Want a Public Sector Job This Summer?

Whether you prefer to volunteer or to extern for credit, if you want to work in the public sector this summer, go for it! There are many different opportunities out there that will help you gain crucial skills and expose you to public interest practitioners in the region and beyond. If you’re not sure where to start, check out the following resources:

- The database of the Denver Law Legal Externship Program includes hundreds of opportunities in the area;
- The Office of Career Development and Opportunities’ (CDO) Jobs/Internships postings for Denver and the surrounding region;
- PSJD to search for opportunities across the country (and to find funding sources);
- The University of Arizona Law School Government Honors and Internships Handbook and USA JOBS for information on federal government opportunities (email amontague@law.du.edu for Arizona handbook password).

If you would like resume or cover letter advice, reach out to the public sector career consultants in the CDO: Andrea Montague (amontague@law.du.edu); and John McKee (jmckee@law.du.edu). You can contact Alexi Freeman (afreeman@law.du.edu) in the externship program for assistance on public sector externships and public service work in general. One of the biggest things to remember in applying for a public sector job is that you have to sell yourself and create a narrative in your cover letter about who you are and why you want to do this work. Dig deep and consider the personal and professional aspects of your life that have led you to become interested in public sector work and this placement specifically.

Check the calendar for relevant programming and reach out to us for help!

The Public Service Newsletter highlights events, people & issues related to public service and the law.

Visit the Public Service Portal for future events.

Denver Law Offers Many Courses Related to Public Interest Law This Spring!

Many students were overjoyed to check out the spring list of courses, as they found many different in-class and out-of-class opportunities to learn more about relevant areas of law and/or gain practical experience: Prof. Marceau’s Death Penalty Habeas Practicum; Prof. Leong’s Constitutional Litigation Seminar; the new Holistic Juvenile Defense & Advocacy Externship; Forced Migration and Human Trafficking; Workplace Rights Project Lab; Immigrant Rights Lab; the team-taught Critical Reading Seminar; and the immersion Criminal Defense Clinic. These new offerings joined favorite courses: Race, Class and Reproductive Rights; Employment Discrimination; Multicultural, Race and the Law; Social Change Lawyering; and the Sustainable Cities Practicum, among others.

Keep it up, Denver Law!
Denver Law Hosts Inaugural Rocky Mountain Public Interest & Social Justice Retreat

In refreshing contrast to the traditionally objective and adversarial mode of thinking among law students, professors, and practitioners, the inaugural Rocky Mountain Social Justice and Public Interest Retreat brought people and issues together towards the furtherance of a common goal. With speakers and panels from a variety of backgrounds, the event provided resources and inspiration to public interest law students in Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and New Mexico. For law students committed to using the law as a tool for the advancement of positive social change, the retreat opened up a vast world of possibilities.

On the morning of September 20th, law students from all over the region chose standing up over sleeping in, and gathered at Denver Law. Jon (“Rap”) Rapping, 2014 MacArthur ‘Genius Fellow’ and founder of public defender training organization Gideon’s Promise, gave opening remarks. With a lens towards racial justice, Rap called for the much-needed injection of humanity back into the system. When two-thirds of law students with a stated interest in public interest work fail to pursue that work after graduation, Rap said passionate law students need courage, conviction, and diligence to steer clear of the trend.

As the day unfolded, the tone of passion and possibility continued at panels on government service, movement lawyering, poverty lawyering, modest means representation, policy advocacy, cause-oriented litigation, and bridging the gap in legal representation. Attendees learned from attorneys, professors, educators and activists who have held fast to their humanity. Using tools as different as community organizing, policy building, and direct impact litigation, lawyers and non-lawyers alike embodied the intersection of diverse pursuits of social justice. Sharing their stories, the presenters inspired and invited audience members to join the movement. The culminating case study on ‘crimmigration’ tracked the way activists and practitioners are using a variety of legal tools to come together for progress. Throughout the day, themes of power, interconnectedness, personal growth and community emerged as common threads woven across the many ways which one can engage in meaningful change.

The second day of the retreat brought the ideals and options of the first day into the students’ hands. Beginning with a guided meditation and yoga session on beautiful Yegge Peak, the day emphasized self-care, reflection, and collaboration among the student community. Time and space for reflection offered students an opportunity to delve into their personal interests and goals, and to imagine how their individual paths coalesce into a collective effort to build a better world. Culminating in school-specific conversations about ways to improve the public interest landscape at Denver Law and Colorado Law, the afternoon included tangible action steps for more intentional collaboration across the state. As students drove down the mountain and back into their respective cities, the Rocky Mountain Public Interest and Social Justice Retreat ended much as it had begun. Having empowered law students with newfound inspiration, resources, and community roots, the horizon for social justice law in the region is bright.

