

# Testimonials from Legal Externs

U.S. Attorney's Office  
District of Idaho

## 2008 Testimonials

I learned more about how to be a practicing attorney during two summer externships at the Pocatello branch office than I learned during two years of law school. During both externships I worked primarily on actual cases, and during the second summer I appeared in court under a student license. Law school classes provide theory and background about the law. However, nothing in law school comes close to working on a real case, especially when there is an actual defendant who has to live with the outcome.

The atmosphere in the Pocatello office was excellent. All of the attorneys went out of their way to make sure that I was included in all aspects of the cases assigned to me, and I frequently attended meetings with agents and opposing counsel. In addition, all of the work assigned to me was significant and had an impact on the outcome of each case. For example, I conducted my own research and proposed my own recommendations when I appeared in court.

A benefit of working in the Pocatello office is that it is small and intimate. I quickly met most of the people involved with the District Court. One of my most valuable experiences was interacting with the judges and opposing counsel from the Federal Defender's Office. The judges were flexible with me since I was a student. However, they did not hesitate to challenge me during hearings to demonstrate a point or to impress upon areas of improvement. I also spoke with opposing counsel before and after hearings, and they were extremely encouraging and accommodating. I never once felt slighted because I was a student.

Despite working in a small office, I never felt that my opportunities were limited. I participated in most of the lunchtime presentations given in the Boise office by teleconference. These "brownbag" presentations were helpful to learn more about other areas of law within the United States Attorney's Office and beyond. I was also impressed with the variety of people and opportunities in the District of Idaho.

I would highly recommend spending a summer or two as an extern at the United States Attorney's Office, especially in the Pocatello branch office. My experiences over the past two summers have been essential to help me prepare for employment as an attorney. More importantly, I met a lot of great people who I look forward to seeing in the future.

Thomas Smith  
S.J. Quinney College of Law  
University of Utah  
Class of 2009

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My summer externship at the U.S. Attorney's Office was one of the highlights of my time in law school. The attorneys genuinely cared about my summer experience, and made sure that the projects I worked on involved an area of law in which I was interested.

I worked on a variety of cases including criminal forfeiture, federal juvenile law, trademark counterfeiting, drug and gun crimes, tax and bankruptcy fraud, environmental crimes, illegal immigration, and federal misdemeanors. I wrote sentencing memorandum, indictments, a response to a habeas corpus petition, and a motion to dismiss an appeal to the Ninth Circuit. I also researched and wrote memos on a wide variety of legal issues.

I worked with agents from the FBI, ATF, IRS, Immigration and Citizenship Enforcement, and the Bureau of Land Management. The agents were great to work with and treated me just as if I were one of the attorneys. I appeared in federal court in front of the magistrate and district court judges, and represented the government in arraignments, plea changes, and sentencings. I also prepared an entire case for trial.

The attorneys I worked with are great examples for any law student. They were patient, and concerned with making sure I learned while I worked. Each attorney is exceptionally knowledgeable in their field, and each were willing to share this knowledge with the externs. The attorneys were also fun to work with, and each attorney made sure that I enjoyed my summer in their office.

The staff members at the U.S. Attorney's Office are also helpful and friendly. Everyone in the office was willing to answer my questions, and to provide suggestions for how to handle situations when I was unsure of what to do next for an assigned project.

Part of the uniqueness of this externship is the opportunity to meet and to work with students from other law schools. The externs that worked at the U.S. Attorney's Office this summer came from four different law schools, and we were encouraged to get to know each other, and to discuss and share our work.

My externship at the U.S. Attorney's Office significantly improved my research and writing skills, as well as my ability to analyze and apply the law; however the most valuable skill I improved was my judgment in managing the responsibilities assigned to me.

I highly recommend that any law student who is interested in spending their summer developing every skill that is important to the practice of law apply for this externship. The U.S. Attorney's Office has the reputation for having one of the best externships in Idaho, and I completely agree with this description of their externship program.

*Amanda Rekow  
University of Idaho College of Law  
Class of 2009*

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I highly recommend the USAO-Boise externship program. I worked for the office following my first year of law school. I cannot imagine a better place to learn about the law. No one I know from my first year class had a comparable experience. No one.

I could speak for days about why this program is so exceptional. Here are the highlights:

**Diverse Work.** I participated in the litigation of criminal and civil cases. I drafted legal memoranda, motions, and briefs in cases involving appeals to the Ninth Circuit, the death penalty, competency hearings, illegal reentry, mass drug and money-laundering conspiracies, rights to speedy trial, and environmental claims. I got a taste of nearly everything while still having the opportunity to work on a few in-depth projects with a number of talented attorney-mentors.

