

HOWARD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

GENERAL EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM

STUDENT GUIDE

This Student Guide was created to answer your questions about the Externship Program. Please review the information provided. If you have any remaining questions, please stop by the Clinical Law Center (G-18, Notre Dame Building) and our staff will be happy to assist you.

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Externships

The Howard Externship Program provides second and third year law students with the opportunity to put their legal knowledge to use in the real-world setting. Student externs complete internships with varied legal employers and can receive academic credit for their unpaid legal work. Unlike internships, which are strictly voluntary, student externs must commit to working a set number of hours during each semester, attending an externship seminar, and completing all requirements of the seminar in order to receive academic credit. For their part, employers agree to provide externs with a substantive legal experience.

Benefits of an Externship

Students who choose to extern receive hands-on experience; gain valuable insight about what lawyers, judges, litigants, and policy makers do on a day-to-day basis, and get a better understanding of how to shape their own career paths. Through these work experiences, students may have the opportunity to increase their knowledge of substantive and procedural law, learn to apply legal analysis skills in real world situations, improve research skills, polish oral advocacy, research, and writing skills, and begin to develop a professional network of contacts which could be essential to securing post-graduate employment.

Eligibility

Students are eligible to apply for externships once they have successfully completed two (2) semesters of law school including successful completion of a course in Legal Reasoning, Research and Writing. All students must apply and be accepted into the Externship Program prior to registering for the course. The application periods are contemporaneous with the clinical programs application process which occurs each fall and spring.

Employment Requirements

All externship placements must meet the following requirements:

1. The employer must be a government (state, local or federal) entity, public interest organizations, court or tribunal, or *pro bono* project within a law firm. Students who propose work within a law firm must provide documentation ensuring that 100% of the student's work is of a public interest nature and does not generate fees.
2. The student must be engaged in substantive law-related work.
3. The student must be supervised by a licensed attorney.

4. All work must be unpaid. Students are permitted to receive nominal reimbursements for parking and travel, but cannot receive a stipend or other compensation for their work.

All proposed placements must be approved by the Externship Program. Students will be provided with an Externship Contract which details responsibilities of the student and employer. Students who are accepted into the Externship Program must provide a signed copy of the contract to the Program by the second week of the seminar course.

Seminar Requirement

All students accepted into the Externship Program are required to attend a contemporaneous seminar course. The seminar will explore different factions within the public sector and engage students in a consistent reflection of what it means to be a public interest lawyer. A variety of topics will be presented including, but not limited to, the development of lawyering skills, problems arising at the placement site, ethical issues, an overview of the public sector, and career opportunities for public interest lawyers.

Students are required to maintain weekly journals, submit weekly time sheets, and comply with all other seminar requirements. Evaluation will be based on the student's performance at the placement site (by the law school supervisor and the field supervisor), participation in classroom sessions, student journals, in-class presentations, and a final paper. A grade of "pass or fail" will be awarded.

Hours of Work and Credit

1. Fall & Spring Program

During the fall & spring semesters, students are required to work twelve (12) hours per week for thirteen (13) weeks, attend a contemporaneous seventy-five (75) minute weekly seminar, and meet all seminar requirements. Students who meet all requirements will receive four (4) credit hours upon successful completion of the program. A student enrolled in the Academic Year Externship Program shall not be permitted to enroll in a "live-client" clinical course offering during the same semester in which the student is enrolled in the Academic Year Externship Program. The academic year programs are capped at twenty (20) students per semester.

2. Summer Program

This program is currently only open to students who are completing externships over the summer in the D.C. Metro area. Students are required to work thirty-two (32) hours per week for ten (10) weeks, attend a contemporaneous 2 hour weekly seminar, and meet all seminar requirements. Students who successfully complete the program will receive six (6) credit hours. These hours can be applied to any subsequent semester of study. The summer program will be limited to fifteen (15) students.

The Summer Program is not included in the regular tuition costs of Howard University School of Law. Students who wish to take this course will incur an additional tuition cost. Students may also have access to educational loans over the course of the summer to pay cost of living expenses. Please see the Office of Financial Aid for detailed information about the cost of the Summer Program and process for loan applications. Information is also available on the Financial Aid section of the Howard Law website, under “Summer Externship Cost of Attendance Budget.”

