

TEXAS LAWYER

An **ALM** Publication

texaslawyer.com | September 2, 2020

My Experience as a Summer Associate Before and During the Pandemic for Patterson + Sheridan

The culture at Patterson + Sheridan has remained fun-loving and supportive despite the uncertainty that everyone is facing.

BY CHLOE DIXON

I was born and raised in Austin, Texas. After winning a mock trial in English class in sixth grade, I knew I wanted to be a lawyer. In eighth grade I discovered intellectual property law through a career-search project. As the daughter of an electrical engineer, I grew up around circuits, and I knew that a technical degree was required to become a patent prosecutor so I obtained a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Texas A&M, and now I am beginning my last year at Baylor Law School.

Following 1L year, I was a summer associate at Patterson + Sheridan. Afterward, I worked remotely for Patterson + Sheridan during 2L year and then returned as a summer associate in 2020. Each of these phases of my experience working for P+S has been challenging and rewarding in its own way.

During my first summer at Patterson + Sheridan, I learned

more about patent prosecution than I could have imagined. The mentorship program is second to none and I felt like part of the team by the end of the summer. I believe that a major contributing factor to that sense of belonging was the time I spent with attorneys during social events. It felt like not a single day went by without a lunch or happy hour gathering, during which I was able to meet nearly every attorney at the firm.

When school started, my workload decreased so that I could focus on school. However, I still spoke regularly with my Patterson + Sheridan mentors and tried to complete a project for them every one to two weeks. The team set up a system to funnel work to me in small quantities to facilitate that goal. My mentors frequently checked in to make sure I had enough work, but not too much, and the team knew ahead of time



Chloe Dixon, a summer associate with Patterson + Sheridan/courtesy photo

when I had final exams so that we could plan projects accordingly.

In March, school moved online and stay-at-home orders began to take effect. I expected work to take a downturn while everyone transitioned to working from home, and I thought my mentors would be too busy to continue communicating with and training me. In fact, the exact opposite happened. I continued to receive training on

how to draft patent applications and responses, and my workload actually increased. Additionally, the summer program coordinators maintained consistent contact with the incoming summer associates and assured us that the program would continue even if it was virtual.

After the school year ended, I hit the ground running with work. Working remotely during the school year gave me the ability to begin working on projects right away without being retrained and reintegrated back into the firm. And, by the time the summer program began in mid-May, I had a docket full of projects to work on.

Even though I moved to Houston, I started the summer program working remotely, as did most of the summer associates. I initially thought that there would be relatively little contact between the summer associates, but that was not the case. We immediately began a summer group chat and had a virtual happy hour on the second day of the program to introduce ourselves. Everyone hit it off and communicated constantly to ask questions and tell stories about our workdays.

Additionally, the virtual events that Patterson + Sheridan put on each week helped the summer associates get to know each other and the attorneys at the firm. We solved a murder mystery together, watched a movie,

attended a virtual magic show, and took a painting class, among other things. I think the social events also kept morale high in the middle of the lockdown.

Because of the remote work environment this summer, I also had the chance to work more directly with some of the engineering interns at the firm. The engineering intern program at Patterson + Sheridan provides undergraduate engineering students with the opportunity to gain insight into the field of intellectual property. I was asked to mentor some of the interns and teach them how to complete important projects such as claim charts and patentability searches.

Toward the end of the summer, I was able to go into the office and see some of the attorneys and other summer associates in person. Very few people were working at the office and the firm maintained social-distancing policies to keep everyone safe. So, while the experience was very different from the previous summer, it was great to have the chance to see my mentors again and have an actual office to work in as opposed to my kitchen table.

My various experiences at Patterson + Sheridan over the last year have taught me several things: I have learned the importance of putting in extra effort to communicate clearly and frequently while working remotely.

It is not always easy to express ideas or concerns, even in person, and the lack of face-to-face contact can amplify that difficulty. I also learned that setting manageable goals allowed me to stay focused and disciplined while working from home.

I imagine that the other summer associates had a difficult time adjusting to working remotely because they had to work with people they had never met. I think it was extremely beneficial that we could ask questions, share advice, and commiserate with each other via group texts. Surprisingly, as a result, I had more opportunities to speak directly with the other summer associates and engineering interns than the previous summer.

Overall, I think the firm's transition to remote work was practically seamless. I still had the opportunity to work with a number of different attorneys, just as I did during my first summer in the office. There were still weekly social events, albeit virtually. And the culture at Patterson + Sheridan has remained fun-loving and supportive despite the uncertainty that everyone is facing.

Chloe Dixon *has spent two summers as a summer associate at Patterson + Sheridan, an intellectual property law firm with seven offices around the United States, including Texas, California, North Carolina and New Jersey.*