Columbia Law School

PI/PS
Office of Public Interest/
Public Service Law and Careers

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Public Interest Job Search

Toolkit

Prepared by the
Office of Public Interest/
Public Service Law and Careers

For the exclusive use of Columbia Law School students and graduates

law.columbia.edu/public-interest

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Introduction to Public Interest Law

This section covers:

- What is public interest law?
- How to determine what internships, jobs, and careers are right for you
- Qualities employers seek in public interest interns and attorneys
- How to explore public interest law while at Columbia

What Is Public Interest Law?

We use the term "public interest law" to mean work that is pursued based on individual or group concepts of justice, fairness, and advancement of the public good.[1]

This deliberately broad definition encompasses work in government (aka "public service") and at nonprofits, public interest law firms, and nongovernmental organizations abroad. Types of work include prosecution, individual client representation, large-scale litigation aimed at broad-based change, advocating in court or before international tribunals, advising nonprofits and community organizations, drafting legislation, and investigating human rights abuses. Public interest lawyers also engage in activities outside of traditional legal practice, such as media, nonprofit management, research, and foundation work.

Resource: See the Appendix for a discussion of the range of public interest work and employers.

About the PI/PS Office

The Office of Public Interest/ Public Service Law and Careers inspires and prepares CLS students and graduates to pursue public interest and public service work. We provide:

- *Specialized career advising.*
- *Interview programs with public interest employers.*
- *Events with practitioners and faculty.*
- *An extensive alumni network.*

We also oversee the Berger Fellows, Human Rights Internship, pro bono, and postgraduate fellowship programs.

Make an Appointment

[1] The definition of "public interest" varies for purposes of the Columbia Loan Repayment Assistance, Summer Funding, and Pro Bono Programs.

What Are You Looking For?

These questions will help you identify what you are seeking in an internship, pro bono or school experience, or career.

Do not worry if you do not have all the answers. You will likely change or refine them as you go through law school.

YOUR PROFESSIONAL GOALS

Why did you come to law school?

Who do you want to serve?

- ❑ Individual clients
- ❑ Groups of individuals
- ❑ Communities
- ❑ Government
- ❑ Other

How do you want to spend your time?

- ❑ Conducting legal research and writing
- ❑ Investigative reporting and documentation
- ❑ Interviewing and representing clients
- ❑ Drafting legal education materials or policy manuals
- ❑ Appearing in court
- ❑ Engaging in alternative dispute resolution
- ❑ Meeting with clients
- ❑ Meeting with policymakers
- ❑ Engaging in oral advocacy
- ❑ Community organizing
- ❑ A little bit of everything

What timeframe appeals to you?

- ❑ Short-term projects with immediate results
- ❑ Long-term assignments, focusing on eventual systemic impact
- ❑ A mix of short- and long-term projects

What characteristics are you looking for in a work environment?

- ❑ Small office (fewer than 20 colleagues)
- ❑ Larger office (over 20 colleagues)
- ❑ Informal setting
- ❑ Formal setting
- ❑ Frequent travel
- ❑ Infrequent travel
- ❑ Support staff
- ❑ Flexible work schedule
- ❑ Multidisciplinary team
- ❑ Diverse staff
- ❑ Collaborative environment
- ❑ Frequent contact with media/public
- ❑ Open office layout
- ❑ Traditional office environment
- ❑ Frequent communication with supervisors

YOUR PERSONAL GOALS

What are your short- and long-term career goals?

Where do you want to work?

- ❑ U.S. (particular state/city) _____
- ❑ Abroad (particular country/city) _____
- ❑ Major metropolitan area
- ❑ Mid-size city
- ❑ Rural setting

Do you have family/personal obligations to consider?
Yes/No

How important is prestige to you?
Important/Not a priority

How important is your level of income?
Important/Not a priority

YOUR INTERESTS

What have you found interesting in law school?

Outside of school, what activities interest you?

Which legal issues interest you?

- ❑ Access to Justice
- ❑ Animal Rights
- ❑ Arts/Preservation of Cultural Artifacts
- ❑ Bankruptcy
- ❑ Business and Human Rights/Corporate Accountability
- ❑ Campaign Finance
- ❑ Children's Rights
- ❑ Civil Rights
- ❑ Community Development
- ❑ Consumer Protection
- ❑ Criminal Law (Prosecution, Defense, Death Penalty, Prisoner Rights, Tribunals)
- ❑ Disability
- ❑ Domestic Violence
- ❑ Economic Justice
- ❑ Education
- ❑ Elder Law
- ❑ Employment/Labor/Work with Dignity
- ❑ Environmental Law
- ❑ Family Law
- ❑ Financial Regulation
- ❑ First Amendment
- ❑ Food Security
- ❑ Foreclosure
- ❑ Government Accountability
- ❑ Gun Control
- ❑ Health and Human Rights
- ❑ Homelessness
- ❑ Housing
- ❑ Immigration/Asylum
- ❑ Indigenous Rights
- ❑ International Human Rights
- ❑ Judiciary
- ❑ Juvenile Justice
- ❑ Land Rights
- ❑ LGBTQIA+
- ❑ Mass Incarceration
- ❑ National Security
- ❑ Native American Rights
- ❑ Peace and Security
- ❑ Poverty
- ❑ Public Health/Access to Care
- ❑ Racial Justice
- ❑ Reproductive Rights
- ❑ Sustainable Development
- ❑ Transitional Justice
- ❑ Torture
- ❑ Voting Rights
- ❑ Water Rights
- ❑ Women's Rights
- ❑ Other

YOUR SKILLS

What skills, experience, and knowledge do you have? Which would you like to develop?

Data Skills

Have	Develop	
❑	❑	Analyzing, evaluating information
❑	❑	Assessing problems
❑	❑	Examining, observing
❑	❑	Investigating
❑	❑	Long-term planning
❑	❑	Organizing, classifying information
❑	❑	Research
❑	❑	Writing

People Skills

Have	Develop	
❑	❑	Advising, counseling
❑	❑	Listening/conveying empathy
❑	❑	Oral communication
❑	❑	Initiating relationships, networking
❑	❑	Inspiring
❑	❑	Interviewing
❑	❑	Leading, managing
❑	❑	Persuading, lobbying, advocating
❑	❑	Mediating, settling disputes
❑	❑	Mentoring
❑	❑	Organizing, coalition-building
❑	❑	Presenting ideas clearly
❑	❑	Teaching, training

Working with Ideas

Have	Develop	
❑	❑	Conceptualizing
❑	❑	Coordinating
❑	❑	Designing, innovating, developing new projects
❑	❑	Editing
❑	❑	Explaining, synthesizing
❑	❑	Implementing ideas
❑	❑	Public speaking
❑	❑	Strategizing
❑	❑	Summarizing
❑	❑	Troubleshooting

ADVOCACY TOOLS

Which strategies and tactics appeal to you?

- ❑ Community organizing
- ❑ Impact litigation
- ❑ Policy advocacy and drafting legislation
- ❑ Client interviewing and counseling
- ❑ Media/social media campaigning
- ❑ Coalition-building
- ❑ Courtroom advocacy
- ❑ Drafting amicus briefs
- ❑ Investigating and reporting
- ❑ Designing legal training programs
- ❑ Public activism

YOUR PERSONAL VALUES

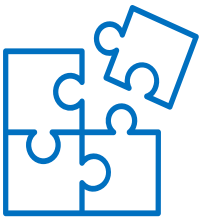
Which is most significant to your career planning?

- ❑ Activism
- ❑ Advancement/achievement
- ❑ Adventure
- ❑ Calmness (in life, work environment)
- ❑ Civic involvement
- ❑ Collaboration
- ❑ Control
- ❑ Community
- ❑ Connection
- ❑ Contribution
- ❑ Creativity/expression
- ❑ Diversity (perspectives, culture, people)
- ❑ Entrepreneurship/Innovation
- ❑ Fairness
- ❑ Fame/status
- ❑ Financial security
- ❑ Ideological compatibility
- ❑ Independence
- ❑ Intellectual challenge
- ❑ Job security/stability
- ❑ Justice
- ❑ Kindness
- ❑ Leadership
- ❑ Public participation
- ❑ Service
- ❑ Social environment/collegiality
- ❑ Variety (in tasks, projects, settings)

Reflect on your selections and use them to inform your job search.

- ➔ **Read job descriptions** carefully to evaluate compatibility.
- ➔ **Seek experiences** that will build desired skills.
- ➔ **Use your values and goals** to identify compatible practice settings and work environments.
- ➔ **Apply to employers** that work on issues you care about.
- ➔ **Find opportunities** to use advocacy tools that resonate with you.

Tailoring your job search to the "true you" will lead to a more satisfying career.



Finding a Good Fit for You

You may not know exactly what you want to do, and you may need to experiment before you find the right fit. Explore options through internships, externships, clinics, classes, pro bono, and student groups. Attend events to learn about practice areas and meet attorneys. Alumni are enormously generous with their time. Many come to the law school regularly; others will speak by phone or over coffee. The PI/PS Office can help you connect.

Remember: you are not making irrevocable decisions about your entire career. You will continue to explore long after you leave Columbia. Public interest lawyers learn about opportunities through networking and coalition work with other organizations. Private sector lawyers explore public interest work through pro bono. Many attorneys change practice areas and even fields.

PI/PS advisers can help you identify employers, issues, and types of lawyering to inform your path, both in law school and after you graduate. Learn about their areas of expertise and set up a meeting.

What Might Make Me a Good Fit?

Once you have a general idea of what type of employers, practice areas, and advocacy mechanisms interest you, consider how to make yourself a competitive candidate.

➔ **Experience**

Public interest jobs are highly competitive. Demonstrating interest in the social good (as illustrated by, for example, prior legal or non-legal work or volunteer experience) is very important. If your application shows a dedication to the issues on which the employer works, the clients it serves, its theory of change, or the advocacy it carries out, you will be an even stronger candidate.

No employer expects a new law student to possess vast experience, but you should work to build it throughout law school. Similarly, graduates looking to switch fields need to build experience to be competitive in their new field. The more you can demonstrate their dedication to an employer's issues, clients, or advocacy approach, the more appealing you will be.

➔ **Knowledge and Skills**

Possessing specific knowledge can be helpful, but it is not always critical. Employers expect to train summer, entry-level, and even mid-career employees. They are looking for a capacity to learn.

Employers emphasize different skills based on their issue areas and advocacy strategies—and you may already have some of what they are looking for.

- **Communication and interpersonal skills**, such as interviewing or language skills, are important to employers who deal directly with clients or work with partner organizations.
- **Debate, public speaking, and presentation skills** are important to employers engaged in litigation, oral advocacy, and community organizing.

- **Research and writing** are valuable for appellate work, campaign-based organizations, impact litigation, advocacy, and policy centers that draft laws, briefs, or educational materials.
- **Knowledge of non-law subjects** can be important. A scientific background may be important in environmental work; experience as a teacher is useful in education advocacy.

Be ready to explain why your skills or background would be valuable, even if they do not exactly match the employer's work.

While it is good to show familiarity with an issue, be cautious if your experience is highly personal (for example, you were in foster care and now want to work in children's rights). Talk to an adviser about whether to disclose this. Some employers will view it as an asset; others may question your objectivity.

➔ Initiative, Responsibility, Judgment

Public interest employers do not hire interns and lawyers just to carry out orders and repetitive tasks. Often, students and new lawyers are expected to take responsibility and show initiative. Employers seek candidates who can work independently, asking for help when needed and using good judgment when working on their own.

➔ Enthusiasm

Employers value candidates who see the job as an opportunity to put their education and experience to work. Even if you have not been trained on a particular issue, your enthusiasm will go a long way. Be ready to offer specifics about why you want this job.

➔ Character

Many public interest employers are small, and people work long hours on issues they care about deeply. A benefit of this work is having colleagues you respect. Be prepared to convey in your cover letter and show in your interview that you are reliable, trustworthy, and enjoyable to work with.

➔ Grades

Public interest employers tend to focus less on grades than those in the private sector. Still, certain employers, including some judges, impact litigation groups, public interest firms, and government agencies, may care about grades or journal work.

Exploring Public Interest at Columbia

During law school, there are many opportunities to explore public interest lawyering and to hear from practitioners engaged in different kinds of work.

Events like those hosted by the PI/PS Office, Law School centers, student groups, other Columbia schools, and organizations around the city are great opportunities to learn about practice areas that interest you and to start developing connections. In addition to providing substantive information, events allow you to network with other students and with Columbia graduates, professors, PI/PS Office staff, and experienced lawyers.

There are also many ways to gain hands-on practice. Students can participate in Spring Break Caravans or join student groups like the Parole Advocacy or Domestic Violence Project, which partner with outside organizations to provide direct services. Upper-year students can take clinics, externships, or policy labs, which combine fieldwork with seminars.

Pro Bono Work

In 1992, at the urging of students, Columbia Law School instituted a pro bono requirement for all J.D. students. The requirement—at least 40 pro bono hours completed between 1L and 3L spring—reflects our belief that service should be part of every lawyer's professional life. It can be met through in-house pro bono projects, uncompensated public interest or government internships, or student-initiated projects (with PI/PS Office approval).

Heed the advice of the thousands of students who came before you…
Do not wait until the last minute to satisfy your pro bono requirements.

Throughout school, look for meaningful projects that will allow you to explore skills and practice areas. Do work that is important to you—all without grades or the pressures of an internship.

Be strategic with your pro bono hours! Make use of the variety of NYC-area employers to develop your expertise and increase your contacts. For students going straight into public interest after graduation, pro bono can help make you a more competitive job candidate. Students going into the private sector who want to move to public interest eventually should also use pro bono to build connections they can draw on later in their career. On occasion, private sector students continue working on their pro bono projects and with public interest organizations as part of their pro bono practice at their firm.

Internships

Internships, either over the summer or during the school year, are great ways to explore practice areas and build skills that will aid you in the future. There are many ways to find internships and jobs after

graduation. Public interest organizations often post jobs directly on their websites, as well as on job boards like PSJD.org, Idealist.org, and LinkedIn. An adviser can help you target your search and will share postings that may interest you. You can also set up alerts for jobs that you are interested in on Symplicity and PSJD.

Many organizations also participate in Columbia On-Campus Interviewing (OCI) in the fall and spring, and job fairs like the Public Interest Legal Career (PILC) Fair in February or the Equal Justice Works (EJW) Career Fair in October.

Here is a year-by-year guide to exploring public interest at Columbia:

As a 1L

In 1L fall, start thinking about the issues and lawyering types you may want to explore over your first summer, as well as geographic areas you may want to work in. Take control of your search: make a list of employers and areas of interest. Check deadlines: some employers interview 1Ls early in the fall, while others wait. Meet with an adviser early for help tailoring your employer list and readying your materials for submission.

Resource: For timelines beyond public interest, see the CLS Student Life Roadmaps.

Even students who plan a private sector career should expect to work in public interest their first summer, given past hiring trends.

In your first year, plan to attend the Public Interest Legal Career (PILC) Fair in February. Make sure to register and submit applications to participating employers by the deadline.

As a 2L

Upper-year students planning to do public interest work should be thinking about their second summer by the close of their first summer. Public interest internship postings generally begin to go up in late summer or early fall.

Continue to attend public interest programs and do pro bono work, participate in clinics and externships, take public interest classes, do term-time internships, work on public interest journals, lead student organizations, work for professors, or publish articles or notes on a public interest topic. You should meet with a PI/PS adviser and continue networking and exploring job fairs like Equal Justice Works in October.

If you plan to work in public interest after graduation, 2L year is very important. You should start planning for postgraduate employment during 2L year by networking, exploring different aspects of issues of interest, researching fellowship sponsorship and government honors programs, and identifying offices and organizations that you would be interested in working at after graduation.

For your 2L summer, you should intern at a public interest organization in a field you are interested in, and you should be preparing to apply for postgraduate employment. Applications and interviews for post-graduate jobs, fellowships, and honors programs can start in late summer and early fall, so you should be prepared to hit the ground running by the end of your internship. Make sure you are meeting with your PI/PS adviser(s) for individualized advice for your 2L internship and academic courses.



As a 3L

During the fall and winter of your 3L year, you will be applying for jobs and, if you are interested, fellowships, including project-based and organization-based fellowships. The hiring timelines for post-graduate jobs vary, but you should expect to start applying for post-graduate positions in the late summer before starting 3L and throughout the fall.

Conversations with PI/PS advisers, professors, Columbia graduates, and practitioners will be important throughout your time at Columbia, but especially in your final year.



Frequently Asked Questions About Exploring Public Interest and Public Service in Law School

What are the advantages of exploring public interest or government opportunities as a student?

There are several reasons to explore public interest and government work while at Columbia.

- You will learn about areas to pursue during your summers or after graduation.
- You will begin to make connections—with classmates, professors, alumni, and other practitioners. These relationships will be crucial for charting your path and finding a job.
- You may have passion for a particular public interest subject area and developing knowledge of the practice while in school will be useful.
- You will have fun learning about—and participating in—opportunities available to you during school and after graduation.

How do I figure out where to spend my summers?

Summer is the prime time to try out what you want to do after school and where you want to do it. Don't limit yourself to work applicable to your experience; think about what *really* interests you. Classes, activities, and programs can help you identify interests. Consider subject matter, client populations, and legal approaches/tools (e.g., direct services? Impact litigation? Policy or government? Learn about these areas.). Also, use your summers to work in locations you may want to live in after graduation.

Is experiential learning important?

Yes! If you are considering a public interest or government career—or if you are simply exploring your options—be sure to participate in an array of experiential learning opportunities. Most successful public interest and government job applicants bring critical knowledge and skills gained through externships, clinics, or practicums. You will also get to know professors and practitioners—potential mentors—through experiential learning.

Experiential learning is so important that the American Bar Association requires every law school student to graduate with six experiential law credits.

In addition to or instead of enrolling in a clinic, externship, or practicum, some students intern with a public interest or government organization during the term to develop expertise and contacts; employers frequently hire former interns, either their own or past interns of similar organizations. (See Should I do a term-time internship?)

What is the difference between clinics and externships? How do I choose one?

The Law School offers students many opportunities to work with real clients through clinics or externships. Both provide opportunities to serve clients or organizations, and both have a classroom component. Each has its own benefits, and you can do both clinics and externships while at Columbia, although not in the same semester.

Clinics are situated on campus and are usually taught by full-time faculty who are experienced practitioners in their fields. Externships, on the other hand, take place off campus, when students work at an organization and are taught by adjunct faculty who are experts in their fields.

Q: I didn't get into the clinic/externship I wanted. What should I do?

Try again! Spots are limited, and 3Ls and LL.M.s may get priority. But do not be discouraged; apply at every opportunity.

How to choose between these opportunities? Consider:

- ➔ **The experience you seek**
  Clinic students form client relationships and bear significant responsibility. The focus is on developing as a lawyer. Externships, however, provide a sense of what a particular office or field is like.
- ➔ **Timing**
  Not all clinics and externships are offered every semester, and some are a two-semester commitment.
- ➔ **Issues and skills**
  Choose offerings that interest you and teach the skills you want. Talk to students who have taken them.
- ➔ **Commitment**
  Because clinics generally give students more responsibility for their cases, they involve a greater time commitment and award more credit.

Should I do a term-time internship?

You should definitely consider a term-time internship for your 2L or 3L year. They are invaluable for building skills, contacts, and knowledge of "real jobs." Since they do not usually provide academic credit or involve a seminar, you may be freer to shape them around your schedule limitations and interests.

Term-time internships are also useful if you do not get into a clinic or externship, are interested in an issue not covered by one, or want to gain advanced or specialized skills.

Columbia students have a big advantage by being in New York City—there are a myriad of opportunities at our doorstep. Many employers are thrilled to host an intern during the year. You may get more

interesting work and better supervision than you would in the summer. Also, it is often easier to get a term-time position. If you do not get your summer "dream job," apply for a term-time job with the same employer.

Refer to Job Search Basics for tips on finding an internship.

Note: Term-time internships provide no credit unless you apply to do an independent project under Supervised J.D. Experiential Study or link your internship to a course. Some employers require you to receive academic or pro bono credit, in which case you must explore options with your adviser.

Are there certain classes I should take?

There are no mandatory classes for getting a public interest or government job, but some are particularly helpful, depending on your goals. For example, if you are interested in litigating, consider classes that will develop related expertise, such as evidence, trial practice, federal courts, or negotiation. If you are interested in certain substantive areas, take classes in those subjects and get to know the professors. Foundational classes, even if not public interest-oriented, may lay the groundwork for your legal advocacy. It is also important to take some demanding classes that develop your legal knowledge and demonstrate your intellectual ability.



