

Discovering Careers in Intellectual Property

Virtual panel hosted by Seed IP
October 28, 2026
Noon–1:30 p.m. Pacific
3–4:30 p.m. Eastern

Real career stories. Practical advice.
Technical + nontechnical pathways.

We advance and protect the world's most valuable brands and innovations.

What today's conversation will cover

1	**How Panelists found IP**	The turning points behind each career.
2	**What the work is like**	Tasks, collaborators, and work products.
3	**Where backgrounds fit**	Technical and nontechnical pathways.
4	**Which skills matter**	Skills in action, with real examples.
5	**How AI is changing IP**	Effects on daily work and career paths.
6	**What to try next**	Practical steps to explore IP careers.

Many starting points. Everyone is welcome.

You do not have to be an attorney to work in IP

- Students, working professionals, and career builders are welcome. This includes international graduates and people still exploring.
- IP teams bring together people with legal, technical, administrative and business backgrounds.

Legal support

- Paralegals and legal assistants coordinate filings, documents and deadlines.

Law-firm operations

- Docketing, legal data, HR, finance, IT and administration keep the firm running.

Hayley Talbert

Managing Partner



A career built at Seed IP

Her entire career at Seed, beginning as a summer associate in 2007.

Firm leadership

Guides firm strategy and chairs the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Group.

AIPLA and UW Law

Co-Chair, AIPLA Membership Committee

Professor, UW School of Law, teaching patent prosecution

Patent practice

Electrical engineering background. Patent prosecution, licensing and IP strategy.

IP basics and the work behind them

Today's panel focuses primarily on patent careers.
IP professionals may work across several areas of IP.

What IP protects

Patents: inventions

Trademarks: source and brand identity

Copyright: original creative expression

Trade secrets: valuable confidential information

What IP teams do

Patent prosecution: preparing applications and responding to a patent office

Litigation: resolve disputes

Licensing and transactions: agreements

Technical work: explain inventions

Attorneys, agents, technical specialists, paralegals, and operations teams collaborate.

IP career pathways at a glance

Pathway	Starting points / training	Transferable skills	Primary job function
Patent attorneys ** (prosecution)	Legal qualifications, bar admission and USPTO registration*	Analysis Technical writing	Advise inventors and prosecute patent applications
Litigation, trademark/copyright attorneys	Various majors Legal qualifications and bar admission	Analysis Legal writing	Advise on disputes, brands, and creative works
Patent agents **	Technical eligibility and USPTO registration	Analysis Technical writing	Prepare and prosecute patent applications
Technical advisors **	STEM study, research or industry experience	Technical insight Clear writing	Explain inventions to patent practitioners
Legal support	Legal-support training Requirements vary by role and employer	Accuracy Organization Coordination	Paralegals, legal assistants and word processing: documents and filings
Operations	Business, accounting or administrative training	Systems Client service	Accounting, administration, office services, docketing and human resources (HR)

*USPTO registration requires technical eligibility. Requirements vary by role and employer.

**Utility-patent paths emphasize STEM. Design-only registration has separate eligibility rules

Patent careers at the USPTO

A public-service pathway in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

Patent examiner

Review patent applications and determine whether a patent can be granted.

What the work involves

Search earlier inventions (prior art), analyze applications, and write findings.

Who might explore this path?

Science or engineering students and professionals. Check each job's specific qualifications.

Student programs and other careers

Explore internships, extern programs, and trademark examining attorney careers.

Student programs: uspto.gov/jobs/student-programs
Explore roles: uspto.gov/jobs/join-us
Career events: uspto.gov/about-us/events/uspto-careers

Degrees for technical patent careers

Technical advisors, patent agents, and patent attorneys

Employer hiring preferences for utility-patent work

- Life sciences: some employers seek a master's/PhD. Lab and research experience can help.
- Engineering/computer science: some employers accept a relevant bachelor's. Specialized roles may require advanced degrees.

USPTO eligibility and role boundaries [1]

- A qualifying bachelor's can meet USPTO technical eligibility, including in life sciences. No blanket master's/PhD requirement applies. Other registration requirements still apply.
- A technical-advisor title alone does not authorize independent USPTO representation.

Other IP paths [2, 3]

- Trademark and court litigation can fit nontechnical backgrounds. Attorneys need applicable bar/court admission. Eligible U.S. trademark attorneys do not need patent-practitioner registration.
- Design-only patent registration has a separate eligibility route.