**Meaningful and Quality Work.** Many of my friends at other summer jobs were disappointed to find that their work was never really used. In contrast, every single memo I wrote became part of a larger conversation with the legal team or served as the basis for the final court document. Everything I worked on was a necessary contribution to a serious legal matter or answered an important legal question.

**Exceptional Training in Legal Writing.** Our weekly legal writing workshops were invaluable. In addition, I got constant feedback from the attorneys. My writing drastically improved over the summer.

**Inspiring and Diverse Brown-Bag Lunches.** Each week, we learned about a new area of the law from attorney-experts. This gave student externs the opportunity to interact with a wide cross-section of attorneys and staff, and learn about areas of law to which we had no previous exposure.

**Outstanding Legal Mentoring from both Attorneys and Staff.** I had the opportunity to work with attorneys and support staff with various levels of experience and expertise. Everyone was available to offer advice and answer questions about the law. I forged relationships that I maintain to this day.

**Unparalleled Collaboration.** I was treated as a colleague during all of my interactions. I was expected to contribute, disagree, and ask evocative questions. I felt that my opinion was valued and taken seriously.

If you have the opportunity to work with this fantastic office it will enliven your legal education. I simply cannot say enough good things about this program.

Jennifer Heidt White  
University of Washington School of Law  
Class of 2010

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## 2007 Testimonials

My externship with the U.S. Attorney's Office was both challenging and rewarding. I was impressed by everyone's sincere interest in ensuring that I had a valuable experience. Coming into the externship, I wanted to be exposed to a variety of practice areas. Per my request, I was provided opportunities to work in a range of areas including civil procedure, trusts, real property, asset forfeiture, criminal law, immigration law, water law, and environmental law. As a result, I also worked with several different attorneys and was able to observe distinct approaches to practicing law. The attorneys I worked with were very knowledgeable and did high-caliber work. They were well-respected by both their colleagues and the judiciary, and many of them had built local and national reputations within their particular areas.

The atmosphere at the office was very collegial. Everyone was helpful and encouraging and I never felt hesitant to ask questions or seek direction on a project. The attorneys made a conscience effort to make me part of the "case team," inviting me to participate in various aspects of the cases on which I was working. While I did get plenty of chances to develop my researching and writing abilities, I was also included in client meetings, settlement negotiations, and court appearances. In fact, with my limited license I was able to appear in court before all four federal judges for arraignments, sentencing hearings, and a preliminary injunction hearing. Few, if any, of my classmates had those kinds of opportunities.

I always looked forward to the brownbag presentations that were held each week during lunch. Experienced and knowledgeable Assistant U.S. Attorneys instructed us on different areas of the law (e.g., drug prosecutions, federal debt collection, statutory protection of archeological sites, asset forfeiture, and natural resource law) and provided concrete examples from cases they had prosecuted. It was a great chance for us to ask questions and interact with the attorneys on a more informal basis. I also enjoyed interacting and comparing experiences with law students from other areas of the country.

Apart from my experience in the office, I would recommend an externship at the U.S. Attorney's Office because of the great lifestyle Boise affords. My wife and I took full advantage of the city's vibrant downtown, beautiful parks, and recreational opportunities.

My externship experience this summer both allowed me to apply things I had learned in law school and provided me a positive base upon which I can build a rewarding legal career. For all these reasons, I highly recommend an externship with the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Ammon Taylor  
J. Reuben Clark Law School  
Brigham Young University  
Class of 2008

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Spending thirteen weeks in Boise, Idaho at the U.S. Attorney's Office was the perfect way to spend my summer. I discovered interesting and new practice areas, refined legal reading, thinking, and writing skills, gained unique insight into the federal court system, discovered what life as an Assistant U.S. Attorney is like, and developed genuine relationships with professional and personal mentors.

During my summer, I learned about varied practice areas in both criminal and civil law. Under the supervision of Criminal Division attorneys, I researched and wrote memorandums, wrote motions, and drafted indictments on guns, drugs, gangs, intellectual property crimes, asset forfeiture, and immigration. Under the supervision of the Civil Division, I worked on environmental and natural resources cases and worked on a large class-action lawsuit. Additionally, I was lucky enough to draft a brief for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

As a summer extern, it is easy to gain considerable experience in federal court. Attorneys often came by my desk to encourage me to attend various court proceedings. During the summer, I witnessed grand jury proceedings, pre-trial conferences, plea agreements, and sentencing hearings.

Everyone at the U.S. Attorney in Boise is passionate about the program and is genuinely excited to help craft a summer that is suited to a student's own personal interests and goals. Best yet, the Assistant United States Attorneys are serious about helping to cultivate law students' careers by involving externs in everyday activities, giving feedback that is outstanding in both its quality and quantity, and by making themselves available as mentors to externs curious about various career paths.