Resources: The Public Interest Roadmap and Curricular Guidelines list courses by area of interest.

Clinics, externships, and practicums—even if not focused on your interests—often provide transferable skills and knowledge. Finally, take a breadth of classes. It helps to gain exposure to several areas of public interest law, since issues and approaches often intersect.

Not all classes are available every semester, so plan accordingly. Also, think about J-term offerings.

For a list of courses based on areas of interest, see our Public Interest Roadmap and Curricular Guidelines. Meet with a PI/PS adviser to determine the best courses for you. You may also meet with a Student Services adviser or a professor for advice. If you plan to clerk, talk to the Office of Judicial Careers and professors for advice.

Should I work on a journal?

Journal work can be interesting and satisfying, especially if the publication focuses on your interests. Public interest employers generally value public interest journals over business-related ones, and some—particularly those that do direct representation and trial work—value journals less than clinics, externships, and internships.

Employers that carry out complex litigation, appellate work, or policy advocacy, however, may view journals as good preparation. Judges, academic institutions, and some employers particularly value the *Columbia Law Review*. Publishing a note or having other legal research and writing experience is also valued.

How much pro bono should I do as a 1L?

Law school is a big adjustment. We generally advise 1Ls to take time to acclimate and focus on classes.

If you find the idea of interacting with the world beyond Columbia to be motivating rather than overwhelming, however, consider in-house projects with flexible time commitments. In addition, Spring Break Caravans are open to 1Ls.

While you can do pro bono at any time, hours completed in the fall of your 1L year will NOT count towards Columbia's 40-hour graduation requirement. They may count for the New York State Bar pro bono admission requirement, however, and if you register them on LawNet, they will be recorded on your transcript.

One reason to record ALL your pro bono work in LawNet: 3Ls or LL.M.s who rack up 100-plus hours are honored at the Law School's annual Public Interest Honors Reception.

Q: Can I count paid or for-credit work toward the pro bono requirement?

In general, only unpaid, not-for-academic-credit internships count for the CLS requirement. The exception: if you have a paid public interest internship over 2L summer, you may count that paid work toward your pro bono credit.

A paid or for-credit internship may count towards the New York State Bar pro bono requirement.

I am considering a public interest career. How will I get a job? Or learn about fellowships?

Although the postgraduate public interest job market can be a challenge, you CAN equip yourself to navigate it. How?

1. Take advantage of public interest opportunities at Columbia.
2. Work closely with a PI/PS adviser to get ready for postgraduate opportunities.
3. Prepare for the possibility that you will obtain your postgraduate job later than your Big Law peers. Private sector hiring tends to happen *much* earlier. Know that you will be rewarded for your patience and diligence with work that is meaningful to *you*.

We strongly urge you to consider applying for postgraduate fellowships or government honors programs. Although the application process can be time-consuming, it is well worth it, since it is a means of designing or obtaining your "dream" job and is often the best entrée to public interest or government work. If you are interested in fellowships, make an appointment to meet with the PI/PS postgraduate fellowship adviser in 2L year. For project-based fellowships, you will need to begin working to secure a host organization and a project over 2L summer. Applications for these fellowships, and for many organization-based fellowships (which are more like standard job applications), are due early in 3L fall.

Make sure to set up a PSJD.org account to monitor fellowships and consult with our office regularly.

Field-specific notes:

- Interested in government? Work closely with the PI/PS government adviser. Some honors applications are due as early as late 2L summer.
- Interested in public defense? Work with our public defense adviser during 2L year and 2L summer. Public defense hiring usually starts early in 3L fall.



Resources:
Postgraduate Fellowship Toolkit
Columbia Law School Fellowships
International Fellowships Guide

How will I pay my bills?

Many public interest and government salaries have risen in recent years. They provide a good standard of living, especially when combined with the Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP). Columbia has one of the most generous LRAP in the country and, unlike most schools' programs, it has an option that does not rely on the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.

In addition, Columbia's Public Service Bridge Loan can help between graduation and the start of your job.

The PI/PS Office and the Office of Financial Aid offer information about LRAP, including FAQs and a detailed program guide, and other key financial information.

Q: Is there data on how much Columbia graduates make as public interest or government lawyers?

Most government agencies and many large nonprofits post salaries on their websites. The PI/PS Office can provide data on other employers. We share salary surveys of graduates and sample LRAP benefit calculations.



Resource:
Financing Your Public Interest or Public Service Career

Take advantage of the opportunities at Columbia! Don't forget to...

- ❑ Attend programs on relevant topics. Talk to speakers after the program.
- ❑ Join student organizations. Consider taking a leadership role.
- ❑ Attend social events for the public interest community.
- ❑ Participate in pro bono projects.
- ❑ Take clinics and externships. Get to know your professors.
- ❑ Think about doing a term-time internship.
- ❑ Think about working on a journal.
- ❑ Meet with PI/PS advisers on a regular basis.
- ❑ Participate in job fairs and interview programs (on and off campus).
- ❑ Pursue public interest opportunities for summer employment.
- ❑ Network whenever you can.

Public Interest Job Search Basics

This section covers:

- Job search resources
- FAQs on planning your search
- A guide to career fairs and interview programs
- Job search timelines for 1Ls, 2Ls, and 3Ls

Job Search Resources

Our job search tools page lists numerous sources for information about public interest opportunities. Here are some basic resources to get you started:

- **PSJD.org** is a great tool to identify employers within your interest and target geographic area. Search by subject and location, research organizations, and review jobs.
- **The PI/PS New York Public Interest Index** lists NYC-area employers by subject area.
- **The Arizona Guide**, also known as the Government Honors & Internship Handbook, offers comprehensive information on federal, state, and local government internships and postgraduate honors programs.
- **Symplicity** includes:
  - Jobs that employers send to Columbia.
  - Evaluations of employers by former interns. Go to "My Account," then "Summer Evaluations," and then search employers. This collection does not represent every student who worked with these employers, but we can often connect you to others with experiences to share.



PSJD Search Tip

Search employer profiles to see organizations regardless of whether they have a job on PSJD; you may apply to them directly. Postgraduate jobs are different—send an application only when there is a posting.



Grad Tip: Job Search Resources

Good sites include idealist.org, usajobs.gov, higheredjobs.org, cleaweb.org, PSJD.org, and LinkedIn.

Public Interest Job Fairs and Interview Programs

Public Interest Legal Career (PILC) Fair

Hosts 250+ employers seeking 1L summer interns and a smaller number hiring 2L interns or entry-level attorneys. Students apply to interview at the fair and can also chat with employers via "table talk."

The fair is held online in early February, but you must apply for interviews in advance—the deadline is in January.

The PI/PS Office will hold "prep" sessions to help you get ready for the PILC Fair. Watch for emails in late fall!

Columbia Public Sector OCI (Fall and Spring Semesters)

Virtual "on-campus interview" (OCI) programs with public interest and government employers seeking summer interns and entry-level attorneys. Open to J.D.s only.

It is important to keep track of OCI deadlines since they may fall before the semester starts.

- Spring OCI: Students "bid" for interviews in January (interviews are assigned by lottery). Interviews start later that month. You will receive instructions in December.
- Fall Public Sector OCI: Employers review applications and choose interviewees. Apply in July.

PI/PS Office Mock Interview Program

Matches 1Ls and 2Ls with alumni volunteers for practice interviews in January. This is a great opportunity to prepare for internship interviews. We will share sign-up instructions in the fall.

Note: The Office of Private Sector Careers (OPSC) organizes other interview programs, including a practice interview program.

Additional Opportunities:

- The Public Interest Networking (PIN) Reception in September hosts information tables with local employers. Employers do NOT interview, but it is a good networking opportunity, especially for 1Ls.
- The virtual Equal Justice Works (EJW) Career Fair, held in October, welcomes 200+ employers and caters mostly to 2Ls, graduating 3Ls, and graduates.
- In 2026, the National Plaintiffs' Law Association held a summer job fair, with applications opening in May. For 2027 dates, contact the association.

Planning Your Search: Frequently Asked Questions

As a 1L, how wide should I cast my net, and how many jobs should I apply for?

Try for your dream job, but be flexible, applying for jobs "outside the box" and in broad geographic areas. There is no limit on the number of jobs you can apply for and no stigma to declining offers if you do so in a professional manner.

A successful search takes creativity and persistence. We recommend beginning with a list of at least 15 to 20 employers. Start thinking about your summer during 1L fall and start applying no later than winter break.

As a 1L, try for your "dream job," but be flexible, applying for jobs "outside the box" and in broad geographic areas.

Should I consider applying for jobs outside of New York or Washington, DC?

First-year students should always consider applying beyond those locations. In smaller markets less saturated with Columbia Law students, it can be easier to find a job. Once you are there, you may find yourself a "big fish in a small pond." You can also get to know the public interest community more quickly in a smaller place.

While 1L summer is a great time to explore a new city, target your 2L summer toward places you would live in after graduation. Wherever it is, there are probably Columbia alumni there. We can connect you!

Tip: If you do apply to an employer located somewhere you have no ties to, be prepared to explain why you want to move there.

What if I have no experience in the issue area I want to work in over 1L summer?

Do not despair! The most important qualities you can offer a 1L employer are interest in their mission and activities, willingness to work hard, and thoughtfulness.

Your cover letter should address why you are applying to the employer, but you can link your interest to your undergraduate studies, speakers you have heard at law school, current events, or life experiences. Think about what you would like to do for the summer, then think about WHY. Do not limit yourself.

What if the place I am interested in does not have an internship posting?

Apply! Almost every public interest employer takes on summer interns. Some post openings on their website or on PSJD.org or Symplicity. If you do not find information about internships from these sources, it does not mean they are not hiring. You can always call the organization to ask what the application procedure is. Either way, go ahead and apply!

Should I worry about my online profile?

Your online profile is relevant. Employers may search for your name on the internet or social media. They may be wary of candidates with inappropriate profiles, pictures, or information. Monitor your profile and delete inappropriate content. Consider every social media post as if it were public. Do not connect with prospective employers on LinkedIn or other social media while applications are pending.

What should I do if I receive multiple offers?

If you get an offer that is not your clear first choice, you should express appreciation and, if they have not provided a deadline, ask for one or two weeks to answer. They do not have to extend this time, but they may be willing to do so. Then immediately contact your preferred organizations. Explain that you have another offer but would prefer to work for them and ask if they can make a decision before your deadline. (See Negotiating Offers.) Respond to the first employer's offer on time; do not ask for an extension. Of course, if the preferred organization makes an offer, you should accept.

Although you may ask multiple employers if they can decide by your deadline, **you should only tell one organization that they are your top choice**—and if they then make an offer, you **must** accept.

Once you have accepted an offer, withdraw applications with other employers. You have made a commitment that should not be broken. See a PI/PS adviser with any questions.

May I split my summer?

Some students "split" their summer, joining a public interest employer for one portion and a private sector or another public interest employer for the remainder. While some students have positive experiences, we generally advise caution with this option because:

- Spending a shorter period in each position gives you less opportunity to explore the work, get to know the staff and culture, and develop quality relationships with potential mentors.
- You will have less time to prove yourself, which can hurt your chances of getting a reference or offer.
- You may be assigned less interesting work because you will be there for a shorter time or are not present when they give out initial assignments.

Note that not all organizations will consider an intern who will be there for only half the summer.

Nonetheless, there are situations in which splitting a summer makes sense. This is more often the case for 2L summer than 1L. Talk to a PI/PS adviser and refer to Deciding Whether to Split Your Summer.



Resource: Deciding Whether to Split Your Summer

Can I still pursue a public interest career if I work at a private law firm?

Many attorneys move from the private sector into a public interest career. Most employers understand that financial and other considerations may make going to a firm an important personal choice. The key to transitioning is to build significant public interest experience in law school and, ideally, to engage in substantive pro bono or public interest work while in the private sector.

Public interest is competitive, however. Employers will consider you alongside attorneys with more relevant experience. In some fields (e.g., environment, labor), working for the "other side" may close doors. Others, like impact litigation or government employers, believe firm work (or clerking) provide useful litigation training.

The key to transitioning to public interest is to 1) gain significant public interest experience in law school and 2) engage in substantive pro bono or public interest work while in the private sector.

While some firms offer the chance to gain relevant pro bono experience, skills gained through billable work may also be transferable (e.g., litigation skills are transferable, even if the area of work is different). Employers will expect you to explain why you chose the private sector and how that fits into your career plan. You will have a chance to show how your choices have led you to be a great candidate.

A PI/PS adviser can help you plan for a transition.



Resource: Planning for a Transition to the Public Sector

Public Interest Job Search Timelines

Public interest organizations do not always have a regular hiring schedule for interns or new lawyers. Students tend to receive job offers late in the cycle, sometimes not until after graduation. Those who begin their research early, develop a plan, and follow through are more likely to be successful in their search.

The timelines below are designed to help you strategically position yourself for internships, fellowships, and jobs. For more detailed timelines, refer to Your Public Interest Roadmap: Exploring Public Interest/Public Service Law at Columbia.

It is critically important to check your LionMail account regularly, as this is the main way that our office and employers will communicate with you, and to respond to emails in a professional and timely manner.



Grad Tip: The Postgraduate Job Search Timeline

While there is no way to know for certain how long it will take to find a postgraduate job, we recommend that you start networking nine to 12 months before you would like to change jobs and begin applying for positions four to six months beforehand. To move more quickly, increase your networking. A PI/PS adviser can help you think through options.

1L Job Search Timeline

Throughout 1L Year

- ❑ Get to know other students interested in public interest.
- ❑ Look for our newsletter every Monday and the Law School's regular LawCal event alerts.
- ❑ Attend relevant Columbia events.
- ❑ Reflect on your interests and goals.
- ❑ Think about issue areas and types of legal work that interest you.
- ❑ Explore student organizations.
- ❑ Talk with upper-year students about their public interest work.
- ❑ Attend events with alumni practicing public interest law.
- ❑ Meet faculty.
- ❑ Learn about LRAP; attend info sessions on financing a public interest career.

1L Fall

- ❑ Meet us! Make an appointment with a PI/PS adviser to discuss your interests and ideas for summer.
- ❑ Review our webinars on the job search, resumes, cover letters, and interviews.
- ❑ Create a PSJD.org account and begin browsing employers. Research summer internships and list 15-20 employers to target. Note of deadlines, especially early ones.
- ❑ Attend panels with 2Ls and 3Ls to learn about their experiences.
- ❑ Revise your resume to standard public interest format and get it reviewed by the PI/PS Office.
- ❑ Revise cover letters and submit them to your PI/PS adviser for review.
- ❑ Complete the Columbia Summer Funding (CSF) checklist to register for CSF.
- ❑ Interested in the summer Human Rights Internship Program (HRIP)? Submit a statement of interest and application.
- ❑ Register for the Public Interest Legal Career (PILC) Fair.
- ❑ Watch for information about our Public Interest Mock Interview Program and Spring On-Campus Interviews (OCI). Mock interviews will allow you to practice, and OCI is another chance to get in front of employers.

1L Winter

- ❑ Apply for summer internships. Follow up on job applications if necessary.
- ❑ Register and apply for interviews at the PILC Fair.
- ❑ Update your voicemail so that it is appropriate to receive messages from employers.
- ❑ Check your online presence—what will employers find if they search?
- ❑ In January, participate in the Public Interest Mock Interview Program and Spring OCI.

1L Spring

- ❑ Attend PILC Fair in February (watch for our "prep" sessions).
- ❑ Continue your job search. If you are still looking by March, meet with a PI/PS adviser.
- ❑ Think about 2L year. Consider applying to clinics, externships, journals, and organizational leadership positions; attend info sessions.
- ❑ Learn about Fall On-Campus Interviews (OCI), which will include public interest and government employers.
- ❑ If you are participating in CSF or HRIP, attend the Summer Payment Session.

2L Job Search Timeline

Your 2L job search will differ from your 1L search. Keep the following in mind.

- ➔ **Good news: you will be in greater demand than you were as a 1L!**
  You have much more to offer employers, and they will perceive you to be committed to a public interest career.
- ➔ **You can be more selective.**
  Apply to your top choices first. Target jobs that will provide the skills, knowledge, and connections you need for your postgraduate plans.
- ➔ **The job search will begin early, roughly around mid-July/early August of 1L summer.**
  Employers hire 2Ls earlier than 1Ls, even when they do not give a deadline.
- ➔ **You will need to update your materials to reflect your increased experience.**
  Add your 1L summer internship to your resume. You can also add 2L fall clinics/externships (but do not include a description until they begin) and student group or pro bono activity you have committed to for the fall. Revise your cover letter carefully; it will be very important. Seek PI/PS guidance.
- ➔ **Splitting your summer between a firm and a public interest employer (or between two public interest employers) is, for some students, a good option.**
  If you are considering splitting, speak with BOTH the PI/PS Office AND the Office of Private Sector Career Services.

Law School career offices are open all summer, so reach out! Advisers can also connect you to students and alumni with experiences relevant to your goals.

1L (Rising 2L) Summer

- ❑ Reflect on your 1L summer internship.
- ❑ Speak with attorneys working in your areas of interest.
- ❑ If possible, develop a writing sample.
- ❑ Watch for information about Fall OCI; you must apply for interviews in July.

Throughout 2L Year

- ❑ Participate in clinics, externships, internships, and pro bono projects.
- ❑ Choose courses that will provide the skills and experience you need to achieve your goals.

- ❑ Build your network; talk with people whose work inspires you.
- ❑ Attend events featuring public interest practitioners.

2L Fall

- ❑ If you haven't already, talk to a PI/PS adviser about your next summer.
- ❑ Make a list of employers to apply to. Note early deadlines.
- ❑ Update materials! Consult with the PI/PS Office.
- ❑ Apply. Most employers expect 2L applications in the fall even if they do not list a deadline.
- ❑ Continue to attend programs and events of interest.
- ❑ Register for the Equal Justice Works (EJW) Career Fair, apply for interviews. Attend.
- ❑ If you want to receive Columbia Summer Funding (CSF) in 2L summer, make sure you are registered.
- ❑ If applicable, apply for the Human Rights Internship Program (HRIP).

2L Spring

- ❑ If considering project-based fellowships for after graduation, brainstorm host organizations and project ideas. Make an appointment to meet with the PI/PS postgraduate fellowship advisers.
- ❑ Apply for clinics and externships for 3L year.
- ❑ Attend the Summer Funding Payment Session if you are participating in CSF or HRIP.
- ❑ Meet with the Office of Judicial Careers if you are interested in postgraduate clerkships.

3L Job Search Timeline

2L (Rising 3L) Summer

- ❑ If you are interested in judicial clerkships, start applying.
- ❑ Research postgraduate jobs. These can include government honors programs, organization-based fellowships, and hosts for project-based fellowships. *Be aware of early government, organization-based fellowship, and public defender deadlines.*
- ❑ Begin drafting applications and cover letters and have them reviewed by the PI/PS Office.
- ❑ If you are pursuing fellowships, work with a PI/PS adviser. For project-based fellowships, work on securing a host and developing a project.
- ❑ Identify recommenders.

- ❑ Set up a deadline tracking system.

Throughout 3L Year

- ❑ Stay in contact with the PI/PS Office.
- ❑ Connect with alumni as you ready applications and prepare for interviews.
- ❑ There are Columbia postgraduate fellowship deadlines throughout the year.

3L Fall

- ❑ Complete applications with early deadlines (government honors programs, EJW, Skadden, Columbia fellowships, etc.).
- ❑ Throughout the fall, attend information sessions on relevant postgraduate fellowships.
- ❑ Regularly check Symplicity, the Arizona Guide, and PSJD.org.
- ❑ Participate in EJW Career Fair, if relevant.
- ❑ Contact the PI/PS Office for mock interviews.
- ❑ Interview for fellowships and jobs.

3L Spring

- ❑ Continue to monitor opportunities, apply, and interview. Stay in touch with a PI/PS adviser.
- ❑ When you have your job, complete your Symplicity graduate employment survey. The ABA requires this. You will receive instructions in early spring.
- ❑ Make sure you are set up for LRAP (and the Public Service Bridge Loan, if applicable).
- ❑ Register for the bar exam.
- ❑ Apply for Enhanced LRAP Fellowships.
- ❑ Before you graduate, sign up for our alumni newsletter! You can also sign up to continue to receive Symplicity alerts, but exclusively for post-law school positions.

