Welcome to Schiff Hardin! As the firm’s managing partner, my number one focus is the people who work here. At a firm like ours, everyone – each of our nearly 300 lawyers in seven cities around the country – is important to the firm’s success.

I’ve been here since I graduated from law school, and I’ve stayed because my colleagues are a special group. We share several core values:

- We are committed to professional excellence and to each other as people. Those commitments go hand in hand: we do our best work when we work together as a team.
- We give our colleagues at all levels the freedom to be the lawyers they want to be and the support they need to get there. New associates have a year to select a practice group. They advance at their own pace with the help of our professional development team and our in-house writing coach. And our partners enjoy the autonomy they need to develop their practices in their own way.
- We also believe in transparency. We share our financial results with all of our lawyers, and we tell our associates what skills and experience they need to advance. We also involve both associates and partners in firm leadership and governance, including as members of our Diversity Committee.
- Finally, we are committed to making Schiff an inclusive community. We were the first major Chicago-based firm to have an African-American partner and practice group leader, we are one of the few AmLaw 200 firms with a woman serving as managing partner, and four of our seven Executive Committee members are women or diverse lawyers. We serve on boards and foundations, we are active members of professional and civic organizations, and in 2019 we devoted 18,163, 5.04 percent of our total client hours to pro bono work, well in excess of the ABA’s 3 percent recommendation.

We need you. Our summer associates, new associates and our lateral lawyers are vitally important to our future. If you are interested in practicing at a law firm like ours – a firm whose lawyers put clients and each other ahead of themselves, a firm that does excellent work and creates early opportunities for all of its lawyers, and a firm that is a community of its own and committed to serving communities in need – please consider joining us.

Marci A. Eisenstein, Managing Partner

The Opportunities

Many firms ask law students to decide what kind of lawyer they would like to be while they are still in law school. That does not make sense to us. Few people can take Property and know for sure that they want to be – or don’t want to be – a real estate lawyer.

For that reason, we don’t hire new associates into practice groups. Instead, we encourage incoming associates to explore a range of opportunities before they select a group. New associates seek work from the practice areas they find interesting and those where the firm needs new associate talent, do the work, and then choose the group that best matches their interests and the firm’s needs. Our experience shows that lawyers who choose the direction of their own careers are far more likely to be happy and productive.

New associates at Schiff Hardin have early opportunities to learn and contribute. You will not spend your first year sitting in your office reviewing documents. Instead, you will be in court. You will be negotiating deals. And you will be meeting with clients. You will learn from hands-on experiences.

The People

Large law firms may look alike online, but they differ in important ways. Each has its own flavor. Schiff lawyers have different genders, colors, ethnicities, sexual orientations, abilities, and opinions. But we also have many things in common: our interest in working collaboratively, our passion for solving our clients’ problems, and our commitment to pro bono legal and community work. We know that we need the skills and perspectives of everyone here to obtain the best results for our clients and sustain our unique culture.

Who works here? A lawyer who rose from mailroom messenger to managing partner. A nationally competitive ballroom dancer (who began dancing just a few years ago). A professional sculptor. A national Kung Fu champion. A former Navy officer who served on a destroyer in the Persian Gulf. A college heptathlete. Several former Teach for America and Peace Corps volunteers. And almost 300 other unique people in seven cities around the country.

Join us and bring your one-of-a-kind qualities to Schiff Hardin!

The Experience
Why should you choose Schiff Hardin over other law firms? Because we are the right size for you to get the experience you want and need. We are big enough to have complex and challenging work but small enough that everyone here plays a key role. You will get high-level experience right away, and we will help you learn and develop skills that you will take with you throughout your career.

Many large law firms focus on mega-cases and mega-deals. New associates work for mid-level associates, who work for senior associates, who work for partners. Not so here. Our partner-to-associate ratio is about 1.57:1, and our teams often consist of just one partner and one associate. Associates develop their skills while they work side-by-side with partners on cutting-edge legal matters. Lean staffing means that you will get early, hands-on substantive work and direct contact with Fortune 500, mid-size business, and individual clients.

Our work ranges from large, complex, bet-the-company cases to smaller matters that junior associates run. With the supervision of senior lawyers, new transactional associates monitor and manage deals, negotiate with opposing counsel, and draft corporate and financing documents. And new litigation associates appear in court, take and defend depositions, and research and write sophisticated trial and appellate briefs.

We are looking for lawyers who are eager to start practicing law when they arrive, who seek out new challenges, and who see each matter as an opportunity to contribute and achieve the client’s goal.

The Training

We know that law school is just the beginning of a lawyer’s education, so we help you develop the additional skills you need to practice, through both our formal and informal professional development programs. Learning is part of our culture. We are one of few firms in the country that has an in-house legal writing coach who works closely with summer and new associates and also with more senior lawyers at the firm. We also provide individual business development coaching and mentoring. You will learn the skills you need here when you need them.

