

My Summer Associate Experience: Caleb Stephens

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Our 2022 Summer Associate Program brought seven law students to the firm for an intellectually challenging and professionally gratifying experience. The students took part in firm-sponsored social events and community service projects throughout the summer in addition to attending client meetings, depositions, court hearings and other proceedings. Nearing the end of the program, the students agreed to share a few highlights from their summer at Shutts.

Caleb Stephens joined us from the University of Virginia School of Law, where he is an Articles Review Editor for the Virginia Tax Review, Executive Vice President of the Law Christian Fellowship, and Technology Editor of the Virginia Law Weekly. He previously interned for Justice Lawson of the Florida Supreme Court.

Caleb shared his view on the summer program below.

How did you decide to pursue this position?

Before law school, I worked as a research analyst for a thinktank in Tallahassee. My supervisor at the thinktank spoke very highly of Shutts, so when it came time to apply for a 2L summer position, Shutts was a natural selection. Shutts sounded superb even during the interview process, and I was fortunate enough to be offered a position after my interview.

What were the three most memorable experiences throughout your time here?

The first time that Jason Gonzalez gave me an assignment will always stick with me. I was not expecting a partner to come in and spend two hours explaining the background and significance of a case, one on one. The care and emphasis he put on making sure I understood aspects of the case that were tangential to the task which I was performing was staggering.

The second memorable experience was the first time I met George Meros. He strolled into the kitchenette and immediately struck up a conversation about coffee, University of Virginia, and the work environment at Shutts. It really emphasized to me that, while the work may be challenging, there's also room for variation in each person's work process, and Shutts is ready to allow its employees the freedom to find a working style that fits for them.

The third memorable experience would probably be when the Tallahassee office lost power on one warm afternoon. My workstation is a desktop, so of course it immediately went down. We all congregated in the meeting room and discussed what the next steps should be for the office.

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Despite the obvious interruption to regular tasks, it really helped me get to know the other employees in the office as we discussed the common power outage problems in Florida (tree limbs), and whether the risk of becoming trapped in an elevator was worth avoiding the stairs.

What are your plans after the conclusion of the program?

I will be returning to the University of Virginia shortly after the conclusion of the program to serve as a Peer Advisor for the incoming L.L.M. students, and then to begin my classes the next week. Before returning to Virginia, I do hope to get in some hours working on my 1967 Mustang restoration, which has been a long-running project of mine, and spend time with family in the Tallahassee area. Longer term, I hope to clerk after graduating in Spring 2023.

What were your expectations and have they been met (or exceeded)?

I expected to receive mostly intern work, writing memos that no one would really read, doing research tangential to ongoing cases which might serve as a reference, and completing other projects which were just that: projects. Instead, I was met with important work, work that was actually relevant and useful to cases, whether working with Florida constitutional law, corporate law, or takings law. I feel like I've gained real experience rather than simply participated in exercises. Additionally, I've felt like a respected member of a broader team, not just like an intern. I did not expect to be briefing partners and associates on issues, much less providing actually useful information. My expectations have definitely been exceeded.

About Shutts & Bowen LLP

Established in 1910, Shutts & Bowen is a full-service business law firm with approximately 300 lawyers with offices in Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, Sarasota, Tallahassee, Tampa and West Palm Beach. Learn more about Shutts & Bowen at www.shutts.com.

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