Public Interest Job Application Materials

This section contains:

Getting Organized

A helpful tool for tracking your applications

Creating Your Resume

- Section-by-section guide to building your resume
- Resume action verbs
- Checklist
- Sample resumes, including "before" and "after" 1L, 2L, 3L, and graduate resumes and portions of resumes geared toward specific situations. *Use the samples as a reference guide only; do not copy them verbatim.*

Writing Cover Letters

- Cover letter template
- Checklist
- Sample cover letters, including 1L, 2L, 3L, and graduate cover letters. *Use the samples as a reference guide only; do not copy them verbatim.*

Resume and Cover Letter Pairings

These pairings are included to illustrate how resumes and cover letters work TOGETHER to provide a persuasive narrative. *Use the samples as a reference guide only; do not copy them verbatim.*

Applying for Jobs: Putting Together the Application

- A sample email accompanying a job application
- An attachment checklist
- A sample reference list and writing sample cover sheet
- A sample email following up on an application

Get Organized

Job Tracking Chart

It is helpful to keep track of dates and correspondence with employers when applying to multiple positions. A chart like the one below can be an invaluable tool. Fill in as necessary and note any dates to follow up with employers after you have applied.



Download a template for this chart in Excel

Organization	Contact Person	App Due	App Sent	Transcript?	References?	Writing Sample?	1st Interview	TY Sent	2nd Interview	TY Sent	Offer?	Notes

Public Interest Resumes: Section by Section

1. Create Your Top Header



Download a resume template

Your header typically includes your name, address, Columbia email, and phone. Include a non-NYC permanent address only if applying for jobs in that region. Before adding your cell phone number, make sure your voicemail message is appropriate and that you are prepared to handle calls from potential employers in public locations. It is acceptable to omit your address if you do not want to disclose where you live. You may also include your pronouns.

GIDEON TAYLOR
919 West 185th Street, #B1, New York, NY 10036
212-888-2285 • gt667@columbia.edu • He/Him

2. Create Your "Education" Section

List all post-high school education, starting with your most recent degree. If you are more than five years out of law school, you can move this section beneath the "Experience" section. Next, make a list of all honors and activities in which you have participated since you started college. These will go under the "Honors" and "Activities" subsections under each degree.

EDUCATION
Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2025
Activities: Columbia Society for International Law
Society for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

University of Rochester, Rochester, NY
B.A. in Political Science and Spanish, *summa cum laude*, received May 2021
Honors: Phi Beta Kappa
Susan B. Anthony Institute Women's Leadership Award
Golden Key Scholarship (awarded to the highest-ranked female junior)
Activities: Political Science Students Advisory Committee
Student Government, Chief of Staff

3. Create Your "Honors" Subsection

Under each educational institution, include academic honors, scholarships, fellowships, and awards. List the honor's proper name (which will often be in Latin). Consider including brief descriptions, in parenthesis, next to the honor's name, if helpful.

4. Create Your "Activities" Section

Include student organizations, journals, moot court, etc. If you have a title, list it. Do not add clinics, pro bono, externships, internships, or legal projects—substantive legal work is better featured in the "Experience" section. Be selective about activities you list and leave out any in which you are only marginally involved. If the nature of the activity is not clear, add a parenthetical explanation.

If You Studied Abroad: This can be included under "Activities" or a "Study Abroad" subsection under your college if you did not receive a separate degree from that institution.

> **Study Abroad:** Columbia in Beijing at Tsinghua University, Spring 2020
> Université de Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel, Switzerland

If You Published a College Thesis or Law School Note: These can be included in italics in a third subsection below "Activities" and "Honors." Call it "Thesis," "Note," or "Publication."

> **Thesis:** Act, Identity, and the Fourteenth Amendment

5. Create Your "Experience" Section

Begin by making a list of all post-high school jobs, legal and non-legal, paid and volunteer, in reverse chronological order. Include the employer's name, your job title, dates and locations, and a brief description of your work. Format these elements consistently throughout.

Write out what you did for each job or pro bono project as if you were answering an interview question and then edit it down to concise sentences. Never submit a resume with sparse descriptions of your experience. The reader should understand what you did in your last position from reading the document. Include anything that a legal employer would care about (such as experience with research, writing, oral communication, or client work, or exposure to legislative advocacy); and include leadership and other achievements (such as promotions).

Be specific about your experience, particularly when it involves skills employers value. For example, instead of "Drafted research memos," write, "Researched legal issues relating to the Fourth Amendment, wrote a research memorandum with legal analyses, and presented findings to supervising attorney."

Include all substantial volunteer experience (such as jobs that required you to donate several hours a week for an extended period). If you worked in an unrelated field prior to law school or could not intern as an undergraduate because you had to work to support yourself, highlight skills and experiences of interest to legal employers. For example, managing 25 servers at a restaurant demonstrates an ability to supervise large teams, prioritize tasks, and operate under pressure. Working as a lifeguard shows that you respond well in a crisis. A medical research job shows that you can conduct complex research and

report your findings. In your descriptions, highlight these transferable skills. If you have more relevant experience covering the same time, however, you may want to omit the less relevant jobs from your resume.

Think strategically about which experiences you include and what you highlight in each description. Your most relevant experiences (not necessarily the most recent) should have the longest descriptions. Do not exaggerate. Begin each sentence with an action verb.

If you are applying to an international employer, see "Internationalizing Your Resume" in the International Supplement to the Public Interest Job Search Toolkit.

EXPERIENCE
Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. Washington, DC
Senior Program Specialist/Team Leader Aug. 2021 – Jul. 2022
Led annual allocation of over $2.5 million in federal funds to 980 literacy programs through federal subcontracts. Provided direct training and assistance to local programs. Trained, supervised, and evaluated four staff members. Analyzed program data and prepared reports.

6. Add "Language Skills," "Bar Admissions," and "Publications" Sections, if Applicable)

Language Skills

Include if you are applying for jobs where languages are useful (such as overseas positions or direct service work). Describe your fluency. Be truthful—this is fair game to test during an interview!

LANGUAGES: French (native); Arabic (fluent); German (full professional proficiency)

Bar Membership/Bar Admissions

Add this section if you are a graduate and have taken a bar exam. Include committees on which you serve.

BAR MEMBERSHIP
New York (2022), District of Columbia (2023). Member of the D.C. Bar Committee on Immigration and International Human Rights.

Publications

If you have several publications of relevance to the job, add these at the bottom of your resume. (As noted, notes or college theses should go under "Education.") If necessary, this section can go onto a second page. Be selective—unless applying for an academic job, list only a few of the most relevant publications.

PUBLICATIONS
Know Your Rights: A Guide for Immigrant Women Navigating U.S. Workplaces, Harvard University Press
South Asian Refugees and Immigrants: A Human Rights Dilemma, 22 Hum. Rts. Q. 59. (2021)

7. A Note About "Interests" Sections

Whether you should include an interests section depends on several factors. If you have extensive relevant experience, it is usually better to forgo it, using the extra space to include that experience. On the other hand, if your experience is limited and you have space, adding your interests might make sense. Also, for government jobs, including clerkships and international internships, you may wish to include one.

If you do include interests, be specific and brief (list three or four), and be ready to discuss them in an interview. They should be interests that you actually partake in, and they should be lawful and appropriate for a professional workplace. Be mindful of the impression that you may create.

Wondering if an interests section is appropriate for you? Speak with the PI/PS Office.

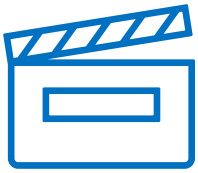
TIP: International Resumes



If you are applying to a job based outside the U.S. or with an international employer in the U.S., rid your resume of anything that might be unclear to someone who is not familiar with American geography, abbreviations, or references. Write out state names ("Rhode Island," not "RI") and dates ("June – August 2025," not "Summer 2025"). Include a "Languages" section, if applicable. If you have substantial and relevant international travel experience, consider a "Travel" section. For international jobs, emphasize your experience abroad under "Education" or "Experience."



Resource:
International Supplement to the Job Search Toolkit



Resume Action Verbs

Use verbs to describe your experiences and accomplishments.
Here are some ideas.

accelerated	constructed	explained	measured	reproduced
accomplished	contacted	explored	mediated	researched
achieved	continued	facilitated	modeled	resolved
acquired	contracted	figured	modified	responded
activated	convened	financed	molded	restored
adapted	conveyed	focused	monitored	retained
adjusted	coordinated	forecasted	motivated	retrieved
administered	corresponded	formed	named	reviewed
advised	counseled	formulated	negotiated	revised
allocated	created	fostered	observed	rewrote
analyzed	critiqued	founded	obtained	routed
annotated	decided	functioned	operated	scheduled
anticipated	defined	generated	ordered	searched
applied	delegated	governed	organized	selected
appraised	delivered	grouped	originated	served
arranged	demonstrated	guided	outlined	shaped
articulated	derived	helped	oversaw	shared
assembled	designed	identified	perceived	showed
assessed	detected	illustrated	performed	simplified
assigned	determined	immunized	persuaded	solicited
authored	developed	implemented	planned	solved
balanced	devised	improved	planted	specified
briefed	directed	increased	presented	spoke
budgeted	distributed	informed	presided	stimulated
built	drafted	initiated	printed	structured
catalogued	edited	instituted	produced	studied
categorized	educated	instructed	protected	supervised
chaired	effected	interpreted	provided	supported
clarified	elicited	interviewed	publicized	synthesized
cleared	encouraged	introduced	questioned	targeted
coded	established	invented	raised	taught
collaborated	evaluated	investigated	recommended	tested
compared	examined	judged	recorded	trained
compiled	executed	led	recruited	translated
completed	exhibited	listened	reduced	tutored
composed	expanded	maintained	rendered	updated
computed	expedited	managed	repaired	utilized
conducted	experienced	marketed	reported	verified
consolidated	experimented	mastered	represented	wrote

Resume Checklist

Format

- ❑ Resume is one page. (Go onto a second page only in special circumstances: e.g., you graduated more than five years ago or have published extensively.)
- ❑ Resume is uncluttered and easy to read. The font is traditional, such as Times New Roman or Garamond, and 11- or 12-points. Margins are no smaller than .7 inches all around.
- ❑ The format is like that of our samples.
- ❑ At the top, your name is capitalized. It stands out but is not too large; aim for 14-to-18-points.
- ❑ Text is single-spaced, with no more than two line breaks between section headers and text.
- ❑ Abbreviations and formatting are consistent. For example, months are either abbreviated or not abbreviated throughout.
- ❑ No underlining or bullet points.
- ❑ No typos or grammatical errors.
- ❑ Document is saved as a PDF file.

Content

- ❑ You tailored the resume to the job you are seeking.
- ❑ Includes a top header and “Education” and “Experience” sections.
- ❑ Contact information is professional and up to date. Graduates: use a personal email.
- ❑ Relevant jobs and activities are included, including pro bono, internships, externships, clinics, journals, student groups, and research for a professor.
- ❑ Current law school activities are under “Education.” (Employers care about these, especially if they are relevant to their work, but even unrelated activities show you as well-rounded.) Your position within a student organization is included.
- ❑ You prioritized activities that apply to your professional goals and those in which you held leadership positions. (You may want to skip activities that conflict with an employer’s goals, such as conservative political activities when applying to a progressive organization.)
- ❑ For an academic prize or honor, you provided a briefly described it to illustrate its prestige.
- ❑ Clinics and externships are included under “Experience.”
- ❑ Descriptions highlight your public interest experience.
- ❑ You used a variety of verbs to describe your experience and highlighted a range of skills (communication, analytical, interpersonal).

Resumes Samples

The following pages include sample resumes. We include resumes that are typical of first-year students at Columbia, as well as resumes of upper-class public interest students and graduates. You will see that what your resume will look like next year and the year after will depend in large part on how you use your time in law school and what story you want to tell.

1L Resumes

- Gideon Taylor (Before and after revisions)
- Ruby Thomas (Before and after revisions)
- Morgan Henry
- Ben Ahmed
- Abel Assefa Zenawi
- Naomi Bennett

2L Resumes

- Francesca Silvestri (Before and after revisions)
- Michael Goldberg
- Nidhi Khan
- Darius Wiley

3L Resumes

- Mai Nguyen
- Mateo L. Salazar

Graduate Resumes

- Stephanie Montenegro (Example of a resume that shows a gap in work experience due to leave)
- Mary Cummings Brown

Other Resumes

- Andrew Park (Joint degree student)
- Solomon King (Example of a resume that includes a current and a permanent address)
- Akeyla Harrison (Transfer student; example of a resume that includes a clinic to be taken the subsequent semester)
- Julia Thomas (Student who transferred schools as an undergraduate)

Sample 1L Resume: Before Revisions

Gideon Taylor

919 W 171st Street, Apt. B1
New York, NY 10036
(212) 888-2285 • gct667@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL, New York, NY
J.D. expected May 2026
Activities: 1L Human Rights Advocates Program
Frederick Douglas Moot Court Competition
Student Senate
Naming and Symbols Faculty Committee

University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education, Philadelphia, PA
M.S. Received May 2022
Major: Urban Teaching Residency
Thesis: "Addressing Students with ADHD: Urban vs. Suburban Educators: A Case Study"

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES, NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ
B.A., *cum laude,* received May 2020
Major: Labor Studies and Employment Relations

Study Abroad: CIEE Barcelona, Spain, Spring 2019

EXPERIENCE

Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, New York, NY
SEO Law Fellow June 2023 – July 2023
Conducted legal research by reviewing 1000+ cases identifying relevant information to a pro bono client's compassionate release case. Compiled a list of relevant cases to be submitted in a BOP packet for a pro bono client seeking compassionate release. Assisted on an international pro bono matter for a client seeking asylum in the US via a special immigrant visa. Produced research related to how chat GPT and generative AI affect the film/music industry in terms of copyright and ownership for an investment management client.

Penn Treaty High School, Philadelphia, PA
Music Teacher September 2022 – June 2023
Wrote curriculum for 10th, 11th, and 12th grade music. Planned/taught lessons and graded papers. Taught music theory, music history and how to play guitar to 10th, 11th, and 12th grade classes and one all ages special ed class.

LANGUAGE SKILLS: Spanish (proficient)

Before

Sample 1L Resume: After Revisions

GIDEON TAYLOR

919 West 171st Street, Apt. B1, New York, NY 10036
(212) 888-2285 • gct667@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2026
Activities: Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition
Student Senate (member of budget committee, assistant chair of social committee)
Naming and Symbols Working Group (organize initiatives that explore and respond to the Law School's historical ties to slavery and other practices of exclusion)

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
M.S., received May 2022
Major: Urban Teaching Residency (Graduate School of Education)
Thesis: *Addressing Students with ADHD: Urban vs. Suburban Educators: A Case Study*

Rutgers University, Brunswick, NJ
B.A., *cum laude,* received May 2020
Major: Labor Studies and Employment Relations
Study Abroad: CIEE Barcelona, Spain, Spring 2019
Activities: Member of the crew team (freshman year)

EXPERIENCE

Columbia Law Human Rights Institute New York, NY
1L Human Rights Advocate Fellow August 2023-Present
Conduct desk research for the International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations on cases in which protestors, activists, and public figures were persecuted after surveillance measures were used. Receive mentorship from practicing human rights advocates, and Columbia Law faculty, staff, graduates, and students. Attend monthly seminars regarding key issues in human rights, given by leading human rights advocates. Visit NGOs in New York City, meeting with staff and learning about human rights careers.

Debevoise & Plimpton LLP New York, NY
SEO Law Fellow June 2023-July 2023
Conducted legal research by reviewing 1000+ cases identifying relevant information to a pro bono client's compassionate release case. Compiled a list of relevant cases to be submitted in a BOP packet for a pro bono client seeking compassionate release. Assisted with a client seeking asylum via a special immigrant visa. Researched how chat GPT and generative AI affect the film and music industry in terms of copyright and ownership for an investment management client.

Penn Treaty High School Philadelphia, PA
Music Teacher September 2022-June 2023
Wrote music curriculum for 10th-12th grades and special education. Taught music theory and guitar.

Teach for America Philadelphia, PA
Eighth Grade Special Education Math and English Teacher/Caseload Manager August 2020-June 2022
Taught and wrote curriculum. Analyzed data to develop 20 Individualized Education Plans (IEP). Coordinated and led IEP meetings with parents, general education teachers, and service providers.

LANGUAGE SKILLS: Spanish (proficient)

Sample 1L Resume: Before Revisions

RUBY THOMAS
Allston, MA • (781) 290-7000 • rubythomas@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Dartmouth College - Hanover NH **2018-2022**
B.A., *cum laude*, Cognitive Science and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies **GPA 3.85/4.00**

Academic Awards

- *High Honors in Cognitive Science:* Awarded for exceptional writing and defense of a senior thesis (2022)
- *Academic Achievement Award in Cognitive Science*: Awarded to seniors with the strongest performance in the Cognitive Science major (2022)
- *Rufus Choate Scholar*, *First Honor Group*: Top 5% Annual GPA (4.00) (2020-2021)
- *Third Honor Group:* Top 35% Annual GPA (2021-2022)
- *Presidential Scholar:* Junior Research Funding Award for Cognitive Science Research; Attained GPA in top 40% of class of 2022 to qualify (2020-2021)
- *Meritorious Citations* in *Introductory Linguistics, Feminist Queer Performance, Young Adult Literature, Contemporary Issues in Feminism,* and *Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Senior Seminar:* Faculty award citations because of unusual talents, dependability, initiative, resourcefulness, or other meritorious characteristics that are not indicated adequately by academic grades. Citations comprise only 2.4 percent of total grades. (2019-2022)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Dartmouth College - Hanover, NH & Remote **Sept. 2019-Present**
Cognitive Science Research Assistant in Professor Jonathan Phillip's PhilLab
Paid position 10-15 hours per week during undergrad, continuing work remotely after graduation

- Engaged in interdisciplinary research focused on morality, *identity*, agency, causality, and possibility that culminated in a senior honors thesis being published and two additional publications.
- Designed an independent Honors Thesis project to study the representation of intersectional identity and its impact on imagining possibility.
- Analyzed study data in Python, R, and MATLAB using NumPy, Pandas, Tidyverse, and Tidyr.
- Awarded a research stipend as a Presidential Research Scholar to study what drives our judgements of whether an agent acted freely.

Harvard University - Cambridge, MA & Remote **Dec. 2019-Sept. 2020**
Psychology Research Assistant in Professor Fiery Cushman's Moral Psychology Research Lab
Paid position 40 hours per week for 15 weeks, continued to work remotely 10 hours per week on a research stipend.

- Conducted full-time research on applied psychology, philosophy, computer science, and neuroscience to answer fundamental questions about morality.
- Developed studies with Qualtrics, jsPsych, and oTree. Analyzed data in MATLAB, JavaScript, and R.
- Designed new projects on retributive tendencies for punishment and assisted Regan Bernhard, Ph.D. with ongoing projects regarding moral culpability funded by a grant from The John Templeton Foundation.
- Collaborated with colleagues from the *PhilLab* to publish work focusing on perceptions of human agency.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Dartmouth College Admissions- Hanover, NH & Remote **March 2019-June 2022**
Tour Guide & Tour Guide Trainer
Paid position 3 hours per week for tours, additional 10 hours per week for training guides (Jan. 2022-June 2022)

- Gave personalized walking tours to prospective students and special campus guests to acclimate them with the college.
- Acted as a representative for the admissions office by participating in admitted student programming, speaking on virtual student panels, and creating informative promotional social media content.
- Selected, trained, and mentored future tour guides from the student applicant pool.

ACLU of NH - Remote
Remote Organizer & Paid Phone Banker **June 2020-Sept. 2020**
Paid position 15 hours per week for 12 weeks

- Assisted with field organizing projects for the nonpartisan 2020 "Get Out the Vote" campaign.

Before

- Participated in virtual weekly volunteer meetings; made over 500 phone calls a week to New Hampshire residents.
- Directly distributed information on absentee voting to register eligible voters in New Hampshire.

Weston Recreation Camp - Weston, MA
Lead Counselor **June 2018- August 2019**
Paid position 40 hours per week for each 6-week summer session.

- Cared for and mentored children ages 4-5. Requires full recertification of First Aid and CPR each summer.
- Planned and organized enrichment activities while leading a group of about 20 children and overseeing two other staff members.

