Public Interest/Public Service Fellows Program

PREPARING A NEW GENERATION OF LAWYERS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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Columbia Law School’s Public Interest/Public Service (PI/PS) Fellows Program will bring together and support a community of students seeking to use their legal training to effect positive change in society.

Designed for highly motivated students committed to pursuing public interest, government, human rights, or other nonprofit work upon graduation, the PI/PS Fellows Program will provide students with specialized opportunities and resources for exploring public interest lawyering in the United States and around the world.
Community Building

From day one, PI/PS Fellows will become part of a close-knit community of peers who share their passion for public interest and public service. Community-building events such as orientation programming; book clubs; small group discussions on current events, social justice lawyering, and other topics; happy hours; and an annual fellows dinner will establish a personal network and camaraderie as fellows make their way through three years of law school.

“Law school can be challenging for students interested in pursuing social justice work. The Public Interest/Public Service Fellows Program will provide a space for committed public interest students to build community and support one another throughout our time at Columbia.”

TIFFANI BURGESS ’20
CO-CHAIR OF STUDENT PUBLIC INTEREST NETWORK (SPIN)
Learning

Substantive and reflective learning opportunities will take place in and out of the classroom. Visits to public interest organizations and government agencies, skills development workshops, and leadership development training will provide PI/PS Fellows the foundation and experiences they will need for real-world applications after graduation.

“We prepare lawyers not only with the skills they need for the world of practice, but also to think critically about the world they are entering. To do that effectively, you need a faculty who values what’s going on in the real world and who is interested in building places of reflection about the law. Columbia excels at making the connection between the classroom and practice.”

OLATUNDE JOHNSON
JEROME B. SHERMAN PROFESSOR OF LAW
Columbia Law School’s faculty, alumni, administrators, and upper-class students will offer PI/PS Fellows specialized guidance on how to be an effective public interest or public service lawyer. There will be many opportunities to engage with and learn from mentors in small group settings and in one-on-one discussions: substantive law and career advising sessions with practitioners; group or peer-to-peer sessions with second- and third-year students; and small group social gatherings, such as teas, mixers, or dinners, with faculty and practitioners.

“PI/PS Fellows will benefit from a strong network of mentors eager to support the next generation of public interest leaders as they define their career goals, navigate potential challenges, and ultimately develop their passions into meaningful careers.”

DEVI PATEL
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST/PUBLIC SERVICE FELLOWS PROGRAM
Career Counseling

PI/PS Fellows will be well-prepared to shape their individual pathways for meaningful and rewarding careers in public interest and public service fields. They will have access to personal internship and career counseling as well as guidance on financial planning for work in the public interest and public service fields.

“The Public Interest/Public Service Fellows Program will enable students who are committed to public interest and public service to explore these areas on a deeper level while at Columbia. Fellows will have the opportunity to examine the many facets of public interest lawyering and substantive practice in the domestic and international realms while thinking about notions of justice, fairness, and 21st century lawyering practice—and positioning themselves to be highly competitive for the most sought-after public interest and public service jobs.”

ERICA SMOCK
DEAN FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVES AND PUBLIC SERVICE LAWYERING
Columbia Law School is renowned for its historic commitment to lawyering for the public good by providing its students access to

- Outstanding **faculty** who are actively engaged in cutting-edge legal work both in and out of the classroom.

- An extensive **alumni** network of public interest lawyers, government officials, and other social justice leaders.

- A wide array of groundbreaking **clinics, externships, policy labs**, and other **experiential learning** opportunities.

- Numerous **centers**, led by faculty or practitioners, focusing on a range of public interest issues that provide hands-on opportunities for students to engage with public interest issues.

- Myriad student **activities**, organizations, journals, and moot courts specifically devoted to public interest law.

- Opportunities to engage with underserved communities through **pro bono work**.

- Generous **financial support**, including public interest admissions scholarships, guaranteed summer funding for public interest or public service positions in the United States and abroad, and an outstanding Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) for graduates.

- Post-graduate **fellowships** in government, international human rights, and domestic public interest fields.
Social Justice Initiatives

The PI/PS Fellows Program is overseen by the Office of Social Justice Initiatives (SJI), which provides career services, programming, and networking opportunities for Columbia Law School students and graduates interested in exploring public interest, government, or other nonprofit careers. SJI also implements and oversees the Law School’s mandatory pro bono program, which connects students with attorney-supervised projects in the public good, as well as the Law School’s Guaranteed Summer Funding Program and the Human Rights Internship Program. SJI partners with Columbia Law School’s Human Rights Institute (HRI) to provide specialized opportunities in human rights advocacy, such as the 1L Advocates Program.

SJI is one of the largest public interest advising centers at any U.S. law school and serves as the hub for a wide range of public interest activities at Columbia Law School.

Visit law.columbia.edu/social-justice-initiatives to learn more.

“One of our core values as an institution is the belief that serving the public interest should be part of the professional life of every one of our students and graduates. The Public Interest/Public Service Fellows Program provides more meaningful experiences for our students and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to preparing graduates for the evolving opportunities of public service lawyering in the 21st century.”

GILLIAN LESTER
DEAN AND THE LUCY G. MOSES PROFESSOR OF LAW
Graduating fellows will be prepared to navigate the nuanced and dynamic fields of public interest and public service, and will be well-versed in critical thinking, substantive law, lawyering skills, and other key elements of social justice work.

This three-year program will focus on supporting students in four key areas:

- **Building a community of like-minded individuals.**
- **Connecting fellows with mentors who are deeply rooted in public interest practice.**
- **Learning from faculty and practitioners, both inside and outside the classroom.**
- **End-to-end career counseling to ensure that fellows are ideally positioned to secure top careers in the public sector.**
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