1. **Objective: To observe and better understand the daily activities within a trial courtroom of a Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas.**

Activities/Resources:

1. Observe the court activities of Judge Guido’s courtroom as well as the activities of several other judges who focus on different aspects of the justice system like Treatment Court and Juvenile Delinquents.
2. Discuss court activities with the judge as well as his law clerk
3. Participate in the office work of Judge Guido’s office
4. Keep a log or journal of my observations

Evaluation/Verification

1. Selected excerpts from my journal of observations.
2. Summary of various court activities such as sentencing and civil trial procedures

My experience interning at Judge Guido’s office was mainly an immersive one. My supervisor, Carl focused on gearing my daily activities toward immersion in a variety of court processes and procedures. This greatly contributed to my achieving this first objective of observing and better understanding the daily activities within a trial courtroom. As I said, I mainly learned through observation and will discuss several of the main courtroom activities I observed during my internship.

Every Tuesday morning at the courthouse is Miscellaneous Court. During Miscellaneous Court any number of cases come before the judge. In my experience, the largest parts of these are pleas and sentencing. During a plea, the defendant comes before the judge with his or her attorney and listens to the prosecutor describe the facts of the case. The judge then asks the defendant if he or she did what the prosecutor purports that he or she did. After admitting the facts of the case the judge then runs through a list of questions to make sure the defendant understands all that is implied by the guilty plea, and to make sure that the plea has not been coerced. If all goes according to plan, the defendant will successfully plead guilty and sentencing will be set for a later date. Often times, the defendant’s counsel will move for immediate sentencing, often for the sake of moving the case along as quickly as possible. In the case of minor crimes or misdemeanors, and where there is no extensive criminal record or history of drug use, the judge will proceed with sentencing. Otherwise, both parties will contribute to a sentencing report, compiling the facts of the case, the defendant’s criminal background, and a drug and alcohol analysis into one document for the judge to examine, prior to sentencing. When sentencing does take place, it includes a range of time in prison for each count, as well as restitution if applicable, payment for the cost of prosecution, and instructions for probation or release.

Another type of court that I observed with great frequency was Treatment Court. During this type of court, participants in the County’s Treatment Court Program attend court regularly to basically give updates to the judge on their progress in the program. Program officers also attend to give updates. Defendants participate in the program in exchange for indefinite sentencing postponement. If a participant withdraws from or fails to complete the program, he or she will be sentenced for the crime committed. I saw this happen on my first day of observing Treatment Court, where a participant withdrew from the program because he didn’t think it was helpful for his particular addiction; he was addicted to heroin. This was a very sad moment for the program, because as the judge has frequently reminded me, the court’s mission is to rehabilitate whenever possible. This option is significantly preferable over “warehousing,” as the judge phrases it.

These are just a sample of the type of court procedures I’ve observed. You can see excerpts from my journal for more information on other court activities I’ve observed during my internship. I feel that this internship has been a great experience for me to get familiar with the courtroom atmosphere and all the activities that take place there. The Judge and my supervisor, Carl were always so helpful in answering all the questions I had about my observations. I feel more prepared for law school now having a little background in court procedures.

1. **Objective: To gain familiarity with different legal careers which interact with the court system.**

Activities/Resources:

1. Observe/Interview the judge’s law clerk, my supervisor Carl Connellan.
2. Observe/Interview the judge about his occupation and how it differs from other legal careers he’s held over the course of his career.
3. Observe and arrange interviews with other lawyers who frequent the judge’s courtroom, for example a DA and a public defender.

Evaluation/Verification

1. Summaries of my interactions with various legal professionals
2. Reflection on how these interactions have influenced my view of potential careers in law

My second learning objective is specifically geared toward preparing for a future legal career. While interning in Judge Guido’s office at the courthouse, I had ample opportunities to interact with a number of different legal professionals. In this way I was able to gain familiarity, not just with courtroom activities, but also with different courtroom careers.

My first point of contact with learning about courtroom careers was my supervisor, Carl Connellan. Carl engaged in a variety of different careers before settling down as the judge’s law clerk. Carl’s first occupation involved working for an airline in a technological capacity. He then transitioned into a sales career of sorts working for a book catalogue company and later selling original copies of artwork. Eventually, his golfing buddy, Judge Guido, asked Carl to run his campaign (judges are elected for ten-year terms). Carl wrote all of the campaign materials for Judge Guido’s campaign. Following his election, the judge took Carl on as his law clerk. Clearly, Carl’s path to the legal field was not a straight one; rather his experiences exemplify the fact that life doesn’t always go in the direction you plan, and you have to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. Carl has repeatedly emphasized how his writing skills aided him through his career path in a variety of capacities – in his sales career, in his campaign experience, and as a law clerk. From speaking to Carl about his career I’ve learned the value of transferrable skills, such as writing, as well as about the unexpected turns life can take in terms of where your career takes you.

Speaking with Judge Guido about his career experience has also been helpful in informing my views of possible legal careers. Judge Guido actually attended the Dickinson School of Law – long before it was associated with Penn State – which I find especially interesting considering I’ll be studying there next year. He helped to advise me during my law school decision-making process, and I am happy to go to a law school with such active alumni. Judge Guido’s career trajectory was significantly more straightforward than Carl’s. After law school Judge Guido worked as a prosecutor and than in his own legal practice, dealing largely with matters of criminal law. His current office as a Trial Court Judge seems like the proper culmination of his career-long experiences in criminal law. From speaking to Judge Guido about his career path, I’ve learned that working in the area of criminal law requires a great deal of passion and patience. Judge Guido sees that same sorts of cases, day in and day out, but his passion for the pursuit of justice enable him to do his job well. I can tell through his interactions with defendants and their advocates, that he really does seek rehabilitation if possible over imprisonment. I don’t know if I want a career in criminal law or not, because I’m not sure if I have the same sort of endurance Judge Guido has for dealing with these oft disturbing cases. However, Judge Guido has said I can extern with him during law school if I want, so perhaps it is something I could try out for a period to see if it’s for me.

The last career contact I made during this experience was a Public Defender (PD), fresh out of law school. Anthony describes the Public Defender’s office as the unwanted stepchild of the Court House family: the Supreme Court proscribes the existence of a Public Defense program in every court system, but they are often an unwanted expense. He says this job is certainly not for everyone and requires a great deal of patience – you lose a significantly greater amount of cases than you win. However, he told me an anecdote about a defendant who made him see the value of work as a public defender. The defendant maintained his innocence regarding charges of theft all the way through trial although everyone – including the PD believed he was guilty. In order to convey his innocence, the defendant secured multiple character witnesses to testify on his behalf. Ultimately, due to the strength of his character witnesses, the jury returned a verdict of not-guilty and the PD was amazed. Later, when encountering the defendant on the street, the defendant bragged to his friends about all Anthony had done for him. It’s moments like those that make the job of Public Defender seem worthwhile. From speaking with Anthony, I came to realize the effects that an attorney has on the lives of his clients. A lot rests with an attorney when trying a case – specifically the future of the defendant – and it is not a responsibility to be taken lightly. This was just an aspect of the legal field I hadn’t thought about much, and it is worth considering when I am deciding what kind of law I would like to practice in the future.