PUBLICATIONS

Cognition:

Bernhard, R.; Thomas, R.; Phillips, J. **"**It's Not What You Did, It's What You Could Have Done." Cognition, November 2022. (Cognition)

Bernhard, R.; Thomas, R.; Cushman, F. **"**Paradox of Punishment." Cognition, forthcoming.

Cognitive Science Society:

Thomas, R. "Possibility is not a Luxury: The role of identity in representations of possibility." Dartmouth College Undergraduate Thesis awarded High Honors, June 2022.
CogSci, submitted. (Dartmouth Digital Commons)

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

The Embattled Program, Founding Board Member **2021-2022**

- Founded an organization within The Student and Presidential Committee on Sexual Assault to allocate college funding to uplift the efforts of students moving forward conversations about sex, consent, gender, sexuality, and related topics at Dartmouth.
- Voted on the allocation of funding for student research project proposals and mentored underclassmen spreading the impact of their work across campus communities.
- Proposed and executed an independent project to provide vibrators and information about personal sexual health to low-income and minority students.

Cobra Senior Society, President **2021-2022**

- Led operations for Dartmouth's oldest all-female senior society.
- Organized projects to unite a diverse group of senior leaders as well as to offer support to female and non-binary freshman through the development of a mentorship book.
- Offered membership to an exclusive selection of rising seniors at Dartmouth who demonstrated a clear commitment to leadership and inclusivity across campus. Maintained connections with and hosted events for Cobra alumni dating back to the founding members of 1978.

Sigma Delta Sorority, Wellness Chair **2021-2022**

- Designed and piloted a new leadership position for risk management and sexual health and wellness for a local sorority of 150 women.
- Organized informational resource guides, hosted campus-wide events discussing sexual violence prevention in Greek life and created spaces for community growth and conversation about mental and sexual health.

Planned Parenthood Generation Action, Co-President **2019-2021**

- Led one of the more than 350 campus groups overseen by the national Planned Parenthood organization.
- Engaged with a network of young activists across the country and mobilized advocates for reproductive freedom, raising public awareness about reproductive rights, educating young people about sexual health, and creating lasting change in their communities.

SKILLS & CERTIFICATIONS

Technical – Proficient in Python, MATLAB, JavaScript, and R. Experience with Python packages: NumPy, Pandas, and pyBIDS (Brain Imaging Data Structures). Graphic Design in Procreate and Canva.
Communication – Conversational fluency in Spanish, Extensive public speaking and performance experience.
Research – fMRI Lab Scan Assistant Certified, Certified CITI Program course for Human Research (Group 2: Social/Behavioral Research), Behavioral Study Design on jsPsych, oTree, Testable, and Qualtrics. Participant Management on Amazon Mechanical Turk.
Health – Trained to provide peer support to survivors of sexual violence. Certified for First Aid and CPR.

Before

Sample 1L Resume: After Revisions

RUBY THOMAS

622 W. 116th St., Apt. #50, New York, NY 10025
(781) 290-7000 • ruby.thomas@columbia.edu • linkedin.com/in/ruby-thomas

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2026
Activities: *Columbia Journal of Gender & Law*, Staff Editor
Gender and Sexuality Law Moot Court
Domestic Violence Project
South Asian Law Students Association

Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH
B.A. in Cognitive Science and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies, *cum laude*, received June 2022
Honors: Academic Achievement Award in Cognitive Science
Rufus Choate Scholar (top 5% annual GPA)
Meritorious Citations in Linguistics, Theater, English, and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies
Thesis: *Possibility Is Not a Luxury: The Role of Identity in Representations of Possibility*, Awarded High Honors
Activities: Planned Parenthood Generation Action, President
Student and Presidential Committee on Sexual Assault, Founding Board Member of Embattled
Sigma Delta Sorority, Executive Board
Cobra Senior Society, President

EXPERIENCE

PhilLab at Dartmouth College Hanover, NH
Cognitive Science Research Assistant for Professor Jonathan Phillips Sept. 2019- Aug. 2023
Implemented interdisciplinary research focused on morality, identity, agency, causality, and possibility that culminated in a senior honors thesis and two publications. Designed and launched new studies while conducting technical analysis for ongoing projects. Expanded existing techniques for studying counterfactual decision making by formulating new applications of these approaches to the study of intersectional identity representations.

Dartmouth College Admissions Hanover, NH
Tour Guide & Tour Guide Trainer Mar. 2019-Jun. 2022
Led personalized walking tours to prospective students and special campus guests to acclimate them with the college. Selected, trained, and mentored future tour guides from the student applicant pool. Represented the admissions office on student panels, organized admitted student programming, and generated informative promotional social media content.

Moral Psychology Research Lab at Harvard University Cambridge, MA
Psychology Research Assistant for Professor Fiery Cushman Dec. 2019-Sep. 2020
Conducted full-time research on applied psychology, philosophy, computer science, and neuroscience to answer fundamental questions about morality. Developed new projects on retributive tendencies for punishment and assisted Regan Bernhard, Ph.D. with ongoing projects regarding moral culpability.

ACLU of New Hampshire Remote
Remote Organizer & Paid Phone Banker Jun. 2020-Sept. 2020
Oversaw field-organizing projects for nonpartisan 2020 "Get Out the Vote" campaign. Conducted virtual weekly volunteer meetings and made over 500 phone calls per week to distribute information on absentee voting to New Hampshire voters.

PUBLICATIONS

Bernhard, R.; Thomas, R.; Cushman, F. **"***The Paradox of Aversive Punishment*." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: Attitudes and Social Cognition, Forthcoming 2023.
Bernhard, R.; Thomas, R.; Phillips, J. **"***It's Not What You Did, It's What You Could Have Done*." Cognition, Nov.2022.

LANGUAGE Spanish (intermediate)

Sample 1L Resume

MORGAN S. HENRY

845-400-6877 · msh4435@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2029
Honors: Max Berger '71 Public Interest/Public Service Fellows Program (selective three-year program for students committed to the public interest)
Activities: If/When/How, 1L Representative
Columbia Law Women's Association
Journal of Gender and Law, Staff

University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland
M.A. in Gender Studies, with first class honors, received November 2023
Honors: George J. Mitchell Scholar
Activities: Abortion Rights Campaign, Policy & Advocacy Working Group
Thesis: *Match Made in Hell: The Rhetorical Influence of American Anti-Abortion Groups in Ireland 2018-Present*

Yale University, New Haven, CT
B.A. in Political Science, *cum laude* and with distinction in the major, received May 2022
Honors: Harry S. Truman Scholar
U.S. Department of State Benjamin A. Gilman Scholar
Jack Kent Cooke Foundation College Scholar
Activities: Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Generation Action Intern
Thesis: *Have the 'Blue Dogs' Lost their Bite? An Assessment of Abortion Politics in the Democratic Party*

EXPERIENCE

Saeed & Little Oxford, UK
Legal Intern May – August 2026
Participated in discovery review and helped prepare a client for his deposition in a Title IX case. Researched and wrote a memorandum on the scope of victim advocates' communication privilege. Drafted discovery requests in Title IX and childhood sexual abuse cases.

McAllister Olivarius Maidenhead, UK
Head U.S. Legal Analyst September 2024 – March 2026
Supervised other Legal Analysts and trained new U.S. team members. Tracked all deadlines and deliverables for the U.S. civil litigation practice.

U.S. Legal Analyst September 2023 – September 2024
Drafted pre-action settlement demand letters, complaints, witness statements, damages analyses, and other legal correspondence for cases involving sexual assault, harassment, or discrimination. Interviewed prospective clients for intake and witnesses for litigation.

LANGUAGE: Gaeilge (beginner)

Sample 1L Resume

BEN AHMED

444 West 77th Street, Apt. 2K, New York, NY 10024
(212) 555-0011 • bya1822@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2023
Activities: Public Interest Law Foundation
Environmental Law Society
Columbia Society for Law, Science, and Technology
South Asian Law Students Association

Cornell University, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Ithaca, NY
B.S., *magna cum laude*, received May 2017
Major: Applied Economics and Business Management
Honors: Ho-Nun-De-Kah, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences Honor Society
Golden Key National Honor Society
Dean's List
Activities: Ho-Nun-De-Kah Honor Society, Publicity Chair
Cornell University Program Board
Student Orientation Committee

EXPERIENCE

Pillsbury Winthrop LLP New York, NY
Legal Assistant July 2018–Aug. 2020
Interviewed expert witnesses for pro bono litigation involving a wrongful death penalty conviction. Prepared, filed, and coordinated service of pleadings in Chapter 11 bankruptcy cases. Conducted legal and factual research. Prepared marketing materials for potential clients and legal notices for publication in national media.

Cornell Office of Counseling, Advising, and Minority Programs Ithaca, NY
Peer Advisor and Administrative Assistant Aug. 2017–June 2018
Advised new, underrepresented students on topics of academic, professional, and personal interest. Provided information and referrals on academic majors, university support networks, college procedures and deadlines, and campus events. Performed general administrative duties.

Department of Agricultural, Resource, and Managerial Economics Ithaca, NY
Teaching Assistant, Marketing Management Jan.-May 2017
Analyzed and presented marketing case studies for instructional use. Evaluated student papers and assisted in grading examinations.

TakeNote, Inc. Ithaca, NY
Business Editor Aug. 2016–Jan. 2017
Reviewed notes for undergraduate business classes. Revised factual, grammatical, and typographical errors. Clarified ambiguities in material presented and adjusted formatting of notes to fit standard company template.

Penguin Putnam Inc. New York, NY
Subsidiary Rights Intern June–Aug. 2016
Helped to negotiate and draft subsidiary rights contracts with book clubs and film studios.

Sample 1L Resume

ABEL ASSEFA ZENAWI

874 West 119th Street, #10B • New York, NY 10027 • 301-267-8514 • az5412@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2023
Activities: African Law Students Association

University of Maryland, College Park, MD
B.A., with honors, received May 2020
Major: Anthropology
Activities: Anthropology Student Association Semester Abroad in Jamaica
Thesis: *The Economic and Social Ramifications of Conflict on Youth in War-Torn Africa*

EXPERIENCE

University of Maryland College Park, MD
Department of Anthropology, Research Assistant Jun. 2020–Aug. 2020
Worked remotely to research topics pertaining to indigenous people's rights in Argentina for Dr. Judith Freidenberg. Led remote outreach efforts to Native American communities to develop new anthropological studies program.

University of Maryland College Park, MD
Admissions Assistant Sep. 2019–May 2020
Assisted staff in Office of Undergraduate Admissions with preparations for incoming freshman activities. Edited admissions materials for upcoming admissions cycle.

Giant Supermarket[2] Silver Spring, MD
Salesclerk Jun. 2018–Aug. 2019
Assisted customers with grocery checkout and bagging. Led efforts to educate management about African cuisine in effort to expand offerings in international ingredient aisle.

Walgreens College Park, MD
Stockroom Clerk Aug. 2016–May 2018
Stocked store shelves and organized excess inventory in stockroom.

LANGUAGE Fluent in Amharic, Oromo

[2] This 1L included his work experience at Giant Supermarket and Walgreens on his resume to reference skills he developed at these jobs, to demonstrate that he had to work to support himself, and to explain why he did not have any internships. As he starts gaining legal experience, he will take this off his resume.

Sample 1L Resume

NAOMI BENNETT

407 West 118th Street, Apartment 7B, New York, NY 10027
nxb2234@columbia.edu • 510-222-3344

EDUCATION

Columbia University Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2026
Activities: Max Berger '71 Public Interest/Public Service Fellows Program
Student Senate, 1L and 2L Student Senator
Health Law Association, Events Chair
Law Revue (musical law comedy), Performer and Writer

Washington University in St. Louis, School of Arts & Sciences, St. Louis, MO
B.A. in International Area Studies, with Honors, received May 2020
Minors: Mathematics; Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
Activities: Women's Varsity Tennis Team; Sexual Assault and Rape Anonymous Hotline (Peer Counselor)
Study Abroad: Chinese University of Hong Kong

EXPERIENCE

New York Legal Assistance Group, Special Litigation Unit New York, NY
Incoming Intern May 2024 – Jul. 2024

Immigrants' Rights Clinic New York, NY
Student Participant Jan. 2024 – Present
Serve as lead counsel on clinic team representing a family from Mexico. Interviewed clients and witnesses, performed factual investigation, drafted pleadings and appeared in court. Worked with national immigration organizations on research for an amicus brief in an upcoming U.S. Supreme Court case.

U.S. House of Representatives, Congresswoman Anna G. Eshoo Washington, DC
Health Legislative Assistant May 2022 – Jun. 2023
Legislative Aide and Correspondent Aug. 2021 – Apr. 2022
Staff Assistant Sep. 2020 – Jul. 2021
Managed the Congresswoman's legislative portfolio in healthcare, reproductive rights, and LGBTQ+ issues. Drafted legislation, speeches, and letters to federal agencies. Assisted during Energy and Commerce Committee hearings. Served as a link between constituents, stakeholders, and the Congresswoman.

Board Member of the LGBTQ+ Congressional Staff Association Feb. 2022 – Jun. 2023
Organized events for LGBTQ+ Congressional staffers with community-based and national organizations serving LGBTQ+ people, such as emergency shelters and the Trevor Project. Chair of the Queer Women's Task Force.

WeLead Training Program Washington, DC
Member of Training Class of 2022 Jul. 2022 – May 2023
Participated in a training program through American University to learn leadership skills, campaign tactics, and ways to close the gender gap in the political arena.

Congressional AI Fellowship Washington, DC
Fellow Oct. 2022 – Dec. 2022
Attended six seminars led by technologists and scholars across sectors to discuss the major questions surrounding artificial intelligence.

The Migrant and Immigrant Community Action Project St. Louis, MO
Intern May 2018 – Aug. 2018
Drafted legal briefs and conducted in-depth research for clients seeking asylum in the U.S. Guided clients through deadlines and accompanied them to appointments at USCIS.

LANGUAGES Spanish (proficient)

Sample 2L Resume: Before Revisions

FRANCESCA SILVESTRI

111 West 121st St #555 New York, NY 10027 212-555-1212 fus1111@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

2017–2020 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL, New York, NY
J.D. degree anticipated May 2020

2013–2017 UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER, Rochester, NY
B.A. degree, *summa cum laude,* awarded May 2017
Double major in Political Science and Spanish
Minor in Latin American Studies

2012–2013 COLEGIO VILLA RICA, Veracruz, MEXICO
Rotary International Exchange Student following graduation from high school
Attended Colegio Villa Rica for one full year, becoming fluent in Spanish
Traveled extensively throughout central Mexico and the Yucatán peninsula

HONORS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society Member
Selected as Chief Student Marshall at the University of Rochester 2011 Commencement
Golden Key Scholarship, awarded to highest academically ranked junior
Susan B. Anthony Institute Women's Leadership Award
U.S. Department of Defense National Security Education Program, David L. Boren Scholar

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Spring Semester 2016 SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING, Fortaleza, Ceará, BRAZIL
Culture, Development, and Social Justice Scholar. Participated in a study abroad program focused on heightening social awareness through a seminar on Brazil's history, economics, politics, and culture, including field studies. Completed an advanced Portuguese language course. Conducted original research on Brazilian agrarian reform and the social movements surrounding it.

Summer 2015 U.S. EMBASSY, INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, Mexico City, MEXICO
Office for Latin America Intern. Utilizing bilingual Spanish-English skills, advised and counseled Mexican and Latin American citizens regarding policies and approaches for completing high school, undergraduate, and graduate studies in the U.S. Conducted group orientation sessions in Spanish. Assisted with the research, editing, and design of the Bilingual Schools in Mexico City publication. Created a law school informational diskette and electronic newsletter.

Summer 2013 AMIGOS DE LAS AMERICAS INTERNATIONAL, Rio Grande do Norte, BRAZIL
Health Care Volunteer. Worked in a rural Brazilian village to improve health and sanitary conditions. Built latrines; planted trees; renovated an elementary school; and provided education in dental health, breastfeeding, and first aid. Became proficient in conversational Portuguese.

Before

WORK EXPERIENCE

Fall 2020–present	OPEN SOCIETY JUSTICE INITIATIVE, New York, NY *Legal Intern for the Mexico Migration Project.* Researching the effects of the U.S.'s border management policies on Mexico's domestic immigration policies and procedures. Comparing Mexico's policies of migrants' due process rights to the international standards.
Summer 2018	DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, Minneapolis, MN *Office of Chief Counsel, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement Intern*. Attended deportation hearings and provided assistance when needed. Conducted in-depth research on Central American asylum cases, utilizing knowledge of the historical political situations and language skills. Acquired a broad understanding of the Department's duties through attending seminars on fraudulent documents, attending interviews of applicants for benefits, and observing the U.S. Border Patrol at the Minneapolis International Airport.
Summer 2017	HENNEPIN COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, Minneapolis, MN *Child Protection Division Intern*. Worked in the division filing system and databases, and assisted with the newly developed electronic distribution of reports. Provided Spanish translation for victim-witness staff in the Juvenile Prosecution Division.
2017–2018	UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER, Rochester, NY *Teaching Assistant for Elementary Spanish and Microeconomics.* Prepared and facilitated weekly recitation sessions, held weekly office hours, assisted with student test preparation and grading. Served as a general liaison between faculty and students.
2017–2018	*Community Assistant & Resident Advisor.* Created residential climate conducive to academic achievement, good scholarship, and intellectual stimulation. Duties included community development; organizing programs and events for residents; serving as an emergency resource, counselor and advisor; and operating as a floor leader.
2015–2017	*Sesquicentennial Student Manager and Fairbank Alumni House Office Assistant.* Provided office support related to marketing the University to alumni and friends. Became proficient with Excel spreadsheets and several other databases. Appointed "Student Sesquicentennial Manager" for the University's 150th anniversary; responsibilities included managing a special account of book orders for the Alumni Department regarding the University's Pictorial History.

CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

2019–present	*Columbia Society of Immigrant and Refugee Rights.* Attend meetings.
2019–present	C*olumbia Society of International Law.* Assist in the coordination of the Friedman Conference, a one-day conference focusing on an issue of Public International Law. This year's conference is focusing on Nation Building.
2017–2018	*University of Rochester Student Government Chief-of-Staff.* Appointed by the President to serve as second-in-command in the Executive Cabinet. Created, coordinated, and executed projects to better the lives of the Rochester students. Collected and provided feedback as an official representative of the student body.

INTERESTS

Softball, reality television, big cities.

Before

Sample 2L Resume: After Revisions

FRANCESCA SILVESTRI
111 West 121st Street, #555, New York, NY 10027
212-555-1212 • fus1111@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2022
Activities: Columbia Society for International Law
Society for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

University of Rochester, Rochester, NY
B.A., *summa cum laude*, in Political Science and Spanish[3], received May 2019
Honors: Phi Beta Kappa
U.S. Department of Defense Boren Scholar
Golden Key Scholarship (awarded to highest-ranked female junior)
Susan B. Anthony Institute Women's Leadership Award
Activities: Student Government, Chief-of-Staff (University Presidential Appointment)
Semester abroad (with fieldwork) in Fortaleza, Brazil

EXPERIENCE

Open Society Justice Initiative New York, NY
Legal Intern, Mexico Migration Project Sept. 2020-Present
Research effects of U.S. border management policies on Mexico's domestic immigration policy. Compare Mexico's policies on migrants' due process rights to international standards.

Department of Homeland Security Minneapolis, MN
Intern, Office of Chief Counsel, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement May-August 2020
Assisted attorneys in deportation hearings remotely. Conducted research on Central American asylum cases.

Hennepin County Attorney's Office Minneapolis, MN
Intern, Child Protection Division May-August 2019
Updated the division filing system and databases. Provided translation for victims and staff.

University of Rochester Rochester, NY
Teaching Assistant for Spanish and Microeconomics 2018-2019
Prepared and facilitated weekly recitation sessions. Assisted with test preparation and grading.

Resident Advisor 2018-2019
Created supportive residential climate for students. Served as advisor and floor leader.

U.S. Embassy, Institute of International Education Mexico City, Mexico
Intern, Office for Latin America Summer 2017
Advised Mexican and Latin American citizens regarding policies and approaches for completing high school, undergraduate, and graduate studies in the U.S.

LANGUAGE SKILLS[4] Spanish (fluent); Portuguese (proficient)

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[3] Student removed her minor. You do not need to include your undergraduate minor on your resume unless it is particularly relevant to the work for which you are applying or fills in a piece of your narrative that is not apparent from other parts of your resume.

