



MENTORSHIP AWARD FINALIST Colleen Smith, Latham & Watkins



Courtesy photo

Colleen C. Smith of Latham & Watkins.

Colleen Smith, partner with Latham & Watkins, is among the finalists for The Recorder's 2025 Mentorship Award. Read a Q&A with her below.

How would you describe your mentorship style?

True development comes with experience, so the best mentors look for ways to get their teams real opportunities. That's always easier said than done, especially in multi-billion dollar cases. But experience does not only arise from "bet the company" motions or trial examinations—opportunities abound in lower stakes situations. For instance, junior associates can cross-examine witnesses in deposition preparation, they can present witnesses and documents in a mock jury exercise, they can argue discovery motions—all of which build a stronger team. As one example, at Latham, we recently ran simulated M&A litigation and mediation exercises with all of the associates in our Securities Litigation Practice, putting them on the

spot to make the next move and answer difficult client questions. These "war games" were inspired by military simulations that yield calm under pressure.

What can individuals and law firms do to develop better mentors?

Mentoring and sponsorship takes time. I think all leaders can be great mentors, but it requires focus. Law firms can align incentives for their leaders to engage with and develop the next generation of talent. At Latham, we try to do this through our year-end process and our hallmark training academies that provide substantive legal training, exposure to firm leadership, and networking opportunities. Both the year-end process and the academies encourage major investments in our talent.