

Saratoga Town Court Intern Program

FAQs

What are the requirements to become an intern? The intern must be at least 16 years old and be recommended by their counselor. They must provide their own transportation to and from court. It is not required that the intern be considering a legal career. Most of the interns are high school seniors or upper level college students but a few have been high school juniors. The intern must be able to be at the court office and in the court room for the minimum required hours. The intern must be able to attend court each week which starts at 4pm on Tuesdays.

Does the program have a maximum age or a minimum grade average requirement? There is no maximum age for the program. We have had college students who have been out of high school for 10 – 20 years who then started college and became an intern with our court. Age had not made a difference in the intern's performance. As to academic average, the school counselors select the interns therefore grade average is an issue for the school, not the court. The counselors are aware that this is a fast paced challenging program so applicants with higher GPAs tend to have a better ability to cope with the demands of the internship.

What attributes are desirable for an intern? The applicant should have good writing skills and a high level of self-confidence. It is often a fast moving environment with many activities occurring simultaneously so the intern must be capable of coping with frequent changes and challenges. The intern will often work on a project independently so the ability to follow instructions is important. Since the intern will be working with actual cases, the ability to maintain confidentiality is vital. All intern activities involve real cases and real situations. They must be a team player with the ability to work closely with the court staff to assist in moving cases along. The standard formula for success: responsibility, integrity, work ethic, and honesty, is a basic requirement for acceptance into this program.

How many interns are accepted? Our goal is to accept up to three high school and/or college interns at one time. The Albany Law School program is run separately so the law student intern position does not displace anyone from the regular program. Including the law intern, we try to have four interns at anytime although this will occasionally vary. During short periods, we have had from two to six interns in the program due to overlapping school schedules but we try to avoid this situation.

Who supervises the interns? The senior court clerk supervises the interns on a daily basis and a judge will supervise them while they work on their research projects or while on the bench. Albany Law School interns will occasionally supervise the high school and college interns during legal research assignments.

How are the interns selected? The interns are selected by their school faculty and/or staff. The court personnel do not participate in the selection process. It is a fast paced program and schools are encouraged to select students who they believe can quickly adapt to the demanding judicial environment.

How long is the program? The high school internships usually last ten weeks and run concurrent with the marking period. The college program follows the term/semester schedule for the school (8-12 weeks) and the Albany Law School program usually lasts about 15 weeks. Adjustments are frequently made to accommodate term/semester start and ending dates. It is not uncommon for interns to start as soon as a vacancy occurs so they could be with our court for a longer or shorter time than a marking period. The program runs all year. Summer interns must also be assigned by a school even though the summer program occurs while school is not in session.

How much time must be dedicated to the program? Each intern must be present for traffic/criminal court which starts at 4pm each Tuesday. Court may end as early as 5pm or go until 9pm. Interns are not required to attend civil court which is on Thursday mornings but they are encouraged to attend at least one session. Each intern must also be present at the court office (open from 9 until 3) a minimum of four hours per week although most schools require more than the minimum with some mandating up to or exceeding ten hours per week. We also have a special one month 120 hour January research program for college students only. The January program interns are expected to complete their research project and have their paper ready for publication at the end of the program. This is an intense program requiring additional research and writing beyond the times that the court office is open.

Does the program give school credit? Most participating schools give credit for completing the program. It is a challenging program with required readings and assignments. Each intern is assigned a research project and six interns have had their findings published in judicial magazines. However, the awarding of credit is a decision made by the school, not the court. School faculty, staff, or administrators wishing to discuss the program to evaluate the awarding of credit are encouraged to contact the court for further information.

How does the school counselor learn more details of the program? The first time an intern is assigned from a high school, the counselor must accompany the intern to an orientation. The overall program will be explained and any questions answered. It is not necessary for the counselor to visit the court every time a new intern is assigned but if a new counselor is assigned, he/she must attend an orientation. The counselor should read the entire information packet before assigning a student to the program. If the counselor has questions that are unanswered by the packet, the court personnel may be called.

How does the counselor know about the intern's performance? The counselor is encouraged to call the court every few weeks and speak with a clerk or a judge about the intern's performance. The counselor is also encouraged to come to court and observe the intern. A judge or court clerk will usually call the counselor at approximately the halfway point to discuss the intern's progress. An evaluation of the intern's performance is completed by a judge and sent to the school at the end of each internship.

What schools may participate in the program? We do not limit schools by distance from the court, the county, or whether the school is public or private. If the school counselor feels that the student can drive to and from the court within a reasonable time then the student can participate in the program. Eleven high schools from two counties have participated. Others have inquired about the program and are considering participating. Seven colleges from five counties and three states have participated. Two interns have been from other countries. Albany Law School also participates in the program but the assignments and responsibilities are expanded to include several additional duties.

When does a student apply? Apply early. It is a popular program with the positions often filled months before the actual start date. Students desiring a position for the fall are encouraged to apply in the early spring. The January research position is usually filled before the start of school in the fall. Since we have a waiting list, the applicant's choice of assignment may not be available unless the application is received during the school year prior to the requested start date.

Does the intern actually participate in the court and office functions or does the intern just observe the proceedings? Unlike most judicial internships, the intern becomes part of the court team and performs many of the functions that are usually completed by the court staff. From the intern's first week, this is a "hands on" program. The reading assignments are designed to provide an understanding of the legal system, the terminology, and the reasons for the tasks to be performed. However, most of the program involves the interns performing administrative tasks, reading actual cases, researching real world situations, and having direct contact and assignments with defendants, their attorneys, and prosecutors. Read the information packet for a description of the intern's duties.

What are the differences between the high school, college, and law school programs?

The high school and college programs are similar due to participants having basically the same level of exposure to the judicial system. The primary difference is the length of the program. The program for Albany Law School has significantly expanded duties due to the nature of the intern's knowledge of the legal system. The law school intern may be assigned to assist/instruct the high school or college intern with legal research or other tasks.

Are changes made to the program or would an intern next year have the same program as one three or four years ago?

The program has been through many modifications and has evolved to where the interns and our staff feel that the program is maximizing the learning of all interns through readings, research, and hands on experience. At the conclusion of the program, the interns are asked for suggestions for improving the program. Many of the suggestions have been implemented.

Does the intern program offer opportunities to visit other courts or participate in other related activities?

The intern may co-ordinate with their school to schedule a visit to a county court. As part of the intern program, several times a year a visit to Albany Law School is scheduled. Up to four interns are taken to the school where they tour the campus, sit through a law class, and have lunch. Further details of these activities are available by calling the court office.

Where is the court located and when is it open?

We are located at 12 Spring Street in Schuylerville, Saratoga County. It is a brick building on the north west corner of Broadway and Spring Street. We are ten miles directly east of the City of Saratoga Springs on Route 29. The office is normally open from 9am until 3pm Monday through Friday. Criminal and Traffic Court starts at 4 PM each Tuesday and may be in session from one to five hours. Civil Court starts at 10 AM on Thursday and usually concludes by noon.

How can I get more information about the program?

Applicants and counselors are encouraged to visit our facility and speak with our staff and the interns. Except for Youthful Offender cases, the court is always open to the public. Anyone interested in the program is encouraged to visit our facility while court is in session and observe the interns along with the court proceedings. An appointment to visit court is not necessary but if notification of a visit is made court personnel can meet with the interested person after court or during a recess to discuss the program and answer questions. The court office can be reached at (518) 695-6887 X 315.