[4] Considering an "interests" section? See our guidance.

Sample 2L Resume

MICHAEL GOLDBERG

555 West 120th Street, Apt. 3, New York, NY 10027
212-555-1212 • mhg4487@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2022
Honors: Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar (for superior academic achievement)
Class of 1912 Prize (for top 1L student in the subject of contracts)
Activities: *Human Rights Law Review*

University Of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
B.A., *summa cum laude*, received May 2019
Major: Cognitive Science
Honors: Phi Beta Kappa
College Alumni Society Prize in Cognitive Science
Publication: "Approval Voting and Parochialism," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (forthcoming), with Jonathan Baron and Stephan Kroll
Activities: Cuba Health Project Peer Advisor

EXPERIENCE

Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic New York, NY
Student Participant Fall 2020
Provide legal assistance (including transactional, regulatory, and tax assistance) to non-profit organizations and small businesses. Work on community development issues. Clients include Housing Plus Solutions and UHAB Housing Development Fund Corporation.

Columbia University School of Law New York, NY
Research Assistant to Professor Vincent Blasi Fall 2020
Research first amendment issues related to campaign spending regulations. Provide research and editorial assistance for revision of textbook on First Amendment law.

U.S. Attorney's Office, S.D.N.Y. New York, NY
Intern Summer 2020
Researched and wrote memoranda on a variety of civil litigation matters, including *Bivens* suits, Title VII, immigration, and taxation cases. Drafted motions, deposition outlines and correspondence. Attended depositions, mediation sessions, trials, oral arguments and client interviews.

Courtroom Advocates Project, Sanctuaries for Families New York, NY
Student Advocate Fall 2019
Assisted a victim of domestic violence to obtain an order of protection. Conducted client interviews, drafted pleadings, and appeared in court as the client's advocate.

University Of Pennsylvania Philadelphia, PA
Department of Neurology, Undergraduate Research Assistant 2017–2019
Assisted with processing, organizing and collating neuroimaging data and patient data files.

Sample 2L Resume

NIDHI KHAN
Pronouns: she/her[5]
(212) 555-5599 • nk2211@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2022
Honors: *Columbia Law Review*, Articles Editor
Activities: Max Berger '71 Public Interest/Public Service Fellow (selective three-year program for students committed to the public interest)
South Asian Law Students Association, Academic Chair
Columbia Law and Political Economy Society, Vice President

Boston College, Boston, MA
B.A. in International Relations and English, *cum laude*, received May 2018
Activities: Center for the Advanced Study of India, Research Assistant
Writing Across the University, Writing Advisor
South Asian Students Association

EXPERIENCE

Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund New York, NY
Legal Intern Spring 2021
Investigated wage and hour, and unsafe workplace claims by day laborers of South Asian descent. Organized outreach projects to inform community of immigrants' and workers' rights.

Neufeld Scheck & Brustin, LLP New York, NY
Legal Intern Fall 2020
Researched and wrote memoranda on legal issues related to wrongful conviction. Drafted motions and complaints. Conducted document review of discovery, including police and forensic reports, to prepare for depositions.

Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem New York, NY
Legal Intern Summer 2020
Assisted with preparation of witnesses for direct and cross-examination during trial. Interviewed clients and witnesses. Researched and drafted legal instruments such as motions and pleadings.

Tenants' Rights Project, Columbia Law School New York, NY
Legal Intern Fall 2019-Spring 2020
Worked with low-income clients to file petitions against landlords for violations of housing codes in their apartments. Advocated for clients in court hearings and settlement discussions with landlords' attorneys.

Bain & Company Boston, MA
Associate Consultant Summer 2018-Spring 2019
Researched and analyzed financial services, consumer products, and retail industries by interviewing experts and surveying customers. Pro bono work included research on the recession's impact on NYC non-profit sector.

PUBLICATIONS

Know Your Rights: A Guide for Immigrant Women Navigating U.S. Workplaces, Harvard University Press (forthcoming)
"South Asian Refugees and Immigrants: A Human Rights Dilemma," 22 *Hum. Rts. Q.* 59. (2019)

[5] Note that this student chose to leave off her address and chose to include her pronouns. Please consult a PI/PS adviser if you have questions about whether to do either of these things on your resume.

Sample 2L Resume

DARIUS WILEY

222 West 121st Street, Apt. 3K, New York, NY 10027
(212) 555-6677 • dew323@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2022
Honors: *Columbia Journal of Race and Law*, Articles Editor
Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar (for academic achievement)
Activities: Black Law Students Association (BLSA)
Frederick Douglass Moot Court
Capital Appeals Project (spring break pro bono project, March 2020)
Black Men's Initiative, Co-President

Columbia University, New York, NY
B.A. in Economics, received May 2017
Honors: Dean's List
King's Crown Leadership Award
Activities: Black Students Organization
Habitat for Humanity
Club Soccer

EXPERIENCE

Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, New York, NY Fall-Spring 2020
Legal Extern
Helped represent indigent clients. Handled a misdemeanor case from arraignment to dismissal. Conducted client, family member, and witness interviews, appeared in court, visited client, advocated for client's medical needs, and successfully negotiated a dismissal of charges. Assisted an attorney throughout the year with her caseload by conducting legal research and writing memos, drafting motions, investigating and compiling mitigation evidence, visiting and interviewing clients, and preparing for trial and sentencing.

Center for Constitutional Rights, New York, NY Summer 2020
Summer Intern
Researched and wrote memoranda on immigrants' due process rights, governmental infringement of the Fourth Amendment, racial discrimination patterns in law enforcement, and various issues arising out of international human rights litigation in U.S. courts.

Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia, Washington, DC Fall 2017-Spring 2019
Investigator
Served as investigator for lawyers representing indigent defendants in felony proceedings. Interviewed and took statements from witnesses, photographed crime scenes, served subpoenas, and reviewed medical records and police videos.

NYC Parks Department, New York, NY Summers 2016, 2017
Counselor and Tutor
Served as counselor for youth ages 10-12 in day camp program serving low-income communities. Worked with other counselors to develop and supervise recreational activities and team sports events. Tutored campers in math and reading.

Sample 3L Resume

MAI NGUYEN

222 West 121st Street, Apt. 3K, New York, NY 10027
(212) 555-6677 • mn323@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2021
Honors: *Columbia Law Review*, Senior Editor
Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar (for academic achievement)
Activities: Rightslink
Human Rights Internship Program
Human Rights Institute, 1L Advocate
Capital Appeals Project (spring break pro bono project, March 2020)

Columbia University, New York, NY
B.A. in Economics and Political Science, received May 2016
Honors: Dean's List
King's Crown Leadership Award
Activities: Reading tutor with Washington Heights Tutors

International School of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland
Bilingual International Baccalaureate Diploma, received August 2015

EXPERIENCE

Center for Constitutional Rights, New York, NY Summer 2020
Summer Intern
Researched and wrote memoranda on immigrants' due process rights, governmental infringement of the Fourth Amendment, racial discrimination patterns in law enforcement, and various issues arising out of international human rights litigation in U.S. courts.

National Coalition for Haitian Rights, Port-au-Prince, Haiti Summer 2019
Summer Intern
Assisted activists and lawyers in monitoring the judiciary, police, and other governmental institutions. Organized basic legal and human rights education seminars for members of grassroots organizations. Investigated abuses of Haitian migrant workers in the Dominican Republic.

U.S. Peace Corps, New York, NY/Dakar, Senegal 2016-2018
Intern
Taught conversational English and basic grammar to youth aged 8-21. Organized summer arts program for young children. Facilitated activities to promote civic engagement among community members.

U.N. Conference on Trade and Development, Geneva, Switzerland Summer 2015
Intern
Researched and wrote on North-South inter-firm cooperation in the construction industry and its effects on technology transfer and development.

LANGUAGES Mandarin (fluent), French (fluent)

Sample 3L Resume

MATEO L. SALAZAR

533 W. 147th St., #4 New York, NY 10031 • (917) 480-1410 • mls2024@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2025
Honors: *Academic Honors* for 1L
Best in Class Award for Immigration Law
Note: *Breaking BI: Using the False Claims Act to End the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program*
Activities: *Journal of Law and Social Problems* Executive Articles Editor; Latinx Law Student Association (LaLSA) Public Interest Chair; Society for Immigrant and Refugee Rights VP; LaLSA Asylum & Refugee Moot Court; Research Assistant for Professor Anjum Gupta

SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY, Santa Clara, CA
B.S. in Psychology and Philosophy w/Pre-Law Emphasis, *magna cum laude,* received June 2020

EXPERIENCE

THE BRONX DEFENDERS Bronx, NY
Immigration Defense, Summer Intern May 2024-Aug. 2024
Worked on complex immigration cases involving criminal convictions. Assisted with representation of detained and non-detained noncitizens in their deportation proceedings through both written and trial advocacy.

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION New York, NY
National Immigrants' Rights Project, Legal Extern Jan. 2024-Apr. 2024
Conducted legal research and wrote memos for preparation of current nationwide litigation pertaining to federal preemption of proposed state immigration laws, rights of detained immigrants, and family separation. Aided in strategy and preliminary research for potential litigation against unjust alternative to detention programs.

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS CLINIC New York, NY
Student Attorney and Teaching Fellow Aug. 2023-May 2024
Managed an asylum case as a co-lead student attorney. Wrote the legal brief, compiled all evidence, and advised client through the process. Lead another client through removal proceedings by requesting prosecutorial discretion. Conducted know-your-rights presentations at the U.S.-Mexico border and at local non-profits in New York.

PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICE FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington, DC
Trial Division, Summer Law Clerk May 2023-Aug. 2023
Performed legal research and drafted various memos and motions to suppress, sanction, and sever. Conducted analyses of discovery materials for witness examinations and preliminary hearings. Interviewed clients to draft a sentencing letter and an early parole termination motion. Trained in a Trial Practice Group for trial advocacy skills.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON Silver Spring, MD
Immigration Legal Services, Paralegal Aug. 2021-Aug. 2022
Prepared immigration forms for indigent clients seeking asylum, U-Visas, family petitions, among other forms of relief. Prepared clients for court proceedings through legal research, mock hearings, drafting of declarations, creating country condition reports, filing of motions, and compiling evidence.

ERIE NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE Chicago, IL
Legal Administrative Assistant [Jesuit Volunteer Corps Volunteer] Aug. 2020-Aug. 2021
Aided DOJ representatives and attorneys with case management by translating legal documents, compiling required evidence, and performing intake screening consultations with new clients while managing my own DACA cases.

LANGUAGE

Spanish (fluent)

Sample Graduate Resume
Example of Gap in Work History Due to Leave

STEPHANIE MONTENEGRO

202 Main Street, Apt. 14, Jersey City, NJ 07302 • smm123@columbia.edu • (202) 228-2297

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, New York, NY
J.D., received May 2019
Honors: Stone Scholar 2017-2018 (honors)
Activities: *Columbia Human Rights Law Review & Jailhouse Lawyers Manual*, Operations Director
Research Assistant for Professor David Pozen
If/When/How, Events Coordinator and Communications Chair
Note: *Intersectional Employment Discrimination: The Potential Cooperation of Title VII and the ADEA*

THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, Ewing, NJ
B.A., *magna cum laude*, in Political Science, minor in Spanish, received May 2016
Activities: Phi Beta Kappa
TCNJ Society for Parliamentary Debate, Vice President of Operations
Theses: (1) *Welfare Reforms and Gender Equality*
(2) *African Americans and Financial Crashes*

EXPERIENCE

LEGAL AID SOCIETY SPECIAL LITIGATION UNIT New York, NY
Justice Fellow Mar. 2023 – Present
Initiated class action and impact litigation to create systemic change for vulnerable New Yorkers. Drafted and researched complaints and motions for federal and state courts including an appeal to the Second Circuit. Strategized with lead attorneys to plan litigation and participated in discovery meetings with opposing counsel. Scheduled to participate in upcoming oral arguments in the Eastern District of New York.

UNITED STATES, DISTRICT COURT OF NEW JERSEY Newark, NJ
Judicial Law Clerk Aug. 2022 – Dec. 2022
Drafted opinions and conducted research on topics in civil and criminal law. Developed case theories in partnership with the Judge. Prepared the Judge for hearings by writing oral argument outlines and observed the federal judicial process. Managed two interns and trained incoming clerks as the Head Clerk.

WHITE & CASE, LLP New York, NY
Litigation Associate Sep. 2019 – Aug. 2022
Summer Associate Summer 2018
Drafted legal documents including two pro bono appeals for the Supreme Court of the State of New York Appellate Division, Second Department. Honed research skills through work with legal databases to aid in litigation. Attended court hearings and client interviews to collect case information. Received award for pro bono work. Medical leave, Aug. 2020- Jul. 2022.

SQUIRE PATTON BOGGS CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT New York, NY
Legal Extern at Columbia Law School Aug. – Dec. 2018
Gained experience in post-conviction relief and general appellate litigation through class discussion, readings, and fieldwork on present cases under the supervision of lead attorneys. Fieldwork included research of case law and social science articles, writing memos and sections of an appellate brief, and assisting in creating a parole packet.

BAR ADMISSIONS

Admitted in New York State, Southern District of New York, and Eastern District of New York

Sample Graduate Resume

MARY CUMMINGS BROWN

200 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Apt. 12E, Washington, DC 20001
marybrown@gmail.com • (202) 222-2222

EXPERIENCE[6]

NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER Washington, DC
Staff Attorney 2015-Present
Draft amicus briefs for pending Supreme Court cases and federal court cases on a variety of women's health and employment issues. Draft testimony for legislative hearings, including Violence Against Women Act reauthorization hearings. Present updated state-by-state analysis of contraceptive equity laws, and draft edits to consumer guide entitled "Contraceptive Equity Laws in Your State: Know Your Rights – Use Your Rights" (available at www.nwlc.org/pdf/concovstateguide2009.pdf).

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE New York, NY
Extern Spring 2015
Handled own prosecution of misdemeanor domestic violence cases at Queens Family Justice Center, in conjunction with Columbia Law School Domestic Violence Prosecution Externship. Participated in trial advocacy skills seminar.

CENTER FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS New York, NY
Legal Intern Summer 2014
Researched evidentiary issues for challenge to state law requiring pregnant women to view ultrasounds prior to scheduling abortions. Drafted memo assessing potential legal challenge to recently introduced state fetal personhood law. Participated in national conference calls on state and federal legislative issues.

LINCOLN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS New York, NY
Legal Intern Summer 2013
Drafted memoranda and assisted the General Counsel on a broad range of legal issues, including entertainment law, intellectual property law, labor and employment law, and trusts and estates.

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL, New York, NY
J.D., received May 2015
Honors: Pauline Berman Heller Prize Fund (highest-ranked female graduating law student)
Best Oral Argument, 1L Moot Court Competition
Activities: *Columbia Law Review,* Notes Editor
If/When/How Law Students for Reproductive Justice

YALE UNIVERSITY, New Haven, CT
B.A., *cum laude*, received May 2012
Major: Art History
Honors: Departmental honors in Art History
Activities: *Yale Undergraduate Journal of Comparative Literature*

BAR ADMISSIONS
Admitted in New York State

[6] This student put her "Experience" section before her "Education" section because she is a graduate with at least five years of experience.

Sample Resume (Portion): Joint Degrees

Option 1

ANDREW PARK

105 West 120th Street, Apt. 2n, New York, NY 10027
212.699.9999 | andrew.park@columbia.edu

EDUCATION
COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2021
Activities: American Constitution Society
Society of Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Moot Court, Captain
Columbia Human Rights Law Review & *Jailhouse Lawyers Manual*, Executive Articles Editor
Columbia Society of International Law

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, WOODROW WILSON SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, Princeton, NJ
M.P.A, expected May 2021
Concentration: International Relations

RICE UNIVERSITY, Houston, TX
B.A., *magna cum laude*, received June 2017
Activities: Semester Abroad at University of London
Big Brothers Big Sisters Program
Thesis: *The Remaining Resistance: The Role of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle*

Option 2

ANDREW PARK

105 West 120th Street, Apt. 2n, New York, NY 10027
212.699.9999 | andrew.park@columbia.edu

EDUCATION
COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL/ PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, WOODROW WILSON SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, New York, NY/ Princeton, NJ
Joint J.D./Master of Public Affairs Degree, expected May 2021
Concentration: International Relations
Activities: American Constitution Society
Society of Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Moot Court, Captain
Columbia Human Rights Law Review & *Jailhouse Lawyers Manual*, Executive Articles Editor
Columbia Society of International Law

RICE UNIVERSITY, Houston, TX
B.A., *magna cum laude*, received June 2017
Activities: Semester Abroad at University of London
Big Brothers Big Sisters Program
Thesis: *The Remaining Resistance: The Role of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle*

Sample Resume (Portion): Permanent Address

SOLOMON A. KING

Solomon.King@law.columbia.edu | 347.847.9923

Current Address:
400 West 120th Street, Apt. 9
New York, NY 10027

Permanent Address:[7]
31 Weaver Drive
Philadelphia, PA 99999

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2022
Activities: Public Interest Law Foundation, Board President
First-Generation Professionals, 2L Representative

ACLU UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, Charlottesville, Virginia
B.A., with distinction, received May 2017
Major: Political Science
Honors: Holland Scholar (full-tuition scholarship)
Activities: College Democrats

EXPERIENCE

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL New York, NY
Extern, Civil Rights Bureau Fall 2020
Assisted lawyers in Civil Rights Bureau through Columbia Law School's externship program. Investigated potential claim concerning an employer's denial of a request for religious accommodation. Performed legal research about the ADA's public accommodation provision pertaining to polling sites.

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL New York, NY
Research Assistant to Professor Matthew Waxman Summer 2020
Researched U.S. national security intelligence and surveillance restrictions. Researched and edited content for casebook on privacy issues and Fourth Amendment jurisprudence in light of new digital technologies.

TEACH FOR AMERICA Oregon City, OR
Kindergarten Teacher Summer 2017-Spring 2019
Taught 30 students to exceed one year's growth in reading and mastery of key state benchmarks in math. Established afterschool program and new reading programs.

[7] Tip: Use your permanent address when applying for summer internships or jobs in that geographic area.

Sample Resume (Portion): Transfer Student; Upcoming Clinic

AKEYLA HARRISON

222 Riverside Drive, #2, New York, NY 10026
212-227-9153 • akeyla.harrison@law.columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2022
Activities: Harlan Fiske Stone Moot Court Society
Columbia Journal of Environmental Law, Submissions Editor
Publication: Legal Measures to Curtail Global Warming, 22 *CJEL* (2021)

Brooklyn Law School, Brooklyn, NY
September 2019-May 2020 (then transferred)
Honors: Phi Delta Phi Honor Society
Activities: Black Law Students Association
Health Law and Policy Association

McGill University, Montreal, Canada
B.A., with great distinction, received May 2017
Honors: Edward Beatty Scholarship
Activities: Greenpeace University Chapter, President
QPIRG, Board of Directors
Simply Sweetly Choir

EXPERIENCE

Environmental Law Clinic, Columbia Law School[8] — New York, NY
Student Participant — Spring 2021

Earthjustice — New York, NY
Summer Law Clerk — Summer 2020
Researched and wrote memoranda on legal issues concerning civil procedure and environmental regulations for cases dealing with fracking, toxic chemicals, and concentrated animal feeding operations.

[8] It may be appropriate to list an experience to which you are committed in the near future. If you have not yet begun the experience, you should omit any description, as here. When the clinic begins, the student will add description of what she is working on, written in present tense. When the clinic ends, she will rewrite the description to be in past tense.

Sample Resume (Portion): Undergraduate Transfer[9]

JULIA THOMAS

205 West 103rd Street, #14K, New York, NY 10027
212-555-3634 • julia.thomas@law.columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2023
Activities: National Lawyers Guild
Columbia Journal of Gender and Law, Editor

Georgetown University, Washington, DC
B.A. in Environmental Studies, received May 2020
Honors: Dean's List
Activities: *The Hoya*, Writer and Editor
Academic Resource Center Tutor

Tufts University, Medford, MA
September 2016-May 2017 (then transferred)
Honors: Dean's List
Activities: Medford Tutoring Project
Tufts Senate, Freshman Senator

[9] See a PI/PS adviser if you transferred during your undergraduate years and are not sure whether to include your first college or university on your resume. In this case, the student is applying for a summer internship in Boston and might consider including Tufts on her resume to show her connection to the area. If the student was applying for internships in New York or Washington, DC, she might not find it necessary to keep Tufts on her resume, especially if space on the page was an issue.