–Ashley Basta, 2L
“The client that really has affected me is a client who I represent in three cases I have. This client had two cases and then picked up some more serious charges in a new case. He calls me every couple of days to fill me in. I think he really is just calling to hear a friendly voice. Every time I think it cannot get worse, something else happens. He is going through so much and doesn’t have a support system to help him through this time. He has broken down on the phone with me numerous times. When I talk to him, I think ‘This is why I want to do this work’: for the people who find themselves in bad situations without the support system that I take for granted; for people who feel alone, or overwhelmed, or tired of the system; for the people who are trying their best to do better for themselves and their families; for the people who never really had much of a chance in this life; for the people who have been mistreated and judged by the system and our society.”

—Lauren Parsons, Colorado State Public Defender, Fort Collins Office

At the end of my oral presentation for my externship seminar, I likened the NACC [National Association of the Counsel for Children] to a shepherd, herding a group of wayward sheep towards the common goal of advocating for and protecting the best interests of children. I find that my experience working at the NACC proved a shepherding experience for me as well. While externing at the NACC, I was shepherded towards a new understanding of the legal world and myself. I was at risk of allowing the two worlds to remain at a disconnect. I was at risk of settling for the notion that some legal issues are too complicated for even lawyers to competently address and improve. I was at risk of losing my priorities. My hope, as I move on from this summer, is to never refuse to be shaped by an unexpected legal or life experience, and to continuously assess myself with regard to my skills, my ethics and my priorities.”

—Amanda Huston, National Association of the Counsel for Children

“My first victim intake was a woman whose ex-husband was serving a six-year sentence due to an extremely violent assault he committed against her. I listened to her story for over an hour only occasionally offering support. At the end of the conversation she told me that I was the first person to completely listen to her story and tell her that I was sincerely sorry she had to go through such a terrible situation. I was completely stunned. She had gone through such a traumatic event and had spoken to police officers, investigators, detectives, district attorneys and victim advocates. Out of all of those people she never felt that one person ever really listened to her. A complete stranger, whom I had only spoken to once, told me to never lose my compassion and told me that someday I would make a great attorney. These words from a complete stranger moved me to tears that day. It reminded me of why I decided to pursue a law degree and reinforced my beliefs to compassionately advocate and empower the victims of crime.”

—Emily Williams, Rocky Mountain Victim’s Law Center

“As I gained confidence in my work, I found I have a deep interest in the law itself and for standing behind the laws. Further, I realized the difference between personal beliefs in various laws versus how laws should be followed until overturned. This was one of the best learning experiences I had at my externship this summer. I was able to learn more about my personal and professional capabilities, and to confirm that I was truly passionate about the law and being an attorney.”

—Mamie Ling, Attorney General’s Office, State Services Division

“. . . I felt connected and inspired by my work. Some days were challenging: I didn’t know where to start my research, I felt I was encountering more issues than could be resolved in time for deadlines, I found myself in dead-ends, etc. But the support system at Advancement Project and amongst my intern cohort helped me creatively problem solve and collaborate to find solutions. At the end of each week and most days, I felt a sense of satisfaction about the work I had done and a sense of inspiration to go back to work the next day and continue doing my part in the fight against social inequity.”

—Elie Zwiebel, Advancement Project

“An experience at the Boulder DA’s office that had a significant impact on me was going to an autopsy. It was very interesting scientifically, but it really made me consider the value of human life. . . . The pathologist discussed being able to see old injuries, which is how he notices if a child was abused or if someone was sexually abused. He told me about times when parents say the child just hit their head on a table and died, but he is able to see the scarring on the bones and the abuse the child endured for so long. It made me ponder the importance of bringing justice to families and individuals who are the victims of violent crime.”

—Megan Bibliowicz, District Attorney’s Office, Boulder
Artesia Lab Allows Students to be First Responders to Immigration Crisis

Mothers and children escaping persecution in Mexico and Central America are being held in detention at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Artesia, New Mexico while their asylum claims are adjudicated. Although families may be released on bond if they are not flight risks or threats to national security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has aggressively pursued a strict “no bond” policy in an attempt to deter arrival of asylum applications. This aggressive policy has resulted in some families spending over three months in detention while their asylum applications are adjudicated.

Although many applicants have meritorious asylum claims, without the assistance of counsel due process is being denied to these women and children. Upon learning of these denials of due process, the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) began to mobilize pro bono attorneys from across the country to assist these families with their bond and asylum hearings.

