

Winston's Hiring Chair Gives Advice to Aspiring Summer Associates

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We recently sat down with Winston's Hiring Committee chair, Samantha Lerner, to discuss how rising 2Ls can shine when interviewing for a summer associate position at Winston.

WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR ON A LAW STUDENT'S RÉSUMÉ?

Samantha Lerner: The first thing we look for in a candidate's résumé is a proven record of consistent academic excellence. Success in 1L classes is a strong indicator of grit as the first year of law school is undoubtedly the most challenging. We also look for well-rounded candidates with a wide range of life, work, and academic experiences. Our top candidates are actively involved, often in a leadership capacity, in activities outside the classroom, both on and off campus.

We also want to see a résumé that's free of any typos and grammatical errors. Lawyering is exacting work, and it is surprising how often we see résumés that have not been proofread, which is a big red flag.

HOW CAN A STUDENT PUT THEIR BEST FOOT FORWARD DURING AN INTERVIEW?

Samantha Lerner: Candidates should do their research and come prepared to the interview with thoughtful and meaningful questions that demonstrate their knowledge of and interest in Winston. They should visit the "Locations" section on our website and learn about the office where they want to summer and begin their career.

WHAT OTHER QUALITIES SET A CANDIDATE APART FROM THE CROWD?

Samantha Lerner: We are looking to hire the best law students for Winston. Candidates should practice their elevator pitch in advance, so they can succinctly sell an interviewer on why they should hire them. They should also be ready to communicate their professional and academic accomplishments and to describe how they have overcome challenges. Additionally, we look for self-motivated, hardworking individuals who possess grit because delivering legal excellence means being able to persevere and overcome obstacles. Finally, we look for evidence of strong interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and a collaborative and collegial mindset.

IS IT IMPORTANT FOR A LAW STUDENT TO KNOW IF THEY WANT TO BE A LITIGATOR OR TRANSACTIONAL ATTORNEY?

Samantha Lerner: Yes. Winston’s summer program is designed for law students who have already determined whether they want to pursue being a transactional lawyer or a litigator. We place summer associates within the career track they have chosen, which allows them to gain valuable skill-building experiences.

WHAT DOES WINSTON DO TO PROMOTE OPPORTUNITY AND INCLUSION IN RECRUITING?

Samantha Lerner: Our recruiting initiatives are designed to create pathways for long-term success for law students. We do this by identifying promising law students and supporting their development in a number of different ways. We partner with student organizations at law schools across the country, and our attorneys participate in résumé reviews, mock interviews, writing skills workshops, panel presentations, and campus programs. Additionally, each year, Winston awards \$50,000 Pathways scholarships to selected 2L summer associates to help offset the cost of their legal education. Applicants are evaluated on academic achievement, leadership potential, demonstrated commitment to fostering an inclusive and respectful environment in their community, and their ability to bring unique perspectives to the legal profession.

DO SUMMER ASSOCIATES AT WINSTON HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO WORK ON PRO BONO MATTERS?

Samantha Lerner: Active engagement in pro bono is a hallmark of our firm, and this extends to our summer associates. We provide opportunities for summer associates to give back while gaining hands-on experience working on a pro bono matter. Additionally, through the firm’s Pro Bono Fellowship Program, we offer incoming associates an opportunity to volunteer with a public interest law nonprofit the summer following their graduation and before joining the firm full time. Winston Pro Bono Fellows receive a \$10,000 stipend for contributing 300 hours of pro bono service.

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Samantha Lerner

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