Public Interest Cover Letters

Your cover letter is a persuasive "brief" on why you want a particular job and why you are the best candidate. You want to highlight your credentials and provide a narrative about your fit.

Public interest and government employers often rely more on cover letters than resumes to assess candidates, so they can make a difference! Your goal is to convince the employer that you are committed to their issue area and that your experience, skills, and knowledge make you the best person for the job. Focus on how you can help the employer and its clients, not on how the job will help you. If your resume does not appear to be a perfect match for the position at first glance, use the cover letter to connect your experience to the job.

In this section, we provide sample cover letters. Read them all, even if they do not match your experience level. Pay special attention to the tips in the footnotes. We also provide resume and cover letter pairings to show how a good cover letter can be crafted from a specific resume. Read these carefully.

A few tips:

- ➔ If you are applying to an international employer or for international jobs, please review our International Public Interest Job Search Toolkit Supplement.
- ➔ LL.M.s should review our LL.M. job search tools page and LL.M. Supplement.
- ➔ *Should I Use Mx. Instead of Ms. or Mr. When Addressing the Hiring Director or Manager?* Mx. is an honorific that has come into use as ideas about gender have changed. Typically, honorifics are used in cover letters to address the person responsible for hiring for a specific position. Currently, we recommend using Mx. only when you know the recipient prefers Mx. or identifies as gender nonbinary. Not sure which honorific to use? Check the staff list or biographies, if available.
- ➔ If your interest in a job or issue stems from personal involvement (e.g., you want to work at the DA's sex crimes unit because you are a rape survivor or go into foster care advocacy because you were a foster child), consult with a PI/PS adviser before including this information. Some employers may view this as an asset; others may question your objectivity.

Grad Tip: Postgraduate Cover Letters

Your cover letter may be significantly longer than a law student's letter, although it should follow the content guide. Clearly state how your personal mission and the mission of the organization align. Do not be afraid to go onto a second page or use a slightly smaller font.

Cover Letter Template



Download a cover letter template.

Student's Street Address, #1a
New York, NY 10027
email

Date

Emp Loyer, Managing Attorney
The Public Interest Organization
100 Attorney Street
New York, NY 10027

Dear Ms. Loyer:

First paragraph: This states who you are (e.g., "I am a second-year student at Columbia Law School"), what you are looking for (a summer internship/position/fellowship), a brief statement of why you are interested in the position, and your funding status (e.g., "As a recipient of Columbia Summer Funding, I am able to accept an unpaid position"). If you have any connection to the organization (e.g., if you heard someone speak on a panel, or if you have spoken to their former intern) mention it here.

Second paragraph: Explain why you are interested in this type of work and this specific organization. THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE LETTER, SO MAKE IT GOOD! Highlight your experience, commitment, and passion. The more you can show that your mission and that of the organization are aligned, the more compelling your narrative will be (this requires some research into the organization's work). Be sure to include any connections or links to your past work and the job for which you are applying.

Third paragraph: Explain any relevant skills you have (a 1L may have less to put here than an upper-year student or graduate). If there is a job announcement, make sure to specifically address as many of the desired skills and qualifications as possible.

Fourth paragraph: Reiterate your interest. Tell them what materials you have enclosed. Sound appreciative and eager. Thank them for their consideration. If you will be in their location, offer to come in and meet with them.

Sincerely,
Student Name
[You can include your pronouns here as well if you like]

Cover Letter Checklist

- ❑ Your letter is tailored to the job you are applying for (although letters for jobs in the same sector may be similar). Public interest letters are different from private sector or clerkship letters.
- ❑ Your letter does not assume that the employer has read your resume. (Some read the cover letter first.)
- ❑ Your letter uses clear and effective topic sentences.
- ❑ You carefully crafted an explanation of your merits. Remember, do not just list credentials!
- ❑ Your letter discusses your involvement in relevant student organizations, moot courts, externships, and clinics to demonstrate interest in the employer's work.
- ❑ Your letter is responsive to the job announcement, if one exists. It is important to read the job posting very carefully.
- ❑ You signed your letter. An electronic signature is fine.
- ❑ Your letter is saved as a PDF file, and you will email it as an attachment to your application.

Cover Letter Samples

1L Cover Letters

- Vladimir Eleryk
- Eduardo Mazier
- Amy Chiu
- Abel Zenawi
- Julia Thomas

2L Cover Letter

- Angelica Vega

3L Cover Letter

- Mia Johnson

Graduate Cover Letters

- Sharma Phuyal
- Yula Virks
- Miao Tian

For more cover letters, see Sample Resume and Cover Letter Pairings.

Sample 1L Cover Letter

44 West 114th Street, Apt. 4
New York, NY 10027
ve244@columbia.edu

December 19, 2023

Joseph Smith, Internship Coordinator
United States Attorney's Office Eastern District of New York
147 Pierrepont Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am a first-year student at Columbia Law School (CLS) and am seeking an internship with the Criminal Division of the United States Attorney's Office of the Eastern District of New York for this upcoming summer. I attended a panel on the U.S. Attorney's Offices in New York this fall at CLS and spoke with several students who have participated in internship programs with your office. Given my strong commitment to working in the field of criminal law, and the excellent reviews your office received from other students, I would welcome the opportunity to intern in your office this summer. As a recipient of summer funding from CLS, I can accept an unpaid internship.[10]

My interest in criminal law stems from my work in the Speaker's Office for the Illinois House of Representatives. As a staffer for the House Criminal Law Committee, I researched criminal law issues related to pending legislation and reform of the criminal justice system. I spoke with experts and representatives from such diverse groups as state's attorneys, legislators, public defenders, law enforcement officials, academics, community organizers, and reporters. Issues of particular interest were the expansion of DNA databases, racial disparity in drug sentencing, the effects of mandatory sentencing, and the privatization of correctional facilities. Seeing the disparity between how criminal justice reforms are perceived and how they are enacted into law, I became interested in learning more.

Since coming to law school, I have furthered my interest in criminal justice by joining Prison Access Working Group, through which I had the opportunity to visit the Edna Mahon State Prison in New Jersey.

In addition, I have gained practical courtroom experience as a member of the Courtroom Advocates Project at CLS. Through CAP, I have appeared before a judge while assisting a victim of domestic violence to obtain an Order of Protection. I have also improved my research and writing skills through my law school classes and moot court.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to pursue my interest in criminal law through an internship with your office this summer. Enclosed please find my resume, which highlights my experience and skills. I will forward my transcript and legal writing sample under a separate cover when they become available. Thank you for your consideration of my application. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,
Vladimir Eleryk

[10] Tip: Do not directly copy this introductory paragraph; write an opening that will suit your own individual needs.

Sample 1L Cover Letter

99 West 89th Street, #3
New York, NY 10026
(917) 777-7878

December 4, 2023

Dawn Frank, Esq.
Legal Aid Services of Oregon
1827 NE 44th Avenue, Ste. 230
Portland, OR 97213

Dear Ms. Frank:

I am a first-year student at Columbia Law School, and I am interested in working for your office this summer. I am a member of the Native American Law Student Association and am looking to work with lawyers providing legal services to low-income Native Americans and tribes. As a recipient of Columbia's summer funding, I can accept an unpaid internship.

I first became aware of the plight of Native Americans in college, when I spent a summer at the Pascua Yaqui Indian Reservation in Tucson, AZ, helping rebuild homes. In addition to observing the abject poverty of the residents, I spent time at the legal services center, talking to the prosecutor about the conflicts between federal law and tribal law. I also spent time learning about the history of the tribe and their relocation by the U.S. government. Part of my motivation for coming to law school was to help Native Americans, or other Americans in similarly dire situations, and working with Legal Aid Services of Oregon would allow me to do so.

While at Columbia, I have begun to participate in NNALSA (National Native American Law Students Association) Moot Court Competition. This semester I am researching and writing a brief on the issue of Indian mineral rights. Next semester I will present my arguments orally in the Moot Court competition. I plan to participate in a pro bono project next semester (during spring break) which will be targeting health and housing issues of low-income individuals. I will be doing intake interviews and providing referrals to social service agencies and legal clinics in North Dakota, and some of my clients will likely be Native Americans.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to focus on legal issues and advocacy for Native Americans through an internship with your office this summer. Enclosed please find my resume and list of references. I plan to be in Portland over the winter break (December 12-January 5) and am available to speak with you in person about my application.

Sincerely,
Eduardo Mazier
Pronouns: he/him/his

Sample 1L Cover Letter

444 West 114th Street, #44
New York, NY 10024
(212) 555-5544

January 15, 2024

Maria Smith, Internship Coordinator
ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project
125 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004-2400

Dear Ms. Smith:

I write to apply for the ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project summer internship. I am a first-year student at Columbia Law School (Columbia) and plan to pursue a career in health policy. Because my primary area of interest and study is reproductive health, I am particularly interested in the Reproductive Freedom Project. I have received a stipend from Columbia for the summer, so I am able to accept an unpaid position.

I developed an interest in reproductive health and women's rights when I worked as a peer educator for Planned Parenthood of Central Texas. This interest was refined in college, where I studied the physiology and technology of reproduction as a biology major and learned more about the connection between women's health, reproductive rights and development in courses on bioethics and public health. During my senior year, I built upon my science background by conducting research and analysis on "fetal pain" for a seminar on Reproduction and the Law. While at law school, I have done research on women's health for the Women's Link Worldwide Project. This coming semester, I will expand my understanding of the legal issues in reproductive and women's rights through participating in a forum with Columbia's Health Law Society.[11]

In addition to my background in reproductive health policy and law, I have spent three summers interning with a law firm in Austin, Texas. As a litigation department assistant at Brown McCarroll, I worked with attorneys and legal assistants to prepare discovery materials and develop expert witness testimony for trial. My familiarity with the mechanics of litigation has been enhanced through two years of participation in mock trial competitions at the regional and national levels.

I would be delighted to have an opportunity to apply my background in reproductive policy and litigation to help protect reproductive rights through the ACLU summer internship. I have enclosed a copy of my resume for your review. Thank you in advance for your consideration of my application.

Sincerely
Amy R. Chiu

[11] Tip: You are in control of your experience. Seek opportunities to develop skills relevant to jobs of interest to you. A commitment to a specific future project is almost as good as experience, particularly for a 1L.

Sample 1L Cover Letter

Abel Assefa Zenawi
874 W. 119th St., #10B
New York, NY 10027
az5412@columbia.edu
301-267-8514

December 5, 2023

Deepa Bijpuria, Immigration Staff Attorney
Tahirih Justice Center
201 N. Charles St., Ste. 920
Baltimore [12], MD 21201

Dear Ms. Bijpuria:

I am a first-year student at Columbia Law School seeking a summer 2024 internship with your organization. As a graduate of University of Maryland, I would be grateful for the opportunity to return to Maryland this summer and participate in the work of Tahirih Justice Center. As an African immigrant, I truly understand and believe in your mission of protecting immigrant women and girls from violence, and I would be honored to use my legal training for this goal. I have received funding from Columbia for the summer and therefore can accept an unpaid internship.

As both an immigrant from a war-torn region in Africa[13], and as an anthropology student studying the effects of regional strife on Africa's youth, I have become aware of the social and economic effects that violence can have on individuals. Although my experience has focused on the impacts of war, rather than gender-based violence, my knowledge and commitment to eradicating the effects of violence would serve me well at your organization. While at Columbia, I intend to continue to focus on the issue of violence. I have joined the African Law Students Association and am organizing a panel of guest speakers next semester, focusing on legal tools to eradicate the effects of violence on the individual. I also look forward to taking classes such as African Human Rights Systems in Comparative Perspective, Anthropology and the Law, Gender Justice and various health law classes. I also plan to participate in Columbia's

[12] Tip: 1Ls should try to be geographically flexible and apply to organizations that are in cities/regions that are less popular with Columbia Law students, such as Baltimore in this case. If you have a personal connection to the region, make sure to mention it in your letter, as that will strengthen your application.

[13] Tip: Although it can be helpful to show familiarity with the issues the organization works on, you need to be careful how much information you provide. Abel fled from a war-torn region and immigrated to the U.S. Although gender violence was not something he was fleeing from, he has seen firsthand the effects of violence on women, and has experienced firsthand the struggles of assimilating in the U.S. Although some employers may think this helps his application, other employers may worry that he is not objective and would be too emotionally impacted by helping clients. Therefore, he was careful in this letter to mention his immigration status but not delve into detail.

Immigration Defense Externship and possibly an externship on the prosecution of domestic violence crimes.[14]

My experiences have provided me with skills that would serve me well as an intern at Tahirih Justice Center. Despite having to work for four years to pay for my tuition and housing, I was able to maintain a high GPA at University of Maryland and was accepted into the Anthropology Honors Program. While pursuing my honors degree, I honed my research and writing skills through writing my thesis, The Economic and Social Ramifications of Conflict on Youth in War-Torn Africa. Through my work at the Giant Supermarket and Walgreens, I proved to be a dependable employee and was recognized for my hard work and exemplary customer service. These experiences also enabled me to learn to interact with people with different needs and would help me with client intake at your organization. Additionally, my cultural background and language skills would be an asset if I had the opportunity to work with African immigrant clients. Finally, while working as a research assistant, I led outreach efforts to Native American populations, which trained me well for any outreach I would need to perform as a summer intern with Tahirih Justice Center.

I have enclosed my resume for your review and would appreciate the chance to speak with you further about my application. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Abel Assefa Zenawi

[14] Tip: Even if you do not have directly relevant experience, you can still write a good cover letter. Think about how your experiences are relevant to the job. Do not highlight your lack of experience; instead, draw parallels to other experiences you have had, or identify similarities. You can also talk about things you plan to do in the future. Abel has no previous legal experience and had to work to support himself so never did any internships. He has never done work with women immigrants or on gender violence/domestic violence issues. He has never worked with legal clients, or done advocacy or policy work, yet he does not dwell on how he is NOT a good fit with the organization; rather he focuses on how his experience would translate to being helpful for this office.

Sample 1L Cover Letter[15]

205 West 103rd Street, Apt. 14K
New York, NY 10027
julia.thomas@law.columbia.edu

December 15, 2023

Deborah Katz, Internship Coordinator
Lenox Hill Neighborhood House
331 East 70th Street
New York, NY 10021

Dear Ms. Katz:

I am a first-year student at Columbia Law School, and I am interested in working for your office this summer. I plan to pursue a career in direct legal services and am committed to the mission of Lenox Hill Neighborhood House to provide legal services using an interdisciplinary and holistic approach. As a recipient of Columbia's summer funding, I can accept an unpaid internship.

I first became interested in providing legal services to low-income families and other vulnerable populations during an Office of Public Interest/Public Service Law and Careers panel at Columbia focused on careers in legal services. During the panel, I had the opportunity to hear from practitioners from various legal services organizations, including staff attorney Louis Hansen from your organization. I was inspired to hear about the work these attorneys do to help people in the community who would not otherwise have access to quality advocates. I was particularly struck by the way in which Lenox Hill Neighborhood House works with families to provide services in all aspects of their lives, including health and education.

In addition to my strong commitment to providing legal services to those who most need assistance, through my work as a writer and editor of *The Hoya* daily newspaper at Georgetown, I gained extensive experience interacting with diverse populations through the many interviews I conducted in the DC area. As part of the newspaper, I enjoyed working on a team, both as a writer and later in a supervisory role as an editor. While at Columbia, I have honed my research and writing skills through my classes and by participating in moot court. I am hoping to develop my interest in legal services further by participating in Columbia's Bronx Defenders Holistic Defense Externship in the fall.

I would be honored to have the opportunity to contribute to the important work of Lenox Hill Neighborhood House this summer. Enclosed please find my resume. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Julia Thomas

[15] Even if you have no prior experience working in the field in which you are applying for the summer, do not be intimidated. You can still show your interest in and commitment to the work, as well as highlight the skills you'll bring to the job, as this student does.

Sample 2L Cover Letter

55-01 31st Ave., Apt. 3D
Woodside, NY 11377
212-993-5465

October 2, 2023

John Kim
Advancement Project – California Programs Office
1910 W. Sunset Blvd., Ste. 500
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Dear Mr. Kim:

I am a second-year dual degree student (law and social work) at Columbia University. I am writing to express my interest in working at the Advancement Project this upcoming summer. I learned about the Advancement Project through a panel on "Nontraditional and Holistic Approaches to Legal Change," which was sponsored by Columbia Law School's Office of Public Interest/Public Service Law and Careers office. I would be honored to help further the Advancement Project's agenda of innovative social change by interning at your office this summer.

I am committed to using a broad set of tools to effect legal change. Thus far, I have explored both impact litigation and community organizing as a means of promoting justice. More specifically, at the Migrant Farmworker Justice Project, I worked with a small group of attorneys challenging labor abuses through large class action suits in federal court. This strategy produced definite results for the farmworkers, yet the entire process seemed disempowering since the individual voices of the farmworkers were not heard. In contrast, as a volunteer at the Workplace Project last year, I saw immigrant workers being empowered to find creative solutions to their problems through community organizing. However, these alternative pressure tactics were often the workers' only available option, and there were many instances in which I thought a lawsuit might have been more powerful to effect long-lasting change. As someone interested in making the law accessible to those most affected by its shortcomings and abuse, I would like to explore the ways in which lawyers can work with communities and still achieve large-scale impact through the law.

I believe my skill set would serve me well at the Advancement Project. Apart from my strong policy background and legal research, writing, and analytical skills, I bring my social work training, and experience working in direct client services. As a family therapist, I have sharpened my interviewing and counseling skills. As an organizer, I have gained practical experience identifying key concerns within a community and mobilizing community resources around those issues. Finally, as someone who is both bilingual and bicultural, I hope to be an asset to your work within the Latino community and immigrant communities in California.

Enclosed please find a detailed resume highlighting my experience and education. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you further about my interest in the Advancement Project. Thank you, in advance, for your time.

Sincerely,
Angelica Vega

Sample 3L Cover Letter

333 West 113th Street
New York, NY 10027
Mia.Johnson@law.columbia.edu
212-555-1212

September 2, 2023

Director, Administration Management and HR Division[16]
Legal Honors Program
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of General Counsel, Room 10245
451 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20410

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a third-year student at Columbia Law School. I write to express my interest in joining the Legal Honors Program at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) next year. I am deeply committed to increasing access to affordable housing and promoting healthy, safe, and prosperous communities. I would be honored to pursue this commitment at HUD.

My diverse professional and academic experiences have fueled my interest in housing policy and my strong interest in joining HUD's Legal Honors Program. As a paralegal for the Alabama Law Center for the Homeless, I represented clients seeking public housing, appealing denials, facing eviction, and navigating the Hope VI relocation process. I later joined the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities and Housing to gain a state policy perspective on the issues HUD works to address. My work as a paralegal at O'Melveny & Myers exposed me to the investor and developer side of housing policy and confirmed my resolve to pursue housing law from a different perspective. Finally, while in law school, I have pursued course work in housing, community development policy, land use law, and administrative law to explore the field of law and policy I would encounter at HUD.

In addition to fostering my passion for housing work, my experiences have given me the legal and policy skills to effectively contribute to the work of HUD. Through my Federal Court Clerk Externship at the SDNY, I developed my research and writing skills and learned to recognize effective advocacy through courtroom observation and analysis. As an editor for the *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems*, I developed my skills as an effective researcher and efficient editor. Through my work on policy matters for the Office of Congressman John Lewis and the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities and Housing, I have experience drafting legislation, navigating the legislative process, and evaluating proposed legislative reform.

My experiences before and during law school have given me a passion for housing and community development as well as the technical skills to contribute to HUD's important work. I sincerely appreciate your consideration of my Legal Honors Program application. I hope to have the opportunity to speak with you further.

Sincerely,
Mia Johnson

[16] Tip: If a job posting specifies that applications be sent to a specific address (as in this instance with no name) do not use the name of the individual who may be reviewing your application since you must always remember to follow the directions specified in the job posting.