Our summer program features training in three areas: legal writing for law practice; practical transactional and litigation skills; and client skills/business development.

And the learning process doesn’t end when you graduate from law school. Our writing coach hosts workshops and works with you individually, and our practice groups run more advanced trainings. We also support associates who seek training outside the firm, including intensive trial skills training through the National Institute of Trial Advocacy (NITA).

In addition, our lawyers have hands-on opportunities to develop their skills through paid and pro bono client work and through bar association and community service.

At Schiff Hardin, if you want to sharpen your skills, learn how to sell yourself and the firm to a potential new client, or write a first-rate brief, all you have to do is ask. The resources and opportunities are here for you.

The Community

Friends and mentors are plentiful at Schiff Hardin. You will not need to look far to find others who share the firm’s values, including a commitment to pro bono work and the communities where we live and work.

Your first “community” will be your summer associate class. That is just the start. The firm fosters additional connections through formal and informal events and programs. A few examples: groups of associates go each month to the Chicago Volunteer Legal Services clinic. New lawyers firmwide are paired with experienced ones in a formal mentoring program. Practice groups host regular social and professional development events. And lawyers from all seven offices come to Chicago for annual firm meetings.

Summer Program

I wear two hats at the firm: I’m a partner in our Litigation and Dispute Resolution group, and I’m the Chair of the firm’s Law Student Recruitment Committee. I love what I do in both roles. My practice is challenging and rewarding, and my recruiting work introduces me to new and interesting people who may soon be working side-by-side with me and my colleagues.

Nothing is more important to the firm than the people who work here, and that starts with law school recruiting. We rely on our newest lawyers to help us perform complex, high-quality work, and to contribute to the supportive culture that drew so many of us here.

You may find it hard to distinguish one large law firm from the next. I know how that feels. I’m the first lawyer in my family, and when I was in law school I did not know what kind of law I wanted to practice. What I did know was that I wanted to do interesting and high-level work, and I wanted to enjoy my colleagues. That is why I joined Schiff, and that is why I’m still here.

So what sets Schiff apart? First, the firm is the best of both worlds: we are big enough to have top-notch, nationally recognized practices, but we are not a “megafirm” – with fewer than 300 lawyers, everyone here matters.

Second, we are not built like other firms. Our partner-to-associate ratio is about 1.57:1. That means you will work directly with partners from day one.

Third, we are intensely focused on your professional development. Summer associates do real work for real clients in the practice areas that most interest them. For example:
We have a legal writing coach on staff who works closely with our summer and new associates and more senior lawyers at the firm and a range of additional training programs. And our full-time associates get credit for up to 50 “training hours” so they can learn by observing more senior lawyers.

Fourth, we are a flexible place. We recognize that one size does not fit all. We do not hire first-year associates into practice groups. Instead, we give associates time to work with different groups before joining the one that best matches their interests and the firm’s needs. Further, our flexible advancement approach gives associates a clear roadmap for their development and lets them move toward partnership at a pace linked to their individual goals and performance.

Last but not least, we are devoted to our communities. Every year we surpass the American Bar Association’s pro bono target, and associates can choose the type of pro bono work they find inspiring and receive full revenue hour credit for their pro bono hours.

My colleagues and I are lawyers who like being lawyers. We take pride in our work, and we have fun doing it. I hope you will consider joining us.

David C. Blickenstaff, Chair, Law Student Recruitment Committee

Schiff Hardin’s summer program has two primary goals.

- We want every summer associate to be able to demonstrate the professional qualities we seek in new lawyers. We look for summer associates who are eager to learn and grow and are open to new ideas, who strive for excellence, and who are dedicated to their colleagues and the legal profession.
- We want all of our summer associates to get a realistic look at what it is like to practice law here, in terms of both the work we do and who we are. Our summer associates work with lawyers from different practice groups and different offices, experience the quality and range of our work, and gain substantive experience in the areas that interest them. By the end of the summer, our summer associates have a good feel for the firm’s work, as well as its culture.

Experience the Work

We are a general practice, national law firm and gather work for our summer associates from all of our practice areas and offices. Summer associates can choose their work based on their interests. While a few concentrate in a particular practice area, most explore several different areas during the summer and work with attorneys around the country. Our summer assignments are varied and have included the following:

- Researching and drafting memos on legal topics, including principles of causation in an Ohio product liability lawsuit, vicarious liability in a Section 1983 matter, and the varying probation and parole systems in several states;
- Drafting and interpreting contracts, opinion letters, and other documents;
- Drafting trial and appellate level briefs and pleadings for both state and federal courts;
- Assisting in the due diligence investigation of a target company and drafting merger documents;
- Writing blog posts for the firm’s employment, environmental, and products liability blogs; and
- Assisting in deposition and trial preparation.

Develop Through Training

You will learn a lot during a summer at Schiff Hardin. We have both formal and informal programs. In some, experienced Schiff attorneys teach our summer associates, give them hands-on litigation and transactional experience, and provide substantive feedback to help them develop new skills. Summer here is designed to be a transition between law school and law practice.

