

## **Court Launches Judicial Fellowship Program**

Thirty-five judges of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas have agreed to host up to 45 law school graduates as judicial fellows to provide them with substantive legal experience while benefitting the court system with this additional legal talent.

The Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas created a Judicial Fellowship Program in conjunction with the Philadelphia based law schools - the Earle Mack School of Law at Drexel University, the University of Pennsylvania Law School and Temple University Beasley School of Law - to address the difficult hiring climate for lawyers that many recent law graduates are facing. Due to the popularity of the Judicial Fellowship Program, three Philadelphia area law schools - Rutgers University Law School, Villanova University School of Law and Widener University School of Law - joined the program last week, doubling the number of participating schools.

The Judicial Fellowship Program provides high-caliber law graduates professional development opportunities. At the same time, the judicial fellows help the busy court carry out key functions and maintain its superior quality of service to the Philadelphia community. Demands on the court have intensified with the existence of numerous vacancies on the bench that have not been filled with interim appointments due to the Commonwealth's budgetary constraints.

Judicial Fellows work at least 20 hours a week in the civil, criminal, family and orphans divisions of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas and Municipal Courts, carrying out the same duties as paid judicial clerks. The Fellowships help recent graduates gain valuable experience and strengthen their marketability for obtaining a paid position in law. Judges select judicial fellows through an application process administered by the court.

Judge Lisa M. Rau developed the program with help from Professor Chapin Cimino of the Earle Mack School of Law at Drexel University as well as faculty and administrators from career services offices at the University of Pennsylvania's Law School and Temple Beasley School of Law. "This program will help the court maintain high quality service with fewer resources and help the many exceptional graduates from Philadelphia's law schools who are graduating during an especially difficult time in the legal economy," Rau said. "We appreciate the law schools' efforts to get the program started and for the enthusiastic response of judges who have agreed to host and mentor recent graduates."

"On behalf of the Trial Division, I enthusiastically support this creative program and applaud Judge Rau for her efforts. Our judges will benefit from the assistance of exceptional local legal talent; and those selected as fellows will be exposed to the major attorneys, firms and judges actively engaged in civil and criminal litigation in Pennsylvania's busiest courts," said Administrative Judge D. Webster Keogh.

"This is a winner for both the courts and the new graduates. We are grateful to Judge Rau for developing the program," said President Judge Pamela Pryor Dembe. "The program will feature events where the fellows will be able to network with members of the Philadelphia Bar Association," Cimino said. "This is a really wonderful opportunity for some extremely capable graduates to gain notice from the bench and bar."

"The economic downturn has created an urgent need for programs that help new lawyers find jobs," said Philadelphia Bar Association Chancellor Rudolph Garcia. "The Judicial Fellowship Program gives highly qualified graduates an additional credential and valuable experience to assist them in finding subsequent employment. The Philadelphia Bar Association is proud to support this innovative program."