

My Summer Associate Experience: Bryan Almeida

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Our 2016 [Summer Clerkship Program](#) brought in eight law students across several of our offices for an intellectually challenging and professionally gratifying experience. Nearing the end of the program, a few of the students agreed to share a few of the highlights about their summer.

Bryan Almeida joined us from Georgetown University Law Center, where he is a member of the *Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics*, co-founder and vice president of the school's Law Mental Health Alliance and a delegate for its Law Student Bar Association.

Bryan expected to work hard on various projects during his time here and learn about the mechanics of a large, major law firm.

"I am happy to report – with a straight face – that respect and tenacity seem to be the currency of a successful career at Shutts & Bowen, and, given my experience, I would probably not work at a law firm that did not actively cultivate these attributes among its employees."

Here is what Bryan had to say about his summer at Shutts.

Q1. How did you decide to pursue this position?

A1. I decided to pursue this position the summer after my 1L year, during the recruitment season for private law firms. I emailed the firm's recruiting coordinator and had the opportunity to participate in Skype and callback interviews, which thankfully resulted in an offer to join the summer program. I am originally from Miami, so my number one priority was finding a way to come back home and practice law. Interestingly, as I was suit shopping for that recruitment season, a tailor that I visited in Miami told me that some of his clients were Shutts & Bowen attorneys. His comment tipped me off to the firm, and as I learned more about the rich history of Shutts & Bowen in Florida, I realized that a summer clerkship in the Miami office would be a great fit. It has been, and I really should stop by the tailor's store to thank him for the tip!

Q2. What were the three most memorable experiences throughout your time here?

A2. The three most memorable experiences throughout my summer clerkship were (1) drafting a complaint on behalf of a client that a partner ultimately filed in Miami-Dade County civil court; (2) sharing an office with another summer associate, whose company was both educational and amusing, given our similar legal interests and personal backgrounds; and (3) spending an evening with my co-summer associates, on a partner's boat, cruising through Miami's beautiful waterways. Drafting the complaint was probably the most rewarding experience, because the partner who I

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worked with allowed me to construct the pleading from scratch, which helped me gain valuable and practical litigation skills.

Q3. What knowledge and/or skills will you be taking with you after completing the program?

A3. Without a doubt, I think that after my summer clerkship, I am a more effective researcher and writer. Thankfully, I had the opportunity to practice these skills by completing multiple substantive assignments, like drafting a complaint and a motion for filing in federal district court. Beyond these competencies, I learned that client development and management skills are the lifeblood of a successful practice. Law students typically do not learn much about client relations in school, so working at Shutts & Bowen this summer demonstrated to me that there is a whole other dimension to serving as an effective advocate, requiring lawyers to be responsive, creative, and strategic in their daily practices. Most importantly, because the Miami office boasts over 100 attorneys, working at the firm showed me the importance of forging strong alliances with my colleagues. So, apart from being a substantive learning experience, my summer clerkship was a very valuable networking opportunity.

Q4. What advice would you give to someone looking for a summer clerkship and succeed in it?

A4. First, when selecting a law firm, try to focus on your long-term goals. Specifically, consider what type of lawyer – and person – you want to be in the future. Your decision should center on much more than the firm's stature or client base, although those characteristics are still salient. After my experience at Shutts & Bowen, I have the benefit of understanding that the people who make up the fabric of a law firm are considerably more important than the organization's prestige. The truth is that you will work incredibly hard at whatever firm you choose, so make sure that your career there will be sustainable, healthy, and fulfilling.

In terms of succeeding at your summer clerkship, my advice is straightforward but sometimes difficult to apply: do not take the opportunity for granted. Have fun and do not worry about making mistakes, but try to consistently remind your colleagues – through your work product – why they hired you, instead of another qualified candidate, to work as a summer associate at their firm. Also, try to be available and flexible, and learn how to channel constructive criticism into becoming a better advocate. Most importantly, try to find mentors at the firm who will help you develop and succeed both professionally and personally. Navigating a major law firm on your own is challenging. Thankfully, some of my most rewarding experiences at Shutts & Bowen occurred in the context of informal mentoring relationships, and I think that I will be a better lawyer and professional because of those interactions.