The attorneys, staff, and externs of the U.S. Attorney's Office formed a cohesive community that was a safe, but challenging place to explore new skill sets and ideas. From conference meetings to a trip to the Snake River Stampede, I always felt like an integral team member throughout the summer. If a student wants to find out what life is like at a U.S. Attorney's Office, I can't imagine a better place to summer.

Christopher Sherman  
Yale Law School  
Class of 2009

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## 2006 Testimonials

This summer externship has provided a challenging and rewarding experience. From the first day of work, I felt like I was thrown into the action. I was immediately assigned to write a 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit brief involving immigration law - an area in which I had no prior experience. Throughout my externship, I also had the opportunity to perform research involving such areas as drug distribution, asset forfeiture, and money laundering. The attorneys are very helpful and encouraging. They provided direction and advice while also allowing me freedom to fully develop my skills.

Each Wednesday the office presented a famed "brown bag." This is an opportunity for externs to eat lunch while listening to various lawyers share experiences related to a specific area of the law. These presentations included such topics as historic drug prosecutions, federal debt collection, asset forfeiture, protection of archeological sites, land and resource law, and drug manufacturing. Listening to these presentations from experienced attorneys has broadened my understanding of various area's of the law.

It has been a great honor to work this summer with such skilled and professional lawyers. The mentoring I've received has helped create a solid foundation upon which I can build a legal career. I highly recommend an externship at the U.S. Attorney's Office to any law-student.

Christopher A. Booker  
University of Idaho College of Law  
2<sup>nd</sup> Year Law Student

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My externship has allowed me to work with some of the best legal minds in the state and Assistant U.S. Attorneys with national reputations. Working with the high caliber of attorneys here has given me the confidence to be successful in my future career. While there are many good externship opportunities, it is difficult to imagine another opportunity that offers both the depth and breadth of experiences one is afforded at the US Attorney's Office.

During my externship I filed multiple briefs with the Ninth Circuit, wrote trial motions, examined witnesses at trial, and helped defend the United States in a \$25M dollar lawsuit. In addition, I drafted proposed legislation, engaged in settlement negotiations over a major contract dispute, worked on both criminal and civil matters, had meetings with the U.S. Attorney, the U.S. Marshal, and the Idaho Attorney General. I've been the primary contact on a couple of matters allowing me the opportunity to become more comfortable with client contact and get a real taste for what the practice of law entails. I've handled one matter all the way from negotiation to judgment.

Working with other law students from around the region proved a treat, as well. This summer there were six law students from five schools and four states. It was great to trade notes with people from other schools and backgrounds. We had weekly brown bag luncheons to develop our knowledge in various areas directed by a number of Assistant US Attorneys. We also took time on Friday for luncheons to trade "war" stories. There were weekly ultimate

frisbee games, a trip to the rodeo, and after-work social gatherings—both impromptu and more organized affairs by groups such as the Young Lawyers Section of the Idaho Bar Association.

While I am definitely biased, I can think of few finer places to spend the summer developing my skills as a lawyer than Boise, Idaho. It's a great community and a fantastic place to live.

James E. Vogt, Jr.  
Lewis and Clark Law School  
Class of 2007

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Working as an extern for the U.S. Attorney's Office has been a great experience. It was an excellent way to put the doctrinal teachings of law school into practical application. An extern here is exposed to a wide variety of work that is hard to find most places. You are made to feel like one of the team and are immediately immersed in handling various aspects of cases. I would recommend the extern program to any law student who is looking for a rewarding summer experience.

Brian Marx  
University of Idaho College of Law  
2<sup>nd</sup> Year Law Student

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I really enjoyed my summer at the US Attorney's Office in Boise. It gave the opportunity to learn what both criminal and civil Assistant US Attorneys do on a day to day basis. Each extern is assigned a supervising attorney who ensures that she has enough work and provides guidance when necessary. However, externs can receive work from any attorneys in the office. This system seems to provide an adequate, but not excessive amount of supervision. I had the opportunity to write a number of appellate briefs for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which really improved my legal writing.

The US Attorney's Office seems committed to providing externs with context for their work. Whenever I was assigned a project, the assigning attorney explained where it fit in the context of the legal strategy. In addition to drafting briefs and motions, I was also able to attend court numerous times for different motions, hearings, and trials. Attending these court proceedings, contributed to my understanding of the context of the work I was doing.

The US Attorney's Office really treated me like a young professional attorney and I had a great experience. It was also fun to spend time with the other externs. We had lunch together nearly every day, and occasionally an attorney or two from the office would join us. On Wednesdays, we had "brownbags," where different attorneys from the office would explain their practice areas to us over lunch.



If you have the opportunity to spend a summer or even a semester at the US Attorney's Office in Boise, I strongly encourage you to take it.

Christine Gealy  
Boston University  
Class of 2008