Sample Graduate Cover Letter

April 4, 2024

Amy Carroll, Deputy Director
Center for Popular Democracy
133 St. James Place
Brooklyn, NY 11238

Dear Ms. Carroll:

I write to express great interest in the Staff Attorney position with the Center for Popular Democracy. Throughout my career, I have worked to defend the civil rights of marginalized communities, including immigrants, people of color, and low-wage workers who face a host of rights violations at the hands of people in positions of power. As an immigrant and committed public interest advocate, I deeply appreciate CPD's passionate and cutting-edge agenda to collaborate with community-based organizations and assist community members in setting advocacy priorities, pursuing policy proposals, and building power within the community to propel change for the long term.

Both during and since graduating law school, I have been committed to using the law as an instrument of social change and helping give a voice to individuals outmatched by the system. During my Skadden Fellowship with the ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project, I observed first-hand how the very existence of immigrant communities, particularly workers, is increasingly under siege in this country. When Arizona passed SB 1070, I participated in a large coalition of advocacy organizations that helped mobilize the community's opposition to the law and filed suit to prevent the law from going into effect. Likewise, in response to the increasing reliance on immigration detainers, I investigated and helped initiate a lawsuit challenging the illegal detention of a naturalized mother of three with the goal of exposing the racial profiling and due process violations attendant to detainer practice. While at the Legal Aid Society, when resource constraints prevented others from doing so, I took on the case of a hardworking grandmother and widow who had become ensnared in the web of immigrant detention. I worked with her daughters, friends, and former employer to draft affidavits and assemble evidence for a parole petition, which, despite all odds, succeeded in convincing immigration authorities to release her.

Working on these and other cases, I honed important advocacy skills that would serve me well as a Staff Attorney at the CPD. I have extensive experience communicating with different audiences, from talking with clients who are experiencing profound and at times deeply personal challenges, to community advocates and co-counsel in collaborative campaigns. My fellowship required that I delve into new topics quickly and efficiently and help devise legal and communications strategies on how to proceed. In all my positions, I have been tasked with a great deal of writing, such as drafting district and appellate court briefs and memoranda analyzing clients' legal and factual questions. I have worked on legislative advocacy as well, including providing a briefing to Congressional staffers in the wake of Republican House members' introduction of anti-immigrant legislation.

I believe the CPD's objectives of helping build community-based infrastructure, develop leadership at the grassroots level, and create momentum for community-driven progressive change are well-calibrated, critical interventions in which I would be honored to assist. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sharma Phuyal

Sample Graduate Cover Letter

62 West 72nd Street
New York, NY 10111
(718) 890-5678

August 1, 2023

Fred Sizer, Esq.
Federal Trade Commission Bureau of Competition
601 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Mr. Sizer:

I am a 2021 graduate of Columbia Law School seeking an entry-level position with the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Competition for this upcoming fall. Immediately following law school, I clerked for the Honorable Robert N. Chatigny at the District of Connecticut. I am currently clerking for the Honorable John M. Walker, Jr., on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. Once my clerkship has concluded, I cannot think of a better place to begin my career than the Federal Trade Commission. The Commission's work in regulating major industries like healthcare and energy has a tremendous effect on the everyday lives of Americans. The Commission considers complex and cutting-edge legal issues—issues I have encountered in academic and professional settings and that are meaningful to me.

I believe my interests and experience make me an excellent fit for the Bureau of Competition. I came to law school with a strong desire to further the public interest. Antitrust enforcement would allow me to do so while engaging with fascinating legal issues. Since entering law school, I have found that I most enjoy untangling complicated legal puzzles. I took an antitrust course during my third year and immediately recognized it as a field that solved important social problems by understanding and regulating complex real-world interactions—exactly what I was looking for. I dove into the class and received an A on the final exam.

My legal skills are well suited to the Bureau's practice. I believe my academic record reflects an ability to understand and apply new legal concepts. I also have strong research and writing skills. In law school, I reviewed and edited academic articles as an editor on *Columbia Law Review*. Additionally, I wrote and published a student note on a technical aspect of campaign finance regulation. While clerking on the district court, I drafted numerous memos, orders, and opinions. I saw a tremendous amount of legal writing and learned what was effective and what was not. As an appeals court clerk, I draft bench memos and opinions on novel legal issues. These experiences have taught me to convey complex legal ideas clearly and accurately, a skill that would be valuable in a field as intricate as antitrust enforcement.

I would be honored to join the Bureau of Competition this fall. I have attached a resume, transcript, writing sample, and list of references. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like more information.

Sincerely,
Yula Virks

Sample Graduate Cover Letter

201 Avenue A, Apt. 4
New York, NY 12111
miao.tian@gmail.com
212-852-7413

June 15, 2023

Jennifer Rodriguez
Deputy Managing Attorney
The Legal Aid Society, Juvenile Rights Practice
199 Water Street
New York, NY 10038

Dear Ms. Rodriguez:

I am writing to express my interest in a position as a Staff Attorney at the Legal Aid Society. Since graduating from Columbia Law School in 2018, I have worked as a litigator at the law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP ("Paul Weiss"). In private practice, I have undertaken a number of projects (some in conjunction with your organization) involving families in the legal system and have acquired broad litigation experience, which has solidified my intent to transition into a career focused on protecting and asserting the rights of children and families.

As you can see from my enclosed resume, I have long pursued opportunities to make a positive impact on the lives of families. Before law school, I worked briefly in the entertainment industry and then elected to attend law school out of a desire for a career in which I would directly impact individuals' lives and the public good. While attending Columbia Law School, I represented children in foster care in permanency and immigration hearings, in connection with the Columbia Child Advocacy Clinic. During these experiences, I became acutely aware of the profound complexity of the personal and systemic factors that affect families, and the enormous opportunities for committed advocates to improve outcomes for families and children involved with the courts and public agencies.

At Paul Weiss, I have taken primary responsibility for a range of matters touching on family law and child welfare. I researched and wrote memos on children's rights for the Children's Rights Litigation Committee of the ABA. As mentioned, I have also had the opportunity to serve as counsel for children in custody and visitation issues in collaboration with the Legal Aid Society, which provided further insights into the practical challenges and potential for injustice faced by parents in the legal system. I also represented a child in foster care, providing advocacy in court and making his voice heard by the agencies charged with his care. My practice has also enabled me to acquire crucial civil litigation, project management, and research and writing skills, while exploring a variety of substantive practice areas.

While I have been fortunate to have had varied and challenging experiences in my legal practice, I now seek to focus my work exclusively on child advocacy. I believe that my commitment to asserting the rights of children and families, combined with my broad experiences and skills, would serve me well at the Legal Aid Society. Thank you in advance for your time, and I look forward to the opportunity to speak with you.

Sincerely,
Miao Tian

Resume and Cover Letter Pairings

These pairings are included to illustrate how resumes and cover letters work together. They are two different documents that TOGETHER provide a persuasive narrative.

- Abel Assefa Zenawi (1L)
- Jasmine Harris (Recent Graduate)
- Stephanie Montenegro (Recent Graduate) (Note: This pairing is an example of a graduate who has a gap in work experience due to leave.)

Sample: 1L Pairing[17]

874 West 119th Street, #10B
New York, NY 10027
az5412@columbia.edu, 301-267-8514

December 5, 2020

Deepa Bijpuria, Immigration Staff Attorney
Tahirih Justice Center
201 North Charles Street, Ste. 920
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Ms. Bijpuria:

I am a first-year student at Columbia Law School seeking a summer 2021 internship with your organization. As a graduate of University of Maryland, I am hoping to return to Maryland this summer and participate in the work of Tahirih Justice Center. As an African immigrant, I truly understand and believe in your mission of protecting immigrant women and girls from violence, and I would be honored to use my legal training for this goal. I have received funding from Columbia for the summer and therefore can accept an unpaid internship.

As both an immigrant from a war-torn region in Africa, and as an anthropology student studying the effects of regional strife on Africa's youth, I have become aware of the social and economic effects that violence can have on individuals. Although my experience has focused on the impacts of war, rather than gender-based violence, my knowledge and commitment to eradicating the effects of violence would serve me well at your organization. While at Columbia, I intend to continue to focus on the issue of violence. I have joined the African Law Students Association and am organizing a panel of guest speakers next semester, focusing on legal tools to eradicate the effects of violence on the individual. I also look forward to taking classes such as African Human Rights Systems in Comparative Perspective, Anthropology and the Law, Gender Justice and various health law classes. I also plan to participate in Columbia's Immigration Defense Externship and possibly an externship on the prosecution of domestic violence crimes.

My experiences have provided me with skills that would serve me well as an intern at Tahirih Justice Center. Despite having to work for four years to pay for my tuition and housing, I was able to maintain a high GPA at University of Maryland and was accepted into the Anthropology Honors Program. While pursuing my honors degree, I honed my research and writing skills through writing my thesis, The Economic and Social Ramifications of Conflict on Youth in War-Torn Africa. Through my work at the Giant Supermarket and Walgreens, I proved to be a dependable employee and was recognized for my hard work and exemplary customer service. These experiences also enabled me to learn to interact with people with different needs and would help me with client intake at your organization. Additionally, my cultural background and language skills would be an asset if I had the opportunity to work with African immigrant clients. Finally, while working as a research assistant, I led outreach efforts to Native American populations, which trained me well for any outreach I would need to perform as a summer intern with Tahirih Justice Center.

I have enclosed my resume for your review and would appreciate the chance to speak with you further about my application. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Abel Assefa Zenawi

[17] An annotated version of this cover letter appears earlier in this toolkit.

ABEL ASSEFA ZENAWI

874 West 119th Street, #10B, New York, NY 10027
301-267-8514 • az5412@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL, New York, NY
J.D., expected May 2023
Activities: African Law Students Association

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, College Park, MD
B.A., with honors, received May 2020
Major: Anthropology
Activities: Anthropology Student Association
Semester Abroad in Jamaica
Thesis: *The Economic and Social Ramifications of Conflict on Youth in War-Torn Africa*

EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND College Park, MD
Department of Anthropology, Research Assistant June 2020–Aug. 2020
Worked remotely to research topics pertaining to indigenous people's rights in Argentina for Dr. Judith Freidenberg. Led remote outreach efforts to Native American communities to develop new anthropological studies program.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND College Park, MD
Admissions Assistant Sept. 2019–May 2020
Assisted staff in Office of Undergraduate Admissions with preparations for incoming freshman activities. Edited admissions materials for upcoming admissions cycle.

GIANT SUPERMARKET[18] Silver Spring, MD
Salesclerk June 2018–Aug. 2019
Assisted customers with grocery checkout and bagging. Led efforts to educate management about African cuisine in effort to expand offerings in international ingredient aisle.

WALGREENS College Park, MD
Stockroom Clerk Aug. 2016–May 2018
Stocked store shelves and organized excess inventory in stockroom.

LANGUAGE Amharic, Oromo (fluent)

[18] This 1L included his work experience at Giant Supermarket and Walgreens on his resume to reference skills he developed at these jobs, demonstrate that he had to work to support himself, and explain why he did not have any internships. As he starts gaining legal experience, he will take this off his resume.

Sample: Recent Graduate Pairing

Jasmine Harris
500 Park Avenue, #315 | Newark, NJ 07103
jasharris@gmail.com | (973) 306-5603

American Civil Liberties Union
125 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004

July 21, 2020

Dear Hiring Manager:

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the Staff Attorney position with the ACLU's Reproductive Freedom Project. I have a strong commitment to a career fighting for women's rights and would welcome the opportunity to work for the ACLU at the end of my U.S. District Court clerkship in early September.

Throughout my career, I have sought opportunities to fight for civil rights, so I was excited to see this position posted on the national ACLU website. During law school, I specifically sought opportunities to work on women's rights and related intersectional issues. I served on the *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*, reviewing and editing student notes on various gender-related topics. As a research assistant to Professor Kent Greenawalt, I conducted research for his article on the *Hobby Lobby* decision, among other constitutional interpretation topics. I spent a week volunteering with the CARA Pro Bono Project at the family detention center in Dilley, Texas, where I conducted Spanish intake interviews to assist women and children seeking asylum and advocated for their release from detention. I worked full-time in the Educational Opportunities Section at the Department of Justice one semester, focusing on gender and religious discrimination, desegregation litigation, and ESL services access. My work at DOJ drew on all my prior experience and allowed me to integrate my desires to help individuals and bring about systemic change.

I pursued impact litigation opportunities while working at Jenner & Block. Notably, I worked closely on *J.H. v. Dallas*, a case with the ACLU of Pennsylvania challenging the unlawful detention of and inadequate mental health treatment for individuals incompetent to stand trial. Based on my work developing the case and identifying expert witnesses as a summer associate, the ACLU of Pennsylvania hired me to continue working on the case for the remainder of the summer. When I returned to the firm after graduation, I worked as lead associate on the case through status monitoring, further court proceedings, and negotiating a revised settlement agreement.

Prior to law school, I developed skills in legislative and regulatory advocacy that would also be useful when working with legislative, communications, and advocacy staff members on related projects. In Senator Lautenberg's DC office, I analyzed bills for potential sponsorship and conducted research that served as the basis for the Senator's introduction of the Access to Birth Control Act. At the Education Trust, I engaged in legislative and regulatory advocacy and coalition-building across various nonprofit organizations. In these positions, I gained skills needed to effect large-scale reforms via the legislative process and advocacy campaigns.

I am committed to a career fighting for reproductive freedom and would greatly appreciate the opportunity to continue this work with the ACLU. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Jasmine Harris

JASMINE HARRIS

500 Park Avenue, #315 | Newark, NJ 07103
jasharris@gmail.com | (973) 306-5603

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY
J.D., received May 2018
Honors: Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar
Activities: *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*, Notes Editor
Empowering Women of Color, 3L Board Member
Education Law and Policy Society, Pro Bono Chair, 2016-2017
Research Assistant, Professor Kent Greenawalt, Fall 2018
Teaching Assistant for Public Sector Structural Reform in K-12 Education, Spring 2018
CARA Family Detention Pro Bono Project, Dilley, TX, August 2017

George Washington University, Washington, DC
B.A., *magna cum laude*, received May 2014
Major: Government
Activities: *The Hatchet*, Writer and Staff Editor
Study Abroad: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spring 2013

EXPERIENCE

United States District Court for New Jersey, The Honorable Esther Salas, Newark, NJ
Judicial Clerk Fall 2019-Present

Jenner & Block, LLP, Washington, DC
Associate Fall 2018-Summer 2019
Summer Associate Summer 2017
Drafted motion for preliminary injunction and brief in support on behalf of class members in forensic mental health treatment civil rights case; wrote brief for appeal of motion to intervene as of right on behalf of students defending affirmative action policies in the First Circuit. Researched and drafted reports on potential judicial nominees. Acted as lead associate in enforcement phase of prison conditions case; developed strategy for returning to court; participated in settlement negotiations and status monitoring; drafted settlement agreement. Drafted discovery correspondence and requests. Conducted research on substantive legal issues in civil rights and intellectual property law.

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Washington, DC
Educational Opportunities Section Intern Fall 2017
Wrote memoranda on topics including Title VI law and regulations and copyright law. Reviewed citizen reports of racial disparities and analyzed discipline data for evidence of disparity.

ACLU of Pennsylvania, remote from Arlington, VA
Legal Intern Summer 2017
Conducted legal research and drafted memoranda on topics in mental health, jails, and disabilities law. Drafted portions of brief in pending school reform case.

Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, Washington, DC
Summer Intern Summer 2016
Researched and drafted memoranda on issues related to predatory lending and fair housing.

The Education Trust, Washington, DC
Legislative Affairs Assistant; Legislative Affairs Intern Winter 2014-Summer 2015
Researched and tracked education legislation. Prepared summary memoranda on education topics. Managed partnership outreach & relationships for the "I AM NOT A LOAN" campaign. Summarized legislative and judicial activity for organization websites.

Office of U.S. Senator Frank R. Lautenberg, Washington, DC
Health and Education Policy Intern Summer 2013-Fall 2013
Drafted 3-5 memoranda per week on health and education policy topics. Drafted 5-10 constituent responses per week. Answered constituent calls, took comments, and explained ongoing policy work in the Senate.

Intern, Newark NJ Summers 2011, 2012
Resolved nearly 300 constituent cases. Conducted research projects in health, business, and education.

MEMBERSHIPS
New Jersey State Bar, 2018; District of Columbia Bar

LANGUAGES
Spanish (proficient)

Sample: Recent Graduate Pairing

202 Main Street, Apt. 14
Jersey City, NJ 07302
smm123@columbia.edu

January 16, 2024

The Civil Rights Law Firm, LLP
77 Madison Avenue, Suite 2B
New York, NY 10016

Dear Hiring Manager:

I write to express my interest in an associate position at the Civil Rights Law Firm, LLP ("CRLF"). My most recent position as the Fellow for Racial Justice at the Legal Aid Society ("LAS") in the Special Litigation Unit has allowed me to deeply engage in public interest litigation. At the conclusion of my fellowship, I intend to work at a firm, like CRLF, where I can continue utilizing my excellent litigation skills to defend the civil rights of marginalized communities.

As you can see from my enclosed resume, I share CRLF's commitment to civil rights work. Even in private practice at White & Case, LLP, my extensive pro bono docket allowed me to work on public interest cases, like an asylum case on behalf of a domestic violence victim and an appeal in New York State Court to aid a struggling non-profit organization. These experiences led me to my current position, where I now focus entirely on zealously representing low-income New Yorkers in class action and impact litigation cases. For example, my team represents a class of drivers in a lawsuit against the New York Taxi and Limousine Commission for unconstitutionally targeting racial minorities in their undercover street hail operations. These cases have only increased my dedication to public interest work, and this passion would greatly benefit me at a public interest law firm.

My litigation experience, which has allowed me to hone my writing, research, and communication skills, will also be an asset to CRLF. At my clerkship in New Jersey, I drafted numerous orders and opinions and witnessed a range of legal advocacy that helped me discern the most effective ways to communicate complicated legal issues. After a break from practice due to health concerns from 2020 to 2022, my clerkship gave me the opportunity to dive back into litigation while learning a tremendous amount about presenting cases in federal court. LAS has further prepared me to be a litigator as I have researched and written many memoranda and motions, participated fully in discussions on strategy and meetings with opposing counsel, and attended court hearings on behalf of our clients.

I am confident that my passion and distinguished litigation experience make me a perfect fit for an associate role at CRLF. I have attached my resume, law school transcript, and writing sample. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like more information.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Montenegro

STEPHANIE MONTENEGRO

202 Main Street, Apt. 14, Jersey City, NJ 07302 • smm123@columbia.edu • (202) 228-2297

EDUCATION

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, New York, NY
J.D., received May 2019
Honors: Stone Scholar 2017-2018 (honors)
Activities: *Columbia Human Rights Law Review & Jailhouse Lawyers Manual*, Operations Director Research Assistant for Professor David Pozen
If/When/How, Events Coordinator and Communications Chair
Note: *Intersectional Employment Discrimination: The Potential Cooperation of Title VII and the ADEA*

THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, Ewing, NJ
B.A., *magna cum laude*, in Political Science, minor in Spanish, received May 2016
Activities: Phi Beta Kappa
TCNJ Society for Parliamentary Debate, Vice President of Operations
Theses: (1) *Welfare Reforms and Gender Equality*
(2) *African Americans and Financial Crashes*

EXPERIENCE

LEGAL AID SOCIETY SPECIAL LITIGATION UNIT New York, NY
Justice Fellow Mar. 2023 – Present
Initiated class action and impact litigation to create systemic change for vulnerable New Yorkers. Drafted and researched complaints and motions for federal and state courts including an appeal to the Second Circuit. Strategized with lead attorneys to plan litigation and participated in discovery meetings with opposing counsel. Scheduled to participate in upcoming oral arguments in the Eastern District of New York.

UNITED STATES, DISTRICT COURT OF NEW JERSEY Newark, NJ
Judicial Law Clerk Aug. 2022 – Dec. 2022
Drafted opinions and conducted research on topics in civil and criminal law. Developed case theories in partnership with the Judge. Prepared the Judge for hearings by writing oral argument outlines and observed the federal judicial process. Managed two interns and trained incoming clerks as the Head Clerk.

WHITE & CASE, LLP New York, NY
Litigation Associate Sep. 2019 – Aug. 2022
Summer Associate Summer 2018
Drafted legal documents including two pro bono appeals for the Supreme Court of the State of New York Appellate Division, Second Department. Honed research skills through work with legal databases to aid in litigation. Attended court hearings and client interviews to collect case information. Received award for pro bono work. Medical leave, Aug. 2020- Jul. 2022.

