

Meet the Summers: SEO Legal Interns

JULY 18, 2014

In addition to the 89 summer associates WilmerHale welcomed to the firm this year, four Sponsorship for Educational Opportunity (SEO) legal interns have also joined our US offices. The SEO program places rising 1Ls who have been admitted to top 20 law schools with a law firm for the summer, and they are considered a part of the summer class. WilmerHale has interviewed these legal interns—who are located in the firm's New York, Palo Alto and Washington DC offices—to learn about what they're most looking forward to in starting law school and their careers, and what they hope to gain from the SEO experience.

Name: Kevin Castillo

Office: Palo Alto

Law School: University of California, Berkeley School of Law

Undergrad: University of California Berkeley

WilmerHale: What inspired you to go to law school?

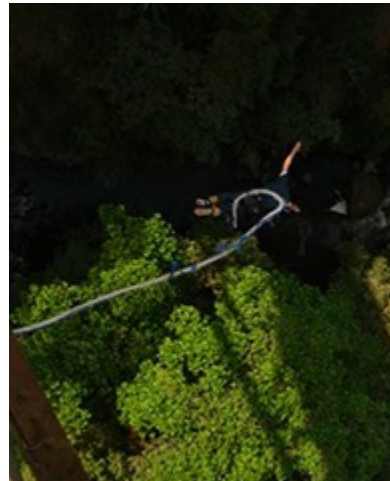
Castillo: I had volunteered at a self-help center that provided free legal assistance to low-income individuals. In that role, I witnessed the great need for high-quality legal assistance, which sparked my interest in becoming an attorney. Recently, I worked as a legal assistant at an employment litigation firm, which exposed me to challenging, fast-paced litigation work. That experience also contributed to my desire to go to law school.

WilmerHale: What do you look forward to most about going to law school?

Castillo: I'm excited to be back in the classroom to learn new things and be challenged. I look forward to meeting smart people that I can learn from and develop friendships with. Also, I hope to be a member of a law review.

WilmerHale: What is the most valuable advice you've received this summer about law school?

Castillo: At an SEO reception in New York, a WilmerHale attorney told me to always keep things in perspective. He said that law school will be challenging, but to not lose sight of who I am while in



the process.

WilmerHale: What do you hope to gain from your WilmerHale SEO experience?

Castillo: I hope to learn as much as I can about the practice of law, and to gain exposure to the many different practice areas. I also hope to develop friendships and strong connections with both WilmerHale staff and attorneys.

WilmerHale: What have you found most interesting about your WilmerHale SEO experience thus far?

Castillo: It was interesting to see how involved the attorneys are with pro bono work. I had the opportunity to work on a pro bono case with two summer associates, and we were able to take on a leadership role and interview the client.

WilmerHale: If you could do anything this summer as an SEO intern, what would it be?

Castillo: I was able to observe a mock trial and it was fascinating to see how distinctly both sides approached the case; everything was very purposeful. Participating in a mock trial would be a great opportunity to both showcase and develop skills for trial.

WilmerHale: Tell us a fun fact about yourself.

Castillo: I was in Costa Rica for three weeks visiting a friend and I went bungee jumping off a bridge. On the way down one of my eye contacts fell out and I ended up losing my voice from screaming. It was fun, but I don't think I would do it again.

Name: Morgan Monroe

Office: Washington DC

Law School: George Washington University Law School Undergrad: Emory University





WilmerHale: What inspired you to go to law school?

Monroe: I knew by the age of 11 that I wanted to go to law school. As a child I used to make contracts for my sister to sign before she could borrow my clothes as a way to hold her accountable in case something came back damaged. I found it interesting how the law can govern individuals' actions.

WilmerHale: What do you look forward to most about going to law school?

Monroe: I look forward to meeting new, really smart people. I'm excited to learn from and connect with them, as well as my professors.

WilmerHale: What is the most valuable advice you've received this summer about law school?

Monroe: A senior associate at the firm gave me some very practical advice that I plan on using in law school: distance yourself from people around exam time. During that time, individuals can be very persuasive when exhibiting their level of knowledge, but they are not always right.

WilmerHale: What do you hope to gain from your WilmerHale SEO experience?

Monroe: I hope to test my writing skills and knowledge of different practice areas. I think I want to focus on transactional work, but I want to gain exposure to different practice areas. So far I've been exposed to transactional and securities work, as well as a civil litigation matter. The civil litigation matter was a pro bono human trafficking case that piqued my interest in litigation.

WilmerHale: What have you found most interesting about your WilmerHale SEO experience thus far?

Monroe: Even though I haven't started my law school career, members of the firm have placed me on an equal playing field. Everyone is welcoming and willing to work with me, and they have been very patient.

WilmerHale: If you could do anything this summer as an SEO intern, what would it be?

