

Reprint from Vault's Career Advice Blog

## Your Summer Associate Experience: Insights from Paul, Weiss Litigation Attorneys

*Featuring partners Liza Velazquez and Tiana Voegelin*



As a summer associate in the Paul, Weiss litigation department, you'll have an unparalleled experience working in one of the top litigation practices in the country, learning about the firm's award-winning legal capabilities and networking with firm attorneys and fellow summers at a wide range of training and social events. Whether during a mock jury exercise led by a veteran trial lawyer, working on a high-stakes class action, or connecting at an after-hours social, Paul, Weiss summers have daily opportunities to learn from those who have excelled at the highest levels of practice.

Litigation partners Liza Velazquez and Tiana Voegelin, alumnae of the firm's summer associate program who now take an active role in mentoring summer associates, offer advice on how to make the most of this unique experience.

### Tackle substantive assignments and make lasting impressions

What sets the summer associate experience at Paul, Weiss apart is the opportunity to work on high-stakes and complex matters for Fortune 100 companies such as Boeing, General Electric, General Motors and IBM; major financial institutions and alternative asset managers such as Apollo, Citigroup, JP Morgan Chase, Goldman Sachs and Mastercard; and brand-name media and entertainment companies and sports organizations such as the NFL, FIFA, NHL, MLB and WWE, all alongside some of the country's most accomplished trial lawyers. To set summer associates up for success, summers are paired with both a partner mentor and senior associate mentor, who provide guidance and training via substantive work assignments.

"We're very busy, and we staff matters leanly, so there is opportunity for meaningful involvement and substantive responsibility on client matters at the earliest stages of your career," says Liza.

As they shadow their mentors, summer associates are immersed in the everyday practice of the litigation department and given ample

opportunities to sit in on high-level discussions and conference calls with important clients, as well as on witness interviews, depositions and court hearings. "We often bring summer associates into the room for important meetings and matters," says Tiana, likening the experience to a resident who shadows an attending physician. As a summer, she was part of a small group that worked on a sensitive project that only a handful of people at the firm were privy to. "We put a lot of trust in our summer associates," she notes.

Liza highlights the importance of the assignments that summer associates work on at Paul, Weiss. She recalls an occasion when a summer associate accompanied her to California for a three-day deposition in an employment class action litigation. On the first morning, opposing counsel brought two boxes of documents into the conference room that had not been produced prior to the deposition. What had started as an opportunity to simply observe a deposition turned into a valuable on-the-job training session in litigation strategy. "We dug through those files and changed the outline on the fly to adjust to the new information, and the summer associate's work was essential. That deposition was a core part of our overall success in that case."

The summer associate program is also a chance to make lasting impressions and shape your career trajectory. "Whatever you're doing to support the lawyer who's writing the brief or arguing the motion, you have to give it your all," Tiana says, "and at Paul, Weiss, you will be recognized for it."

### Seize the opportunity to explore

Summer associates at Paul, Weiss have the opportunity to sample many different practice areas. Summers select assignments from various practice groups and substantive areas of law, including the firm's elite litigation and white collar-focused practice capabilities, as well as its vibrant antitrust, appellate, investigations, patent, product liability and securities class action groups.

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Additionally, Paul, Weiss's renowned litigation department often works hand in hand with its best-in-class corporate department, providing summers the unique advantage of learning and training with both corporate lawyers and litigators on each matter. "We have a strong generalist tradition, because we recognize that, although it makes a lot of sense to develop an expertise and to specialize as you become more senior, an attorney who has had a well-rounded legal training and a wide range of experiences will be a better advisor to clients," says Liza.

"My number one tip for summer associates is that, if there's something you're interested in trying or seeing, this is the perfect playground to do that," says Tiana. "I tried both corporate and litigation in my summer and quickly realized that litigation was what I enjoyed most."

While the firm encourages and fosters exploration, it also supports summer associates in achieving their professional goals. "If you come in and say, I know I want to do this type of work, we will help you make connections and build your career in the practice area that is your passion," Liza says.

For example, Tiana knew early on that her interest in sports would shape her career path—even as a summer associate. "I knew that I really wanted to do sports law and work for certain clients, and they immediately made sure I got on an NFL matter. Because it was important to me, it was important to the firm." As a partner, she continues to work on sports matters.

### Embrace Paul, Weiss's culture of excellence

The Paul, Weiss summer experience is elevated by Paul, Weiss's culture of collaboration, teamwork and excellence, which makes for a congenial atmosphere for junior lawyers to work, explore and make new connections with lawyers at all levels of seniority. With

many of the nation's most accomplished trial lawyers and former government officials walking the halls, opportunities to learn and connect are plentiful.

"I tell summer associates to make an effort to meet as many members of the Paul, Weiss community as possible," says Liza. "Reach out. Partners welcome the opportunity to connect with summer associates. If you have an interest in someday working at the U.S. Attorney's office, we have many former U.S. Attorneys and assistant U.S. Attorneys here. They will inspire you with their career trajectories and can offer great advice."

Tiana also embraces an open door approach to mentoring. "I'm an open door for any level of question, even if it's 'how do I run a redline comparison of these documents?'"

### Nurture your relationships

The Paul, Weiss summer associate program also includes myriad opportunities to network and sample the many cultural and sporting events that New York City has to offer, including Yankees games, sailing, a cocktail reception at MoMA and more.

"There's a real effort to create opportunities to socialize and get to know each other, and to find space to have conversations that are not just about work or the law, but also about life and the experience of starting out a career," says Liza. Receptions at iconic New York City locations and partners' homes are a cornerstone of the program and after-hours drinks in the Paul, Weiss cafeteria are a longstanding staple.

Tiana recalls these aspects of the program as some of the defining elements of her summer experience. "You're making connections, forging friendships and making a community for yourself, and it's really important to have that community in this fast-paced field."



**Liza Velazquez** is a partner in the Litigation Department and chair of the Employment Law, Workplace Investigations & Trade Secrets Litigation practice group. She has extensive experience representing corporate clients and nonprofit institutions in a broad range of employment-related litigation and investigations. Liza also regularly counsels clients on employment-related issues such as litigation risk assessment, review of internal policies, developments in employment law and compliance. Liza is recognized by *Chambers USA* in the Labor & Employment (NY) category and by *Benchmark Litigation* as a "National Star" for Labor and Employment Litigation. She has also been named an "Employment MVP" by *Law360*, an "Employment Law Trailblazer" by *The National Law Journal*, and a "Labor and Employment Lawyer of the Year" by *Euromoney*.



A partner in the Litigation Department, **Tiana Voegelin** specializes in complex commercial and civil litigation, internal investigations and trial practice. Tiana represents clients in a broad range of complex commercial disputes, with a particular focus on litigation involving the sports industry, mergers & acquisitions, and highly sensitive internal investigations. Tiana has extensive experience litigating in state and federal courts in all phases of litigation, from pre-suit investigations through trial and appeal. She is recognized as a rising star by *The Legal 500* for general commercial disputes.