USPTO sources: [1] General Requirements Bulletin (Aug. 2026) and Becoming a patent practitioner
[2] Becoming a trademark practitioner [3] Apply to become a design patent practitioner

Meet the panelists



Beth Goldsmith

Director of Legal Data Management

Operations perspective

Practice: legal data management



Andrea Peña

Trademark Paralegal

Paralegal pathway

Practice: trademark & copyright support



Jessica Gritton

Of Counsel

Litigation and transactions

Life sciences / biology, pharmaceuticals, and physics



Hao Wang

Technical Advisor

Patent practice

Telecommunications, electronics, and computer technology



Blake Kumabe

Partner

Patent practice

Electrical engineering, semiconductors, telecommunications, medical devices, automobiles



Emily Ross

Associate

IP litigation

Patents, trademarks, other enforcement and dispute work

Beth Goldsmith: IP operations

Position: Director of Legal Data Management

At Seed IP since 2009. Total industry experience: 20 years.

Practice focus: docketing and legal data management



My starting point

- B.A. History and Journalism, UW
- Law-firm starter job after college
- Considering law school

My work today

- IP information and processes
- Lead specialized IP operations teams
- Deadline and client/matter software

What I would pass on

- Effective communication is key
- Ask questions and keep learning

Questions for Beth

- What is legal data management?
- Why is your role essential to the firm's day-to-day operations?
- How is AI changing your day-to-day work?

A real example: Leveraging AI in process and risk management

Hao Wang: Patent practice across borders

Position: Technical Advisor

Master's student, electrical & computer engineering, University of Washington

Technical focus: telecommunications, electronics, smartphones and computer technology



My starting point

- STEM background + curiosity about law
- Licensed patent attorney in China

My work today

- U.S. patent prosecution support
- Cross-border client communication

What I would pass on

- Stay Curious
- Keep learning

Questions for Hao

- What differences have you noticed between U.S. and Chinese patent practice?
- How is AI changing your day-to-day work?
- What's next for you in your IP career?

A real example: adapting international patent applications for U.S. practice

Andrea Peña: Trademark paralegal

Position: Trademark Paralegal

Time in the industry: 12 years

Practice focus: trademark & copyright support



My starting point

- B.S. sports sciences
- Referred by a friend
- Learned trademark and copyright on the job

My work today

- U.S./international marks
- Drafts for attorney review
- Client and team coordination

What I would pass on

- Accuracy and checklists
- Entry-level exposure
- Curiosity and reliability

Questions for Andrea

- How did you find your way into IP law, particularly trademarks and copyrights?
- What interests you most about trademark work compared with patent work?
- How is AI changing your day-to-day work?

In practice: check a draft response and clarify the next deadline

Blake Kumabe: Patent practice

Position: Partner

Patent/legal practice: 11 years

Technical focus: Electrical engineering, semiconductors, telecommunications, medical devices, automobiles



My starting point

- Electrical engineering
- B.S. and M.S., UW
- J.D., Seattle University

My experience

- Patent examiner
- Engineer at aerospace and telecommunication companies

What I would pass on

- Effective persuasion
- Gain exposure and experience

Questions for Blake

- What sparked your interest in becoming a patent attorney?
- What advice would you share with participants based on your experience at the patent office?
- How is AI changing your day-to-day work?

A real example: the art of persuasion; from explaining why inventions aren't patentable to arguing they are

Jessica Gritton: Litigation + transactions

Position: Of Counsel

Patent/legal practice: 16 years. At Seed IP: 5 years.

Technical focus: life sciences / biology, pharmaceuticals, and physics



My starting point

- B.S. Physics, Utah
- M.S. Biology, MIT
- J.D., Harvard

My work today

- Patent portfolios
- Transactions
- Life sciences disputes

What I would pass on

- Keep learning
- Talk to strangers
- (informational interviews)

Questions for Jessica

- How have your professional background and skills prepared you to work across practice groups?
- How do you use science in your everyday work?
- How is AI changing your day-to-day work?

A real example: freedom to operate analysis - Using science to review different approaches to a problem

Emily Ross: IP litigation + disputes

Position: Litigation Associate

Patent/legal practice: 9 years. At Seed IP: 3 years

Technical interests: whatever comes my way, with particular interest in software, hardware, and materials



My starting point

- B.S. Engineering, Harvey Mudd College
- Patent agent for 4 years
- J.D., Northwestern

My work today

- Primarily IP litigation & disputes
- Occasional other litigation
- Occasional patent prosecution

What I would pass on

- The value of emotional intelligence
- If possible, test the waters before you commit

Questions for Emily

- What led you to pursue litigation?
- What do you find most exciting about your practice?
- How is AI changing your day-to-day work?

Day to day: emotional intelligence, developing arguments, and drafting

Skills for a career in IP

IP careers call for a mix of technical, communication, business and organizational skills.

Communication

Communicate at every level with emotional intelligence. Listen and adapt to your audience.

Client & business skills

Negotiation, business development and marketing grounded in client needs.

Organization

Manage deadlines and handoffs with accuracy, confidentiality, and sound judgment.