Monroe: I would like to travel for an international project because I am interested in working outside

of the United States.

WilmerHale: Tell us a fun fact about yourself.

Monroe: I ran track at Emory and hold the university's high hurdle record. The previous record was 14.23 from 1997, and I ran a 14.16. Track teaches discipline, which is important. I enjoyed running in college, and will be volunteering as an assistant coach at George Washington University Law School in the fall.

Name: Roberto O. Rivera

Office: Washington DC

Law School: Columbia Law School Undergrad: Duke University





WilmerHale: What inspired you to go to law school?

Rivera: My initial interest in law school stems from my experience with debate and moot court while in high school. I enjoyed the chance to make arguments and think critically. At Duke, I was involved in documentary filming and became interested in how I could help creative people protect their work product. After undergrad I took some time off but kept coming back to the idea of law school.

WilmerHale: What do you look forward to most about going to law school?

Rivera: I look forward to studying the different areas of law and expanding my knowledge base while also discovering what I want to focus on.

WilmerHale: What is the most valuable advice you've received this summer about law school?

Rivera: If you're sure of the area of law you would like to focus on, it's not a bad thing to build upon your knowledge and expand your interest-specific network. Building these ties early on can help you better brand yourself and make you an irreplaceable asset later.

WilmerHale: What do you hope to gain from your WilmerHale SEO experience?

Rivera: I hope to gain a holistic idea of what life is like for an associate at a large law firm. I want to get a sense of the work-life balance. So far, WilmerHale associates seem to be very happy and stimulated by the work they do, and they still manage to maintain fulfilling personal lives.

WilmerHale: What have you found most interesting about your WilmerHale SEO experience thus far?

Rivera: I was surprised to learn that many associates didn't know what area of law they wanted to practice before joining the firm. Associates here seem to have a lot of latitude and are able to dabble in different areas.

WilmerHale: If you could do anything this summer as an SEO intern, what would it be?

Rivera: I've been working on a Texas voter ID matter and will be flying to Texas to attend one of the depositions. Besides that, I would like to see an appellate argument in person—I love witnessing the quick thinking.

WilmerHale: Tell us a fun fact about yourself.

Rivera: Last summer I backpacked with a friend through several cities in Costa Rica for nine days. We used a *Lonely Planet* book to get around and met many interesting people. During the trip I rappelled off a few waterfalls and hiked around a volcano. Costa Rica is beautiful and I would definitely recommend visiting.

Name: Amber Koonce

Office: New York

Law School: Yale Law School Undergrad: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill





WilmerHale: What inspired you to go to law school?

Koonce: In college, I devoted most of my time to two student organizations: a group that mentored incarcerated juveniles, and another that represented an elderly community under threat of gentrification. Through those experiences I learned that I am most fulfilled when advocating for others. I believe attending law school and obtaining a law degree is the most effective way for me to continue my advocacies.

WilmerHale: What do you look forward to most about going to law school?

Koonce: I look forward to interacting with classmates and professors. I am excited about engaging with individuals who will challenge my ideologies and broaden my understanding of the ways in which we can use the law to craft positive solutions for pressing issues.

WilmerHale: What is the most valuable advice you've received this summer about law school?

Koonce: In law school it can sometimes feel like everyone knows more than you, but always remember that we each have unique strengths. It's important to build upon those strengths while also learning from others.

WilmerHale: What do you hope to gain from your WilmerHale SEO experience?

Koonce: I hope to gain a better understanding of what it means to be a successful litigator and what that looks like on a day-to-day basis. Working with my advising attorneys has provided me the opportunity to observe the skills and characteristics that shape an effective litigation practice.

WilmerHale: What have you found most interesting about your WilmerHale SEO experience thus far?

Koonce: I have been pleasantly surprised by the degree to which WilmerHale supports pro bono work. Additionally, I appreciate the openness with which WilmerHale allows attorneys to explore government work. I believe both of those aspects make the firm stronger and that these elements attract multidimensional attorneys whose skills span beyond standard firm work.

WilmerHale: If you could do anything this summer as an SEO intern, what would it be?

Koonce: I would like to witness the progression of a trial in court. I learn best through observing, so gaining that type of exposure would be valuable.

WilmerHale: Tell us a fun fact about yourself.

Koonce: For the past five years, I have been running an international nonprofit called BeautyGap. While teaching and mentoring in a young women's prison in Ghana, I noticed that many of my girls struggled with self-esteem issues and clung to white dolls that had been donated by Western nations. BeautyGap's mission is to support the development of girls of color, internationally, by providing them with self-reflective dolls. To date, we've delivered dolls to Ghana, Kenya, Haiti and the Philippines, and hope to expand to Latin America. You can learn more about us in the July edition of Cosmopolitan magazine and at <http://www.beautygap.org/>.