

My Summer Associate Experience: Sophie R. Hecker

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Our 2024 Summer Associate Program brought 13 law students from five law schools 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.

Sophie R. Hecker joined Shutts' Fort Lauderdale office for the summer from the Florida State University. Sophie is a member of the Business Law Society and Women in Sports Law Society.

Sophie shares her thoughts on her summer experience at Shutts.

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

One of the most memorable experiences was meeting my two mentors and attending the Fort Lauderdale Mentor/Mentee Cooking Class. Upon starting at Shutts, I was assigned both a Partner mentor and an Associate mentor. They made me feel comfortable asking questions about the firm and continuously checking in on me throughout the summer. The Fort Lauderdale office organized a cooking class with the mentors and mentees. This was a fun event where I got to learn more about the attorneys in my office in a social space. The mentorship program here at Shutts is commendable.

Another memorable experience I had was the Miami Summer Associate Event. This was a two-day event where the Summer Associates from each office came to the Miami office for two days full of programming. I was able to meet the other Summer Associates which was awesome. We were able to network with attorneys from the Miami office which was especially neat. We even had our professional headshots taken. The next day, we were able to volunteer with Feeding South Florida which was a rewarding experience. It was great to connect and give back.

Another memorable experience was the day I spent attending the Fifteenth Annual Summer Associates Day at the Federal Courthouse hosted by the Federal Bar Association Broward County Chapter. Two attorneys in the Fort Lauderdale office sent me this wonderful opportunity and encouraged me to attend. We started the day with two speakers from the U.S. Attorney's Office the Federal Public Defender's Office. We were then able to observe both civil hearings and criminal duty hearings in front of United States District Judge's. We then had a panel of attorneys from civil law firms fielding a variety of questions and providing advice. The Presiding Judge from the criminal duty hearing even sat on the panel and allowed us to ask questions. This was a great day of networking,

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learning, and overall getting a first-hand experience in the legal system.

If you could go back to the first day of the summer program and give yourself a piece of advice, what would it be?

I would tell myself do not be afraid to ask for work. At the beginning of the program, I felt a bit awkward asking or seeking out work. I just needed to put myself out there more. In a professional atmosphere, it is important to take the time to walk around and make yourself known to the attorneys and staff in your office. As the summer progressed, if there was an attorney I wanted to do work for but was not in the office or in a different office, I reached out via email or by phone. I would tell myself on the first day to always reach out if I needed more work or wanted to learn more about a specific practice area.

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

My expectation was to experience different practice areas and learn as much as I could throughout the program. I also wanted to build meaningful connections with the professionals in my office and throughout the firm. The summer program definitely exceeded my expectations. I was able to work in a variety of practice areas with many different attorneys. I was assigned new work everyday that varied from drafting motions, researching issues, revising agreements, and the list goes on. Every day was something new and I have learned so much. The firm made me feel welcome and like I was part of a team.

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