At Denver Law, Lecturer Lisa Graybill has led the effort to remotely assist these families and their pro bono attorneys by creating a lab where students prepare bond packages to secure the release of these families while their applications are adjudicated. Law students Jessica Rehms and Sean Ays have been working on these packages since September. The group’s first client was released in early October. As part of the lab, the team also worked on-site for several days in early October to assist with intakes, hearing preparation and investigation.

- Sean Ays, 3L

Rocky Mountain Collective on Race, Place and Law: Equal Protection Initiative

If racial discrimination by the government is prohibited under our Constitution, why do pervasive racial disparities continue to exist? How do recent Supreme Court decisions and public attitudes combine to undermine the pursuit of racial equality in the United States? These questions will be the focus of the Equal Protection Initiative, a series of public lectures and panel discussions sponsored in the spring semester by the Rocky Mountain Collective on Race, Place, and Law.

A panel discussion on January 28, 2015, will focus on several landmark Equal Protection cases of the past two decades, including recent decisions in Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action and Shelby County v. Holder. Speakers, including Professors Ehrenreich, Juarez and Romero, will explore how common assumptions about the meaning of equality and the nature of our society feature prominently in these Equal Protection cases, despite the widely varying factual contexts in which they arise.

On February 12, Angela Harris, a prominent critical race theorist, will deliver a keynote lecture examining how the Supreme Court jurisprudence of recent years has changed the Equal Protection Clause from a tool for protecting the subordinated and powerless to a means of maintaining the race and class privilege of the powerful.

A second panel discussion will be on affirmative action discourse and speakers will focus on the public debate surrounding Amendment 46, an anti-affirmative-action provision that was on the ballot here in Colorado in 2008. Featuring political activists and law professors from the coalition that successfully defeated the amendment, the panel will examine the arguments that opponents of this attack made in favor of affirmative action and why the story they told succeeded. Stay tuned for more information!

- Professor Nancy Ehrenreich
Denver Law BLSA: “Let’s talk about RACE…and law.”

Race will be a prominent issue in the legal profession for years to come. The disparities that exist in our criminal justice system and the eruptions of race based controversy nationwide are stark reminders of this fact. We must become comfortable dealing with the hard topics if we ever want to make positive change in this difficult area.

On November 14, Denver Law’s BLSA hosted a round table discussion entitled “Let’s talk about RACE…and law.” The following day, students who attended the discussion had the opportunity to see the exhibit, “RACE: Are we so different?” at the History Colorado Center. After viewing the exhibit, those students had an opportunity to debrief.

The goal of this event was to break the ice on the difficult topic of race. DU BLSA reached out to a number of campus organizations with the hope that they will contribute to a robust conversation highlighting varying points of view. Participants had the unique opportunity of sharing their individual perspectives before and after a group learning experience. Hopefully, people walked away with a willingness to engage in constructive conversations about race.

For this event, DU BLSA partnered with the Asian Pacific American Law Students Association, DU Law Democrats and the American Civil Liberties Union. Contact Shaquille Turner, (sturner16@law.du.edu), for more information.

–Shaquille Turner, 2L

The Movement for Sustainability

Sustainability is a movement with many aims, among them to promote respect for the Earth, and to build a just and healthy society, through actions small and large, in communities local and global. Sustainability work takes many forms. At the University of Denver, hockey games are opportunities to employ zero-waste practices. The campus-wide bike plan encourages cycling through bike-sharing programs, bike repair stations, and this past fall’s popular Bike-In Movies series. A constant retooling of lighting and h-vac systems throughout the University is reducing energy consumption, helping DU meet its American Colleges and Universities Presidents’ Climate Commitment to being carbon neutral by 2050. Mindful consumption practices are encouraged by the monthly Farmers’ Market and the relocation of DU’s community garden on campus next spring.

This is a small sample of the sustainability work going on at DU. You are invited to contribute your skills and energy to these efforts. The Sustainability Center operates under the direction of Chad King and builds collaborative efforts across DU’s many departments, programs and schools. Students, staff and faculty working together comprise the University’s Sustainability Council, which meets the second Thursday of every month in Johnson-McFarlane. The Council welcomes your participation. Contact Randy Wagner (rwagner@law.du.edu), for more information.

–Randy Wagner, Administrative Director, Strategic Initiatives

News and Updates FALL 2014

Public Service at Denver Law

KEEP CONNECTED

Want to keep in touch with the public service community at Denver Law? Visit the Public Service Portal for upcoming events.

Would you like to contribute to the newsletter, or have concerns, questions or suggestions about public service at Denver Law? Contact Alexi Freeman at afreeman@law.du.edu.