Research & technical skills

Research clarifies inventions. STEM experience also supports legal-support work.

Writing: four skills to hone

Technical writing
Explain how technology works with precision.

Legal writing
Analyze law and evidence in memos and briefs.

Patent writing
Draft claims, specifications and responses.

Everyday written communication
Write clear messages, manage client interactions, give clear instructions and hand off work.

Patent bar eligibility

The patent bar is the USPTO exam for representing patent applicants.
Older STEM background? Check degree and coursework records with OED.
Refresh relevant technical knowledge separately from exam preparation.

Technical qualifications

A: An approved science or engineering degree

B: A degree plus qualifying coursework

C: Pass Fundamentals of Engineering (FE)

D: Qualifying design degrees, design-only

Registration requirements

- No law degree required for patent agents.
- Patent attorneys also need bar admission.
- Good moral character and reputation.
- Citizenship/status rules apply.*

Application and fees

- Apply through the USPTO Applicant Portal.
- Submit transcripts and supporting records.
- $118 application + $226 examination fee
- Separate testing-center fee: check current rate.

Individual review

*U.S. citizens and permanent residents may register. Others may qualify for limited recognition. Petitions apply only in limited cases.

Contact USPTO Office of Enrollment (OED). Approval is not guaranteed.

Exam prep: PLI's paid Patent Office Exam Course includes PatWare® practice questions.

Source: USPTO General Requirements Bulletin (Aug. 2026). Eligibility and fees may change.

Resources for further exploration

Start with the option that matches your preferred pathway.

AIPLA membership

- Student Affiliate: free membership
- Tech-transfer Affiliate: $129 annual dues for full-time university/research staff with IP technology-transfer responsibilities.

Patent Pathways®

- Free for admitted STEM graduates. Some fields require a PhD. Check full criteria.
- Harrity Academy: free drafting training. Separate entry requirements apply.

patentpathways.org Participant details and eligibility

Careers and qualifications

USPTO careers and patent bar

- Find USPTO jobs, internships, and events.
- Separately, check patent bar eligibility to represent patent applicants.

School programs and clinics

- Join IP clinics and student networks.
- Pursue IP research and coursework.

uspto.gov/jobs/student-programs

Check current criteria, dues, and availability. Membership does not make every course or event free.

Next steps

Talk with someone

Ask an advisor, professor, or career counselor about paths for which you may qualify, including law school admission or patent bar eligibility.

Practice a skill

Try a mock negotiation, research brief, or marketing project. Practice clear writing and explain your work to a new audience.

Meet the community

Connect with an IP group or professional association. Practice active listening and thoughtful follow-up.

Choose one action and put it on your calendar.

Career connections and applications

Connections throughout your education

- Build relationships with professors and academic advisors as you explore IP careers.
- Join relevant organizations and explore clinics that match your interests and eligibility.

Programs and clinics to explore

- Seattle University's TILE Institute
- UW Entrepreneurial Law Clinic
- Loyola Patent Law Interview Program

Informational interviews

- Ask IP professionals about their daily work and entry routes.
- Discuss experiences and skills that could prepare you for a role.

Recruiter connections

- Recruiting services are free for applicants.
- Connect with recruiters who place practitioners, legal-support staff, or administrative professionals.

General applications

- Apply to employers that accept general applications.
- Follow their instructions for submitting updated résumés or supporting materials.

Additional career resources

Recruiter Contacts

Greg Walther, Emerald Search
info@emeraldsearch.com
Legal and law-firm business roles

Adam Sutton, Fintelligent
IP Specialty
adam.sutton@fintelligent.co.uk
Offers 30-minute resume reviews for students

Marisa Schuldinger, LegalEyes Pro
IP Specialty
marisa@legaleyespro.com
From January 2027: Lykke Advisory
Marisa@lykke-advisory.com

Ginger Manizza, Premier Legal Staffing
IP Specialty
gingerm@premierlegalstaffing.com

Summer Associate Hub

- IP Virtual Interview Program
- For patent-bar-eligible 1L students.

View IP Virtual Interview Program

Lateral Hub

- Patent-agent and technical-specialist job listings
- Compare responsibilities and qualifications to learn what different roles involve.

lateralhub.com/browse-jobs

Additional learning resources

IP learning, patent practice training, and exam preparation

USPTO Trademark Basics Boot Camp

Free, eight-part virtual series on trademark registration and maintenance.

USPTO bootcamp overview

WIPO Academy Introductory IP courses

Free foundational learning: IP Primer (DL-001) and General Course on IP (DL-101).

WIPO Academy course overview

WIPO Academy Patent-focused learning

Patent essentials (DL-170), PCT (DL-101-PCT) and patent information (DL-177).

