

Fourth graduate in five years to serve as U.S. Supreme Court clerk



Merritt McAlister (J.D.'07) will serve as a judicial clerk for U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens for the October 2009 term. She will be the fourth Georgia Law graduate in five years to serve our nation's highest court in this capacity. Photo by Dennis McDaniel.

Counting the selection of Georgia Law alumna Merritt E. McAlister (J.D.'07) as a U.S. Supreme Court judicial clerk for the October 2009 term, the law school will have had graduates serve our nation's highest court in this role for four of the last five years.

In a recent ranking, Georgia Law is among the top law schools in the nation for supplying clerks to the U.S. Supreme Court for the 2000-08 terms.

"It is such a rare opportunity and an extraordinary privilege," McAlister

said. "I am looking forward to being exposed to that level of legal thinking and decision making."

Applicants for this position come from students at the top of their class and from the top law schools in the nation. It is considered by many as one of the most prestigious positions available to recent law school graduates. McAlister will join this very elite group as a judicial clerk for Justice John Paul Stevens.

"This appointment will provide Merritt with invaluable experience that will benefit her for the rest of her professional life," Dean Rebecca H. White said.

Currently, McAlister is an associate with the law firm King & Spalding in Atlanta, where she will remain until leaving to work for Stevens before the start of the October term. Previously, she served as a judicial clerk for Judge R. Lanier Anderson III of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

"After clerking for an appellate court, I understand even more the depth of what you can learn and am excited to have the same opportunity with the U.S. Supreme Court," McAlister said.

While faculty members at Georgia Law encouraged her to apply, Georgia Law's recent history of Supreme Court judicial clerkship success bolstered her confidence.

"I could not have done it without the support of everyone at the law school," McAlister said. "Knowing that I am coming from a great school that has produced great clerks gave me the confidence I needed to take this step. It is an unparalleled opportunity."

Besides graduating first in her class at Georgia Law, McAlister also participated in the school's accomplished advocacy program,

worked as a teaching and research assistant, served as executive articles editor for the *Georgia Law Review* and was inducted into the Order of the Coif.

McAlister's clerkship selection brings the total number of Georgia Law graduates who have clerked for U.S. Supreme Court justices to eight.

The other seven Georgia Law alumni who have served the highest court in the land in this capacity are: Jason T. Burnette (J.D.'06), clerked for Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. in 2007; Adam M. Conrad (J.D.'05), clerked for Justice Clarence Thomas in 2006; John H. Longwell (J.D.'99), clerked for Justice Stephen G. Breyer in 2005; Anne Proffitt Dupre (J.D.'88), clerked for Justice Harry A. Blackmun in 1989; Bruce P. Brown (J.D.'84), clerked for Chief Justice Warren E. Burger in 1986; Glen M. Darbyshire (J.D.'84), clerked for Justice Thurgood Marshall in 1985; and Benna R. Solomon (J.D.'78), clerked for Justice Byron R. White in 1980.

Georgia Law Ranks High in Supreme Court Clerkship Placement, 2000-08 Terms*

1. Harvard University
2. Yale University
3. University of Chicago
4. Stanford University
5. Columbia University
6. New York University
7. University of Virginia
8. University of California at Berkeley
9. University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
10. Northwestern University
13. University of Georgia

* This ranking was compiled by University of Chicago Wilson Professor of Law Brian Leiter and is based on the total number of clerks hired from each law school by an active justice of the court for the 2000 through 2008 terms.

Background Image: West façade of the U.S. Supreme Court. Franz Jantzen, Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States.