

# 2021 Phillips Murrah Externship Program teaches law students career lessons



From L: Phillips Murrah Attorney Lauren Barghols Hanna, Phillips Murrah Director Candace Williams Lisle, OU Law 2L and PM Externs Christopher Punto and Camille Burge pose together in the courtroom of Federal Judge Jodi Dishman during their Apr. 14 educational visit and tour.

In January 2021, Phillips Murrah initiated its inaugural Externship Program in partnership with the University of Oklahoma College of Law, continuing the Firm's efforts to recruit talented and motivated future attorneys who reflect the diversity of our local community. The Externship Program is spearheaded by the Firm's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. The Program, chaired by Director [Candace Williams Lisle](#), is designed in alignment with Phillips Murrah's goal to create a workplace culture that is open to all needs,

perspectives, contributions, experiences, and backgrounds. The Externship Program exposes a diverse group of students to the everyday practice of law, cultivates relationships, and provides mentorship and opportunities to enhance legal skills. Participating students gain legal experience while working at Phillips Murrah's Oklahoma City office and receive 3 hours of course credit.

This year, Phillips Murrah welcomed second-year OU Law students, Camille Burge and Christopher Punto. As externs, Burge and Punto were mentored by Phillips Murrah attorneys while learning about practice areas including litigation and appeals, labor and employment, business transactions, real estate, tax, family law, oil and gas, bankruptcy, municipal financing, energy and regulatory, administrative, estate planning, cannabis and liquor licensing, and workers compensation. The externs attended events including depositions, client meetings, a trial, and frequent lunch and learns. They worked on a variety of research and writing projects and received feedback from their supervising attorneys. The externs also enjoyed a presentation by a Firm client about practicing law as Deputy General Counsel for a large public corporation.

A highlight of the program was a visit to the William J. Holloway Jr. United States Courthouse. Burge and Punto accompanied Lisle and Phillips Murrah Attorney [Lauren Barghols Hanna](#) to meetings with federal judges Hon. Bernard Jones, Hon. Patrick Wyrick, and Hon. Jodi Dishman. The federal judges offered advice, answered the externs' questions, and Judge Dishman gave a tour of her courtroom.

"It was a unique opportunity for the externs to meet one-on-one with the federal judges, learn about their respective paths to the bench, and receive the benefit of their wisdom and advice," Lisle said.

Below is a video interview with Burge and Punto discussing

their courthouse visit as well as their experience participating in the 2021 Phillips Murrah Externship Program.

“We are very pleased with our inaugural externship program,” Lisle continued. “Through the interview process, we had the opportunity to meet a number of outstanding diverse students from OU Law School. Our externs, Camille and Chris, were talented, energetic, and enthusiastic. We were able to provide them with wonderful opportunities to learn about various areas of law practice from our talented practitioners, and to observe legal work in action. Our primary goal for the externship program was to develop relationships and collaborate with students with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and we definitely achieved that goal with this program. We’re very excited to expand on our externship program in the future.”

Phillips Murrah continues to be a leader in gender equity in Oklahoma with 44% of Shareholders and 53% of all employees identifying as female. In 2020, Phillips Murrah was nationally recognized by Law360.com as “[Ceiling Smashers](#).” Not only is Phillips Murrah a leader in the percentage of women attorneys, but more importantly, in women who have a seat at the table as equity partners and firm leaders,” Lisle said.

Through the Externship and other programs and initiatives, the Firm seeks to build on this success and further our team’s innovation, engagement, and creativity in our work. As a six-time-consecutive recipient of the [Top Work Place in Oklahoma](#) honor, an award chosen annually by employees of Oklahoma businesses, the Firm is confident in our ability to grow and continue making Phillips Murrah a fulfilling place for all current and future employees.