

Delaware Supreme Court Externship Gives Katherine Childers Invaluable Experience

DURING HER EXTERNSHIP at the Delaware Supreme Court, Katherine Childers, JD '10, often wrote memos on such varied areas of law as workers' compensation, corporate governance, or criminal law.

Her corporate judicial externship, one of the first offered through the law school, was new territory for Childers. "In law school you're used to taking a whole semester to master a subject," she says. "But every week at the court, you're having to learn a new field of law and doing it quickly and efficiently. And you need to be able to do so in a manner that you're able to talk intelligently about it to a supreme court justice."

When she first started the job, the rapid pace of the clerkship created some anxiety, Childers admits. "Sometimes I would get a subject matter and say 'I don't even know where to begin.' But after I had been there for a while, it became much easier."

Childers' adaptability not only helped her performance, but also impressed her boss. After graduating from the law school in May 2010, she arrived in Delaware to work as an unpaid extern from September through December. Childers was the first extern in the new Corporate Judicial Field Placement established by

Hillary A. Sale, the Walter D. Coles Professor of Law and professor of management.

Within a few weeks, Childers' boss, Delaware Supreme Court Justice Randy J. Holland, offered to extend her stay until the end of the summer of 2011. "I was converted into a real law clerk—meaning that I was getting paid," she says, happily.

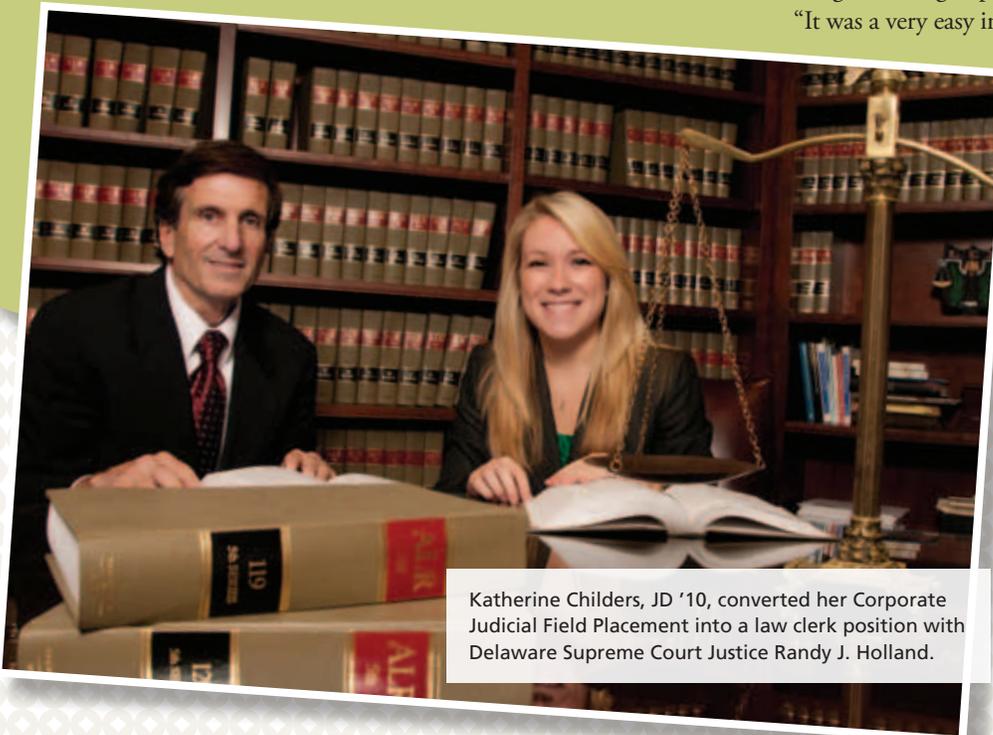
Childers says the work prepared her well "for what I will be doing the rest of my career." This fall, she plans to join the general litigation practice at Alston & Bird LLP in Atlanta.

Childers' assignments with Holland began when he asked her to review a case appealed to the Delaware Supreme Court. Childers then read the lower court opinion and the briefs filed by opposing attorneys before writing a detailed memo for the justice. Sometimes an issue of law was unclear or Holland wanted a legal question answered so Childers conducted further research.

"The type of writing we did was very interesting," Childers says. "Often in law school, you want to make arguments based on fairness—what seems right in your mind. However, most times you're told not to do that because 'fairness' is not really a legal argument. But at the appellate level, the judges do hear those fairness arguments, and sometimes they make a difference. ... The writing's a little more nuanced."

Although she loved hearing the attorneys' oral arguments and the justices' pointed questions in court, Childers says her favorite part of the clerkship was interacting with Holland himself. Appointed to the Delaware Supreme Court in 1986, Holland is the youngest person ever to sit on the court, as well as the longest serving Supreme Court justice in Delaware's history.

"It was a very easy interaction," Childers says. "First and foremost, he's a teacher. He took time to explain very complicated issues that might not make much sense when you first read them. But after listening to him for five minutes, they make perfect sense." IIII



Katherine Childers, JD '10, converted her Corporate Judicial Field Placement into a law clerk position with Delaware Supreme Court Justice Randy J. Holland.