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## Akin Gump, Bracewell Did Summer Programs Right, Summer Associates Say in Survey

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld leads homegrown Texas firms, coming in eighth place on the 2021 Summer Associate Survey, with Bracewell in the 11th spot.

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Summer associate programs at homegrown Texas firms **Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld** and **Bracewell** got particularly high marks from law students, according to ALM's 2021 Summer Associates Survey.

Akin Gump came in eighth among 71 firms, based on surveys returned by summer associates, while Bracewell took the 11th spot in the ranking.

Two other Texas firms were included in the survey report: **Locke Lord**, which was 26th, and **Vinson & Elkins**, which came in at 45th.

According to the **overall results of the survey**, associates preferred in-person experiences, even though most programs were largely remote. Roughly 41% of programs were mostly remote with some in-person aspects, while 38% were completely remote. Just 11% of programs were mostly in-person with some remote elements and

4% were fully in-person.

The Texas programs also **varied** in the amount of in-person opportunities for the Texas summer associates. But, each of the firm scheduled social events to help the summer associates get to know lawyers better including a karaoke night and happy hours at Akin Gump; dinners and Houston Astros games at Bracewell; a comedy show at Locke Lord; and a seafood field trip, pickleball tournament and a trivia competition at Vinson & Elkins.

Akin Gump, the highest-ranking homegrown Texas firm, conducted a mostly remote program, but law students who participated in the summer program, like at many firms, commented that they understood



Credit: Andrey Popov/Adobe Stock

how COVID-19 safety protocols affected the amount of in-person contact.

"[There's] nothing that Akin could've done better with COVID considerations. Anything that I wish were different are because of COVID precautions," one Texas summer associate wrote.

However, another Texas summer associate wrote, "I wish we had a bit more interaction with partners and clients. Most continued to work at home while we tried to come in, so there just

wasn't much interaction, but it's hard to fault Akin for that, given the circumstances."

A number of the Texas summer associates wrote that the program was valuable, with one noting that it "helped me narrow down where I want to go in law," and another writing that it provided important connections.

"I was surprised by how much responsibility junior associates have," wrote an Akin Gump associate in Texas. Another expressed surprise at the amount of real work the associates were asked to handle during the summer.

Another Akin summer associate wrote that the firm takes diversity seriously.

"Great place in all aspects. In addition to prestige and high quality work, the firm is also a leader in its communities. The firm was founded on diversity (two Jewish men could not get hired). The firm continues to honor this history by prioritizing diversity and community service," the summer associate wrote.

The summer program at Bracewell was mostly in-person, which several of the Texas associates said they appreciated. One wrote that the only disappointing thing was two weeks of remote work.

As at other firms, the Bracewell summer associates were

impressed with the amount of work they were able to do. Another wrote that the firm provides an "intensely collegial workplace with kind and brilliant folks."

One summer associate wrote that the firm is a great place for those looking to work in Big Law in the Houston legal market.

"Picture a firm with deep roots in the community and longstanding prominence in the field of energy. As a result of their deep Texas roots, expect a far less corporatized working environment in a large legal market," the associate wrote.

Summer associates at Locke Lord's Texas offices described the mostly in-person summer program as "fantastic," "wonderful," "amazing" and "very holistic and complete."

A couple of the Texas summer associates wrote that they wanted more feedback on their work, but another wrote that their most memorable experience was "receiving an email from a partner stating that my project submission was outstanding."

Locke Lord summer associates wrote that they were impressed how engaged the partners were with young associates.

"I was surprised at how laid back and friendly the office was. I was also very sur-

prised when the managing partner came to my office and answered a question I asked from two weeks before. I think that showed a lot of care and effort and investment in me as a summer associate. I was also surprised to hear partners tell an associate to relax a little on working so much. There was genuine concern for the associates' longevity not only at the firm but also in the profession," the summer associate wrote.

At Vinson & Elkins, which held a mostly remote program, more than one Texas summer associate wrote that the lawyers were "genuine."

"I had very positive interactions with every member of the firm with whom I interacted—no bad eggs that I encountered," one associate wrote.

One summer associate wrote that the program was valuable, because it solidified their interest in particular practice areas, and also their interest in working at Vinson & Elkins.

Another Texas summer associate wrote, "The people are nice, it seems to be in a good spot financially. However, some practice groups seem very cliquey." In contrast, another wrote that "the people are just very down to earth" and take work, but not themselves, seriously.