WIPO Academy course catalog

AIPLA Patent Prosecution Boot Camp

Drafting workshops for junior patent professionals. Check fees and future dates.

AIPLA program overview (2026)

PLI Patent Office Exam Course

Paid patent-bar prep with PatWare®. USPTO exam eligibility is separate.

pli.edu: Patent Office Exam Course

Attorney bar-exam preparation

Paid BARBRI and Themis bar-exam prep. Check jurisdiction-specific eligibility.

BARBRI Bar Review Themis Bar Review

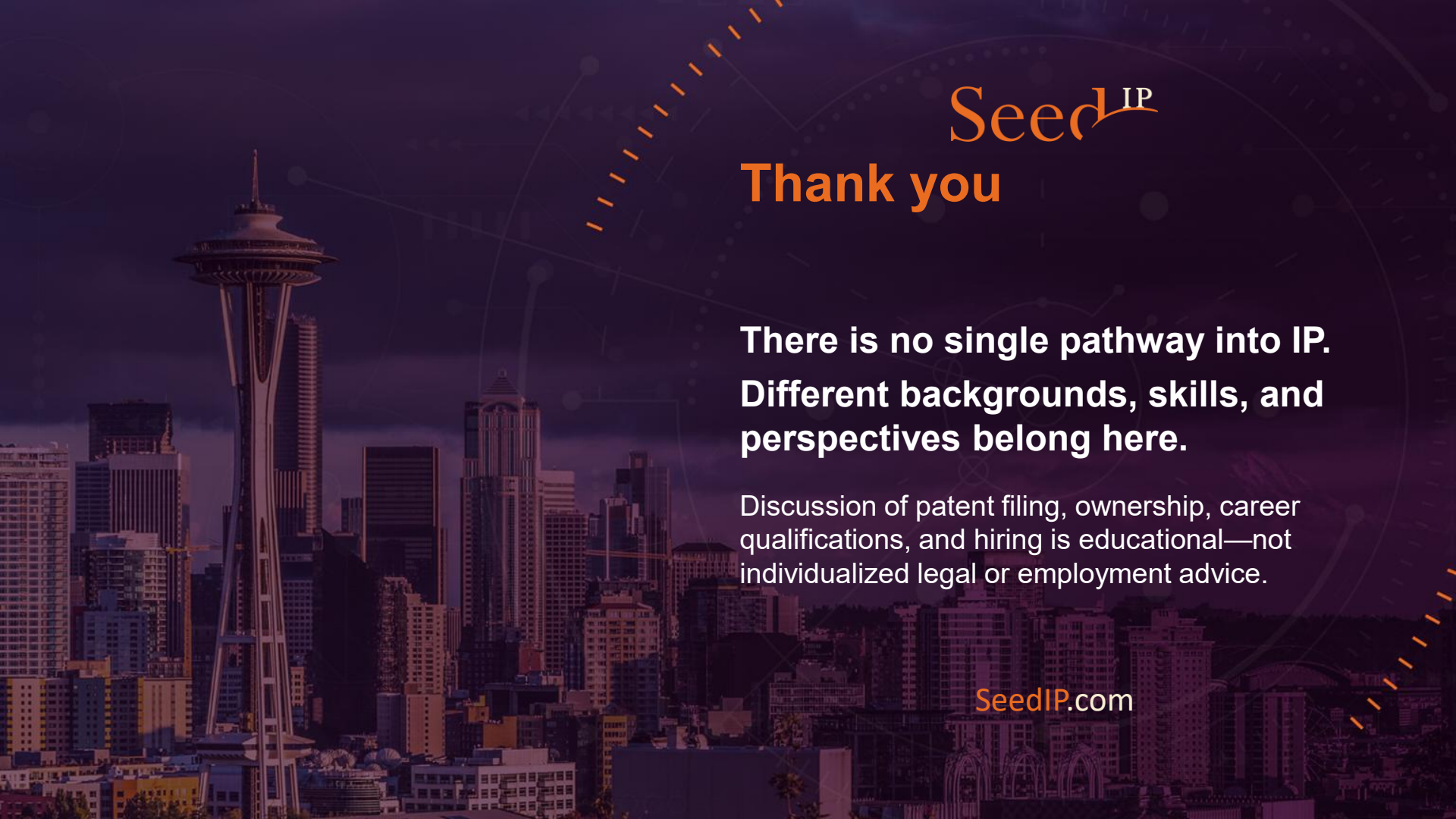
Check current fees and entry criteria. Course enrollment or completion does not confer a professional license.



Q&A

What would you like to know about careers in IP?

SeedIP.com



Thank you

There is no single pathway into IP.

Different backgrounds, skills, and perspectives belong here.

Discussion of patent filing, ownership, career qualifications, and hiring is educational—not individualized legal or employment advice.

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