

## **Taking the Firm to SCOTUS School** **It's not just law students who gain from high court litigation clinics**

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By Deborah L. Cohen

Nine Northwestern University law students gather in a semicircle. Two nibble on lunch as others sip coffee and several hammer out notes on laptop computers. All listen attentively as Joseph R. Guerra, an appellate litigator with the Washington, D.C., office of Sidley Austin, lectures on strategies for writing reply briefs.

Guerra came to Chicago last fall to help guide Northwestern's Supreme Court litigation clinic. It's one of several such programs cropping up at elite law schools around the country.

Since Stanford Law School launched the first such clinic in 2004, others have followed: Northwestern, Yale, the University of Texas and the University of Virginia began theirs in 2006; Harvard and New York University kicked off last fall.

Mark Stancil, a 33-year-old appellate litigator with Robbins, Russell, Englert, Orseck, Untereiner & Sauber, says the firm's involvement with the University of Virginia clinic has boosted his Supreme Court expertise and led to new business for the boutique firm.

"I'm a relatively young lawyer. I'm probably the youngest of the clinic leaders in private practice," says Stancil, who lives just a stone's throw from UVA's campus in Charlottesville and commutes to Washington. He clerked for Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist.

"It's a great way for me to get a lot of experience in the court on a lot of cases that maybe I wouldn't get at this stage in my career," Stancil adds.

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