

RIW Summer Intern Recap: Michael Coleman and McKenna McLean

By RIW on October 10, 2023



Michael Coleman from Boston University School of Law and McKenna McLean from Suffolk Law School were summer interns at RIW in 2023. Learn more about their time at the firm and their key experiences and learnings.

Michael Coleman

Why did you choose RIW for your summer?

I was initially drawn to RIW for its extensive work in the areas of real estate, land use and construction law. Upon interviewing with the firm, RIW stood out to me for a variety of reasons. Answering interview questions can be a somewhat stressful experience. But meeting with Chris Agostino, Adam Gutbezahl and Sarah Melia, I felt very comfortable. RIW attorneys showed a genuine interest in getting to know me. Learning more about the substantive work I would have the opportunity to do, I left the interview knowing my summer experience would be exceptional. I was not disappointed!

Tell us about some of the interesting matters on which you've worked while at RIW.

I got to explore so many exciting areas of law this summer. Some of my favorites were real estate, land use, litigation and trusts and estates, and my most interesting matter this summer involved all of them to some degree.

I worked on a partition action between family members who, over multiple generations, have inherited varying portions of property in Northern Massachusetts. Some lived on the property and made payments for property taxes, insurance, utilities and maintenance. I was tasked with disaggregating who paid what and for which part of the property, figuring out who was financially responsible at the time and looking at checks dating all the way back to the 1950s to confirm their validity. I was able to use my financial background from my undergraduate education to then project how much interest would have accrued under multiple theories of when statutory interest begins, identifying the ideal scenarios for our client.

I also had the opportunity to work on a matter of first impression involving a new law commonly referred to as the "MBTA Communities Law," where we argued that our client, a developer, should be allowed to pay into an affordable housing fund in lieu of including affordable units on-site, because transit-oriented development is the primary goal of the statute. To do so, I was tasked with researching the statute's legislative history.

What was your favorite part of your summer at RIW?

I learned so much about not only the law but also who I hope to become as a future attorney. I was given such freedom to explore whatever areas of law I wanted, and I found myself most drawn to trusts & estates work. To further explore this area, I'm now working towards completing my LLM in Taxation alongside my JD at BU Law. I'm also excited that I'll be able to continue working part-time with RIW's T&E group during the school year.

What advice do you have for others who are taking on a summer associate role?

As a summer associate, expect that you'll begin to discover what types of law interest you most. So don't just wait for work to come to you. Reach out to attorneys whose work sounds interesting and offer your help. If you really enjoyed an assignment, let the attorney who assigned it know and ask if there are any opportunities to continue exploring that area of law.

McKenna McLean

Why did you choose RIW for your summer?

I chose to work at RIW for the opportunity to gain hands-on experience within a variety of practice areas. As a rising 3L trying to decide what to pursue after law school, the ability to complete substantive work across a variety of industries and practices area was invaluable.

Tell us about some of the interesting matters on which you've worked while at RIW.

For a few different matters in litigation, I researched the legislative history of a particular Massachusetts statute and learned how this research could be used when drafting motions and pleadings. As someone with an undergraduate degree in history and a focus in politics, it was a great way for me to combine my existing knowledge with new legal skills.

I also enjoyed attending a hearing on a motion and cross-motion for summary judgment. It was a great look into the timeline of motion practice – from drafting the initial motion and opposition, to preparing for oral argument, to reading the judge's decision only a few weeks later!

I also really enjoyed getting to work with the Trusts & Estates team on drafting various estate planning documents. As someone without a background in trusts & estates, I was surprised to realize the field encompasses a lot more than just wills and trusts!

What was your favorite part of your summer at RIW?

My favorite part about my summer at RIW was working with so many dedicated and knowledgeable legal professionals. I am continuously grateful for every attorney, paralegal and assistant who took the time to show me the ropes!

What advice do you have for others who are taking on a summer associate role?

Take advantage of the resources RIW has to offer! In addition to attorneys who are eager to share their industry knowledge, RIW offers several different events to gain cutting-edge insights and learn more about the community the firm serves.

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