Credit Maximums

The Externship Program is part of Howard’s Clinical Law Center. A student may not earn more than eighteen (18) credits from clinic/externship courses.

Registering for the Externship Program

Students must pre-register and be approved for the Externship Program. It is not necessary to have an offer of employment before registering – in fact, most students have not located an externship placement by the time they pre-register for the following semester. Application and registration dates will be contemporaneous with the clinic application process. Students must be approved for the program prior to registering for the course.

Finding an Externship Placement

1. Reflect On and Determine What Type of Experience You Want

Before beginning to think about specific field placements, you should think about what type of experience you are trying to get out of an externship. Some externships offer primarily research and writing experience; others involve interviewing and representation of clients; and still others may offer the opportunity to work on matters of policy.

If you already have a substantive area of interest, such as family or criminal law, focus on organizations that will enhance your knowledge in those arenas. If you are still searching for an area of interest, think about which courses have interested you the most and what in particular you enjoyed about them. Speak with other HUSL students who have externed at a variety of organizations to begin to assess your options.

2. Research and Identify Suitable Employers

There are a number of resources at HUSL to assist you in locating your externship.

- a. Review Externship Database (hard copies found in main clinic office G-18 ND) and binders in the Public Interest Resource Center (107 ND) containing recent externship opportunities and surveys of placements.

- b. Create an account at www.pslawnet.org and take advantage of the extensive database to do a search for internships or organizations. Accounts are free for Howard students.
- c. Review government opportunities in the Government Honors & Internship Handbook (compiled by the University of Arizona and available at: <http://www.law.arizona.edu/career/honorshandbook.cfm> (Username and Password provided in the Career Services newsletter).
- d. Search the Career Services on-line jobs database for internship opportunities (Symplicity).

3. Apply, Interview & Accept Offer of Placement

Once you have identified organizations of interest, you should submit cover letters, resumes, and other required application materials to the employer. It is extremely important to draft a separate cover letter for each employer as boiler-plate language is not likely to get you to the interview stage. Remember to personalize the letter and demonstrate the reasons for your interest in the organization as well as the skills you will bring to the job.

If you receive an offer of employment prior to being accepted into the Externship Program, you should let your employer know when you expect to hear about the acceptance. Most employers will not condition your internship on your ability to receive academic credit for the program; however, some government offices impose a credit requirement. If that is the case, you can only accept the offer contingent upon your acceptance into the Externship Program as positions in the seminar are not guaranteed. It is your responsibility to communicate openly and effectively with your employer until you are approved for placement in the Externship Program. If your employer does not require academic credit, you are free to choose to intern voluntarily if you are not accepted into the Externship Program.

4. Attend Clinic Open House & Apply for Externship Program

Remember that securing your offer of employment is only one step in the externship process. You must also apply for the Externship Program during the Clinical Programs Application period which occurs once each semester and generally two weeks prior to course registration. Please be on alert for emails and other notices about the Clinic Open House where you will receive more information about all programs offered in the clinic, including externships. Clinic applications will be available after the open house outside the clinic office, G-18, Notre Dame. The deadline for the applications for the Summer Program will be announced each Spring and most likely occur in April.

Timeline

1. Fall Externships

Students interested in fall externships will apply for the fall program the previous spring, about 1 week prior to registering for fall semester courses. The vast majority of students who apply for the fall externship program will not have a position secured when they apply for the externship program. This is completely fine and, in fact, expected. However, students should have some idea of where they would like to extern that coming fall. Many government employers recruit fairly early for fall externships, some as early as the previous spring. Students should begin researching and applying for fall externship positions no later than June.

2. Spring Externships

Students interested in spring externships will apply for the spring program the previous fall, about 1 week prior to the registration deadline for spring semester courses. Many students will have secured offers by this time, but again, it is not required that students have a placement in order to apply for the program. Students who have done some initial research and have a plan in place for identifying and securing placements will improve their chances of getting into the program. Students should begin researching and applying for spring externship positions by November.

3. Summer Externships

Students interested in summer externships will apply for the summer program during the preceding spring. The deadline for applications will be mid-April. Most students will have proposed placements secured by the time they apply for the summer program; however, it is not a requirement of the program. Students should begin researching and applying for summer externships as early as January.

Questions

Professor Claire Raj coordinates the Externship Program and can be reached at (202) 806-8119 or craj@law.howard.edu.