also had lunches with and been able to have private conversations with partners from multiple law firms – these are connections that are invaluable to my legal education and also to my getting a job when I graduate.” - Germain E. DeMartinis

Should this program continue and if so why?

“This program should definitely continue, because it provides professional opportunities to students who otherwise would not have them. The legal profession has a need for attorneys who bring diverse perspectives and can better serve their communities. I have worked hard, learned a lot, and had fun along the way. I feel privileged and honored to be a pioneer of this program, and I hope that I helped to pave the way for future generations of diverse, first-year law students.”

– Brittany Deitch

“From a law school student’s perspective, it would be foolish not to continue this program. I’ve been introduced to Chester County and in so doing discovered a new, exceptional place to practice law, learned about multiple legal opportunities in West Chester, and found the borough to be a very beautiful and familial place to work.” – Germain E. DeMartinis

“I believe this program should continue. Chester County is a gem that not a lot of people know about. This program will allow more residents of PA and Delaware to experience all that Chester County has to offer.” – Raven Trueheart

“This program should continue because it gives 1L students the chance to apply the concepts that they have learned to a real-life situation in order be better-prepared for subsequent years of law school and eventual practice.” - Issac Jean-Pierre

“The program absolutely needs to continue because of the benefits it provides to both the students who participate and to Chester County as a whole. Many students who attend school in the Philadelphia region do not think to consider, or are simply not aware of Chester County as a viable place to practice. This program expands the horizon of diversity students as they establish their careers and opens doors to a welcoming professional network and countless job opportunities.”

– Issac Jean-Pierre
opportunities. From Chester County's point of view, attracting law students from diverse backgrounds adds critical new perspectives to the practice of law in the county and strengthens the community.”- Dean Lentzeres

Do you plan to pursue your legal career in Chester County when you graduate?

“After finishing the first year of law school, post-graduation prospects seem so far away, but whenever that distant time actually arrives, I would be more than excited to pursue a legal career in Chester County.”- Issac Jean-Pierre

“After these past two months, I cannot imagine practicing anywhere except Chester County. I plan to return to the County next summer and move here permanently to live and work after graduation.”- Brittany L. Dietch

“Yes, I plan to pursue my legal career in Chester County after graduation.”- Dean Lentzeres

“Because of this program I know that West Chester is a place I’d like to live and like to practice law in.”- Germain E. DeMartinis

“Participating in this internship has allowed me to gain a love for Chester County and has made Chester County one of the top places where I am considering practicing law.”- Raven Trueheart

Would you recommend this program to other law students?

“The Temple Beasley School of Law Career Center and any students who ask me will hear strong recommendations for this program. I wasn’t raised with a law pedigree, didn’t know a single lawyer growing up, and didn’t know how to get a summer job with a law firm. Through this program and the opportunities it’s offered, however, I’ve catapulted my legal education forward. I will definitely recommend this program to other law students.”- Germain E. DeMartinis

“I would, without hesitation, recommend this program to other law students.”- Issac Jean-Pierre

“I would enthusiastically recommend this program to other law students. It has been a wonderful experience that will stay with me for years to come.”- Dean Lentzeres

“I would definitely recommend this unique program to other law students. Additionally, more law students should have the privilege of coming out to Chester County to see everything that this vibrant community has to offer.”- Brittany Deitch

The Chester County Bar Association plans to continue its efforts to expand the diversity of our legal community and looks forward to providing additional 1L law students this fantastic opportunity again next summer. “I truly believe this initiative will provide opportunities to individuals who may never have the opportunity to practice in our County. At the same time, we will make our Association and County even better”, said Styer.

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