Summer associate training has four components:

Litigation Training: Summer associates learn from top trial lawyers about how to argue a motion and then argue themselves and receive feedback from firm attorneys.

Transactional Training: Summer associates learn from leading corporate attorneys about their practices, including topics like the steps in a corporate transaction, securities issues in corporate practice, and the key elements of a purchase agreement. They observe a negotiation of terms of a mock purchase agreement and negotiate other terms themselves.
Legal Writing Instruction: Schiff Hardin’s summer writing program has three parts.

- First, at the beginning of the summer program, our in-house legal writing coach Julie Schrager conducts a half-day writing workshop called “Introduction to Legal Writing at Law Firms.”
- Second, each summer associate participates in an individual feedback conference. Before the conference, the summer associate will have written a memo or brief for a partner. In the conference, the summer associate and Julie and the partner discuss the assignment and the legal writing process generally. Partners share their best writing practices in an open and informal conversational setting.
- Third, Julie works one-on-one throughout the summer with each summer associate on a writing project.

Client Skills Training: Summer associates learn how lawyers develop new client relationships and nurture and maintain current ones through hands-on exercises in which they practice building trust, conveying empathy, and demonstrating expertise.

Learn Through Observation

We build observational experiences into our summer program because new lawyers learn a lot by watching experienced ones. Our lawyers take summer associates to court, to corporate negotiations, and to client meetings, and we help summer associates develop their legal skills through other meaningful “hands-on” experiences.

For example, recent summer associates have

- observed depositions of key witnesses and settlement conferences;
- attended an on-site due diligence review for purposes of a bank acquisition;
- observed oral arguments on motions to dismiss and motions for summary judgment;
- watched acquisition negotiations and participated in client meetings;
- attended trials and other hearings; and
- observed and witnessed will signings.

Summer associates also join in our tradition of representing clients on a pro bono basis. In Chicago, for example, Schiff has staffed a Chicago Volunteer Legal Services clinic since 1979. Summer associates assist — they may observe and participate in the intake process and work one-on-one with attorneys on CVLS and other pro bono cases.

Get to Know Us and Have Fun

Summer associates meet many Schiff attorneys and staff during their ten weeks at the firm. They are assigned an associate adviser and a partner resource, both of whom are there to answer questions or provide advice. Associate advisers act both as friends and professional advisers, conveying partner feedback on summer associate work and helping summer associates learn their way around the firm.

The summer program starts each week with a Monday Morning Meeting with the Summer Program Committee. In these meetings, summer associates meet with senior lawyers who discuss the firm’s strategic plans, the firm as a business, and the most effective ways to develop strong client relationships. They also learn about the firm’s pro bono matters and the “Secrets of Being a Great Associate.”

We also host evening social activities so that summer associates and attorneys can get to know each other better in more relaxed, fun settings. In recent years, Chicago events have included an architectural boat tour, WhirlyBall, an improvised Shakespeare comedy show, a Cubs game, and a progressive dinner at partners’ houses.

An annual highlight: "Iron Schiff," an Iron Chef-inspired cooking competition in which teams of partners, associates, and summer associates work together to prepare a three-course dinner. Everyone then samples the "gourmet" creations.

Awards & Honors

- Midlevel Associates Rank Schiff Hardin Among Top Firms in Chicago and Nationwide for Job Satisfaction
  For the second straight year, Schiff Hardin LLP has ranked among the top large law firms in Chicago and nationwide for associate satisfaction, according to the results of the 2018 Midlevel Associate Satisfaction survey by The American Lawyer.

- Marci Eisenstein Named to CBJ’s 2018 Women of Influence
  Chicago Business Journal’s 2018 Women of Influence honors women business leaders who stand out for both their business achievements and their commitment to their community.

- Three Schiff Hardin Attorneys Join 2018 LCLD Leadership Programs
  Three of our attorneys will participate in the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity’s 2018 leadership programs

- Imron Aly Named Among Most Influential Minority Lawyers in Chicago (2017)
Crain’s Chicago Business

- **Schiff Hardin Named a Best Place to Work for LGBTQ Equality**
  Human Rights Campaign awards perfect score on 2018 Corporate Equality Index for 8th consecutive year

- **Law360 Highlights Schiff As Leader In Maintaining Diverse Attorney Workplace**
  We are one of 18 firms identified as consistently showing above-average representation of women and minorities at every level

- **Schiff Ranked #1 in Chicago and #20 Nationally for Midlevel Associate Satisfaction**
  We ranked particularly high in the categories of exposure to major cases, exposure to high level/challenging work, and attitude toward pro bono.

- **Schiff Hardin Recognized as a Top Firm for LGBT Equality**
  For the seventh year in a row, we have been named a top law firm for “Raising the Bar” on LGBT inclusion by Equality Illinois