SQUIRE PATTON BOGGS CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT New York, NY
Legal Extern at Columbia Law School Aug. – Dec. 2018
Gained experience in post-conviction relief and general appellate litigation through class discussion, readings, and fieldwork on present cases under the supervision of lead attorneys. Fieldwork included research of case law and social science articles, writing memos and sections of an appellate brief, and assisting in creating a parole packet.

BAR ADMISSIONS

Admitted in New York State, Southern District of New York, and Eastern District of New York

Putting Together the Application

Generally, an application for an internship or postgraduate position will include a resume and cover letter unless you are responding to a specific job announcement that indicates otherwise. Some employers may ask for a writing sample or reference list.

If the employer says to apply via email, save your resume and cover letter as PDF files and then attach them to a short email that states your intention to apply for a position. Do not use your email text for your cover letter; it should be a separate attachment.

Sample Application Email

To: Jose Rivera
Subject: Application for Summer Internship

Dear Mr. Rivera:

Enclosed please find my application for a summer internship with Montana Legal Services Association. I have attached my resume and cover letter. Please let me know if you would like me to provide a reference list or writing sample.

I would welcome the opportunity to intern with you this summer, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,
Marty Plum

Attachment Checklist

Employers may ask for a transcript, references, or a writing sample. Provide them *only if requested*.

Transcripts

- ❑ Unofficial transcripts (which usually suffice) are available on LawNet.
- ❑ If the employer requests an official transcript, obtain one from the university's Office of the Registrar.
- ❑ If you do not yet have a transcript with grades, note in your cover letter that you will forward it once grades become available.

References

- ❑ Before you send a list to employers, make sure these contacts are willing to serve as (and will be good) references.
- ❑ Include a mix of employers who know your work, including summer employers and pro bono supervisors, and law school professors or, for 1Ls, legal writing instructors, who know you.
- ❑ Help your references prepare. Provide them with your resume. In writing, remind them of the work you did for them. Include key points for them to highlight.
- ❑ Include two to four references on your list. Format the document like our sample. Your contact information should appear at the top of the page. The formatting should match your resume.
- ❑ If you need recommendation letters, provide your recommenders with clear instructions on where and when to send their letter. Give plenty of lead time! References may ask you to draft a letter for them to edit. You should agree to do it.

Writing Sample

- ❑ The sample should be five to ten pages unless otherwise requested, ideally on a topic of interest the employer.
- ❑ Legal writing for law school or a job (memo, moot court brief, etc.) is almost always preferable. Choose something that shows your best writing.
- ❑ The writing sample must be your own and should not have been heavily edited by others. Be sure NOT to submit a sample containing comments or edits. (This really happens!)
- ❑ Attach a cover sheet (see template) explaining the sample. Include a short description of the case, question, or assignment the sample was for. If it is an excerpt, note this on the cover sheet, and make sure it can stand alone. Your contact information should appear at the top of the cover sheet, and the formatting should your resume.
- ❑ If your sample is from a job, get the employer's permission and redact confidential information.
- ❑ Make sure that your writing is clear and persuasive and that citations are correct. NO TYPOS!
- ❑ Be ready to discuss your writing sample during the interview.

Sample Attachment: References

KATHERINE DODD
554 West 116th Street, #30A, New York, NY 10027
(917) 521-3691 | sja1234@columbia.edu

REFERENCES

Catherine Warren — **Supervisor during 2020 internship**
Intern Coordinator
Advocates for Children
8844 Broadway
New York, NY 28078
(212) 555-7777
catherine.warren@AFC.org

Dr. C. Maurice Balik — **Academic and thesis adviser**
Director of Undergraduate Programs
School of Study
State University, Box 7907
Hopper, IL 27695
(584) 515-2222
balik@sssu.edu

Andreas Valej — **Legal writing section instructor**
Writing Instructor
Columbia University School of Law
435 West 116th Street
New York, NY 10027
(347) 555-8888
andreas.valej@law.columbia.edu

Sample Attachment: Writing Samples

Sample 1

Madison Johnson
33 West 112th Street, #2E, New York, NY 10027
madison.johnson@columbia.edu • (917) 555-5555

The following writing sample is an excerpt from a draft Fifth Circuit response brief that I wrote as a summer intern. The case arose out of an anti-immigrant ordinance passed in the city of Farmers Branch, Texas. The law required proof of lawful immigration status to rent housing in the city. The ACLU prevailed at summary judgment before the District Court on its preemption claim, demonstrating that the law constituted an unconstitutional regulation of immigration that infringed on the federal government's exclusive regulatory authority over immigration matters.

The excerpted portion of the brief presents our argument that, through passage of this law (Ordinance 2952), the city of Farmers Branch is seeking to regulate immigration by controlling who can stay and who must leave the city's borders. In sections not included here, the brief goes on to argue that the law is also conflict-preempted and field-preempted. I will provide the full brief upon request.

Sample 2

Madison Johnson
33 West 112th Street, #2E, New York, NY 10027
madison.johnson@columbia.edu • (917) 555-5555

The following writing sample is a final draft of an office memorandum that I wrote for the Columbia Law School Legal Practice Workshop (LPW) during the fall semester of my first year. LPW is a year-long course that focuses on applied legal skills, including legal research, writing, interviewing, counseling a client, negotiations, and oral advocacy.

The memorandum was an open-universe research assignment in which I evaluated a client's potential liability under New York law.

[If you've made cuts] I have edited the memo for length [and have excluded the fact section/sections related to damages/alternate legal theories/etc.]. The memo in its entirety is available upon request.

The research and writing are entirely my own, though I received feedback from my professor and a classmate during the drafting process.

Following Up

After applying for a summer internship or job, you should follow up in a few weeks to make sure your application was received. In addition to allowing you to re-express your interest in the position, your outreach may prompt the employer to give your application another look or provide information about where they are in the decision-making process.

You can talk to your PI/PS adviser about how to time your follow-up email. In general, you want to give an employer two to three weeks after you send your application (or after the application deadline, if there is one) before you follow up. If you are sending your application for a 1L summer internship after December 1, you may want to wait until after the holidays to follow up. You can send a second follow-up email a few weeks later if needed, but do not send any more after that. (You do not want to harass the employer.)

Sample Follow-up Email

To: Juhu Thukral
Subject: Application for Summer Internship
Dear Ms. Thukral,

I recently submitted my resume and cover letter for the summer internship position at the Center for American Progress. I would like to confirm your receipt of my application materials and inquire as to whether I am still being considered for an internship position.

I am still very interested in interning at your organization. I believe my enthusiasm, research skills, and commitment to eliminating barriers to opportunity in the U.S. would make me an ideal fit for your organization.

If you have any further questions, or would like to schedule an interview, I can be reached at (917) 222-2222 or Milo.Levinson@law.columbia.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,
Milo Levinson

Guide to Public Interest Interviewing

- Preparing for an interview
- How to conduct yourself in the interview
- Common interview questions
- How to follow up, including sample thank you emails
- How to negotiate an offer, including sample emails

Public interest employers give great weight to interviews, especially for 2L internships and postgraduate positions. The purpose of an interview is to determine whether you and the employer are a good match, but it is a *mutual* fact-finding mission. While the employer is assessing if you are a good fit for the job, you are assessing whether it is a good fit for you and your career objectives.

There is no standard format for a public interest interview. It can be one on one (by itself, or with a half- or full day of interviews back-to-back) or a group interview. It can be in person, by phone, or by video. You might have more than one round of interviews (for example, DA's offices may hold three or four rounds for permanent positions). Talking to students and alumni who have interviewed with the employer can give you a sense of what the format might be, but do not be surprised if it differs from what they describe.

Your mission is to "wow" the employer and really sell yourself (without seeming arrogant) as the right person for the job, even though this may feel uncomfortable.

Preparation

➔ Research the Employer

Read the employer's website thoroughly. Familiarize yourself with the mission and review recent cases and press releases. Research the employer on the internet and databases like Lexis/Nexis. Check out their social media. Talk to former interns, professors, or PI/PS staff about the employer. Review intern evaluations of the employer on Symplicity. If you know the interviewer's name, research them too.

➔ Develop Your Narrative

Develop and practice your answers to the following questions:

- *Why this organization?*

- *Why these legal issues?*
- *Why this advocacy approach?*
- *Why these clients/communities?*
- *Why this location?*
- *Why are you a good fit for the job?*
- *How would this job fit with your background, goals, and personality?*

Be thoughtful and reasoned. The more you have thought about your answers, the more confident you will sound. Convince the employer this is your dream job (without sounding cheesy or as if furthering your careers goals is all that you care about).

➔ Practice Sharing Your Narrative

Practice your answer to "Why do you want [this job] at [this organization]" until you are comfortable with your narrative. This, or some variation, is often the first question asked, and being confident in your answer can put you at ease for the rest of your interview.

➔ Stay Abreast of Developments in the Field

Read about current events and advocacy efforts or campaigns related to the employer's work. Prepare a question or two to show that you have considered their impact. (See below for more details).

➔ Know Everything on Your Resume and Cover Letter...

...and be prepared to talk about your experiences in detail. Know your dates of employment and the substance of your work. Be ready to make connections between your previous work and the job you are seeking, especially if it is not readily apparent. Expect to talk about current events or case developments related to the work you did. Be prepared to explain gaps.

If you are transitioning to a new practice area or do not have experience in the relevant field, be ready to explain your interest and draw connections to previous jobs and activities.

➔ Identify Two or Three Facts You Want the Interviewer to Know about You…

And think of ways to incorporate them in your answers or questions.

➔ Prepare Two to Four Questions to Ask the Employer

See Your Questions for the Employer.

➔ Schedule a Mock Interview with the PI/PS Office

These can often be done on short notice, by phone or video if necessary. You can also go over interview questions (see the next section) with friends or on your own. Practice, practice, practice! You do not want to sound too rehearsed, but you want to be confident in your answers.

➔ Prepare Explanations for Any Inappropriate Content...

...that you have not deleted on your online profiles and social media. You can also adjust your privacy settings to prevent your accounts from appearing in an online search.

➔ Become Familiar with the Basic Law in the Employer's Area of Practice

This is especially important for employers whose work focuses on specific statutes or constitutional provisions. Research cases in the employer's area, including any the employer has litigated. This is likely to be more important for permanent jobs than summer ones, but it cannot hurt to be prepared.

➔ If You Are Asked to Provide References…

Alert your references so they expect to be contacted. Always ask your references before you list them on an application and give them the opportunity to decline.

Some employers will ask for references with an application, others will ask after a final interview, and some will ask for them with an application and again after the final interview. If it becomes clear that the employer is going to reach out to your references, follow up with them. Provide details about the job and mention any areas you would like them to highlight. If you are using a reference that you are not in contact with frequently (such as a former employer), it can be helpful to remind them what you worked on.

➔ Obtain Information about the Interview Ahead of Time

It is acceptable to ask about the interview when you are invited so that you have an idea of what to expect (e.g., the number and names of the interviewers or the interview's length). Gather other information ahead of time as well, such as where the interview will take place and how you will get there.

➔ Prepare a Packet of Materials to Bring

Include your resume and cover letter, as well as a writing sample, list of references, and copy of your transcript, if applicable. Many employers will already have a printed copy of your materials, but it is better to bring a packet and not need it, than need one and not have it.

➔ Pick Your Attire Carefully

Business attire is best, even if your interviewer dresses casually. Suits are recommended for job fairs and postgraduate job interviews; dress for summer jobs can be slightly less formal (a blazer and pants, dress, or skirt) but still professional.



The Interview

Logistics

For in-person interviews, arrive at least 10 minutes early. Be polite to everyone, including support staff. Rude interactions can quickly make their way to the hiring director!

Your PI/PS adviser may have insight into how specific employers run their interviews or make hiring decisions. It never hurts to contact us for insider tips.

General Interviewing Tips

- Begin by introducing yourself. Offer a warm greeting and a confident handshake.
- Remember to listen as well as speak.
- Be focused and concise but give complete answers.
- It is okay to pause for a few seconds to prepare your answer.
- Try not to babble, mumble, or fidget.
- Make direct eye contact (with everyone in the room, if it is a group interview).
- Be enthusiastic but professional. Be engaged and interesting.
- Read body language.
- If you do not understand a question, ask for clarification.
- Do not get ruffled if interviewers are silent, rude, or ask hard questions. If they ask illegal or offensive questions, you do not need to answer. Explain that you are not comfortable discussing that that issue and ask, “Is there another question that I can answer?” or “Is there another issue we can discuss?”
- Try to avoid filler words or phrases (like saying “you know” at the end of every sentence) or nervous laughter.
- Weave in important relevant points.
- Give examples from previous experiences.
- Avoid speaking negatively about past work experiences. Describe less-than-ideal experiences in a positive light. For example, instead of saying that you hated doing solo research, explain that you gained valuable experience but learned that you prefer working with clients.
- Some interviewers may be put off by notetaking, while others may not mind. In general, we recommend that you do not take or refer to notes during the interview, but if you need to, you should do so.



Phone Interviews

When interviewing by phone, find a quiet location where no one will interrupt. Avoid rustling paper or making other noises. Test headphones ahead of time. If you do not have a quiet place to interview, reach out to the PI/PS Office and we will help you find a location at the law school.

Try to sound enthusiastic but focused. Instead of body language, read verbal cues. Some students find it helpful to stand during phone interviews to maintain alertness and formality. If it is a group interview, try not to be frustrated if you cannot tell who is asking the question, or if group members have conversations among themselves.

If you want to have notes on hand, make sure you do not read your answers directly from the page—even over the phone, interviewers can tell.



Video Interviews

When interviewing via video platform, make sure that the application is working properly and that your onscreen name is professional. Wear full professional attire. Choose a location that is office-like (or at least not messy) and that anything in view of the camera is appropriate.

Make sure the lighting does not cast shadows on your face. Look at the camera, and do not have other distractions open on your screen. Close programs that might make noise during the interview. Try not to get frustrated or distracted by the time lag or by interviewers' off-screen conversations. Remember that everything you do can be seen on their screen, so general interviewing tips apply.



Need a Quiet Place for an Interview?

Email PIPS@law.columbia.edu and we will help you find space at the Law School. Please provide as much notice as possible.

Note: this email is only monitored during business hours.

Six Common Areas of Questioning

Employer interview styles differ, but public interest employers often cover similar subject areas.

As much as you can, illustrate your answers to the questions below with examples from your experience.

Important: If you have previous legal experience or have worked with clients, maintain confidentiality; use general details, leaving out names and other identifying information.

Throughout the interview, be sure to listen as well as speak.

1) Questions Assessing Your Commitment to the Issue Area

Often the interview will start with questions such as:

- *Why do you want to work here?*
- *Why do you want to work in this office as opposed to other offices that do similar work?*
- *What makes you a qualified candidate?*
- *How are you different from other applicants?*
- *Where do you see yourself in five (or 10) years?*
- *Which of our legal practice areas/areas of advocacy are you most interested in and why?*

These are the hardest questions to answer, but they are usually the most important. To answer well, you need to understand the employer's work and mission. You also need to have thought about what you bring to the table and why you want to work for this employer. You need to be confident and thoughtful but not arrogant.

Practice your answer to "Why do you want [this job] at [this employer]" until you are comfortable. Some version of this question is often the first one asked, and being comfortable with your answer can put you at ease for the rest of the interview.

For interviews with an office of an elected or appointed official (including district attorneys, public defenders, and attorneys general) be sure you know the name of the official. Similarly, if applying for a role that serves an elected official, take the time to learn not only about the official, but also about the elected officials who represent *you*. For example, if interviewing with a U.S. Congressmember, you should know about that member's priorities and about your own congressperson and the issues important to your community. This will demonstrate a passion for politics and knowledge of the field.

Other questions you might be asked (more common in permanent job interviews than those for summer jobs):

- *What do you think is the most pressing issue in our field today [such as international human rights, environment, civil rights, poverty law, etc.], and how would you resolve it?*

- *Do you think we should continue to emphasize our priority issues, or should we revamp our approach?* (Be careful!)
- *We are finding that impact litigation is failing given the current constitution of the courts; what new legal approaches should we adopt to address our issues?*
- *Most of our work is done with diverse communities. How are you prepared to work with clients/partners who are different from you? What do you see as your greatest challenge?*
- *If you could restructure our agency/organization, how would you do it?* (Careful again!)
- If you are interviewing at an organization with a holistic approach, expect questions assessing your commitment to their approach, experience with diverse communities, or interest in doing work that is not traditional lawyer work.
- There may be questions to probe how you feel about controversial topics related to their work. For example, a public defender may ask how you would feel about representing alleged child abusers, or the ACLU may ask how you feel when defense of the First Amendment conflicts with other rights.

2) Questions about Your Resume

Before your interview, think about the story you want to tell through your resume. What have you learned from your previous positions—both what you liked and disliked—that has led you to want the job you are now interviewing for? How has your experience in law school and through extracurriculars informed your interest in this type of work? How does this position fit into your overall career narrative?

Be prepared for questions about the work you did for previous employers or unusual items on your resume. Be ready to answer questions about law school (e.g., extracurricular activities or a clinic experience). The interviewer may ask about developments that happened after you left a previous job, such as the latest on a case you worked on or current events affecting the issue area. Also be prepared to discuss any writing (thesis, note, publication) mentioned on your resume. Be ready to explain gaps in your work chronology or other gaps (such as not participating in any activities in law school). If your resume lacks public interest experience, expect questions about why you are now seeking a public interest job. If you are switching from the private sector, expect questions about that.

The public interest world can be small. If your interviewer mentions someone they know from your prior employer or school, take note! They may be asked about you, regardless of whether you list them as a reference. If you know that person, reach out to let them know about your interview and your job search.

3) Questions Assessing You as a Person

Interviewers do not have much time to get to know you, so they are likely to ask some questions intended to reveal personal qualities. These might include:

- *What do you like most/least about law school?*

- *What is your favorite class?*
- *Who is your hero?*
- *Describe a stressful situation at a job and how you handled it.*
- *Describe your work style. Are you a team player, or do you work best independently?*
- *What is your biggest accomplishment?*
- *What are your strengths/weaknesses?*
- *How do you deal with pressure?*
- *Give an example of your on-the-job creativity.*
- *What would be the biggest challenge you would face if you worked here?*
- *How would a colleague or a friend describe you?*
- *What was the biggest risk you took, and what did you learn from it?*
- Most public interest organizations care less about grades than other employers, but you may be asked "What were your grades this semester?" or, if applicable, "Why did your grades decline?"
- Interviewers may ask, "Where else have you applied?" to assess your commitment to their issues or the consistency of your target employers. Answer but avoid questions about how you rank them by stating that you will not know until you have completed your interview.
- There may also be questions that pose scenarios and ask how you would deal with them (such as conflict with another attorney in the office) or ethical dilemmas.
- There may also be questions about the economic realities of being a social justice lawyer, such as how you feel about making less than in the private sector or having little support staff.



Grad Tip: Talking About Your Current Job

If you are employed, expect questions about why you want to leave your job. Do not be too critical of your current employer or reveal internal matters, such as finances.

4) Questions Assessing Your Legal Mind

The employer also wants insights into how you think like a lawyer, and may ask questions like:

- *Tell me about your writing sample.*
- *Tell me about a legal memo you wrote this year.*
- *Tell me about a case that came up in one of your classes, explain the facts and holding, then tell me whether you agree or disagree with the legal reasoning.*

- *Tell me about a thorny legal issue that relates to our work.*
- *If you were a court, how would you rule on the following issue...?*
- *Please answer the following hypothetical...*

This last question is less likely to occur in interviews for summer positions than those for permanent positions at organizations like public defender offices, DA's offices, city law departments, or impact litigation organizations. To prepare for this question, have a basic familiarity with the main constitutional principles, statutes, and cases that the organization focuses on. Remember that there is not necessarily a "right" answer; more often, they want to hear how you approach legal or factual analysis, whether you have a basic familiarity with the law that applies, and whether you stand your ground when challenged. If the hypothetical requires knowledge in an area of law (e.g. rules of evidence) that you are not yet versed in, note that for the interviewer and explain what assumptions you are making in your answer.

5) Questions Assessing Your Ethics

Certain legal organizations, such as prosecutor offices and public defender offices, are quite concerned with a candidate's ethical code and will pose interview questions (usually hypotheticals) that test a candidate's ability to weigh their obligations to the client or office against other concerns. Reviewing the state's code of professional responsibility can help prepare a candidate for these types of questions, although some questions will rely simply on the candidate's judgment and ability to discern right from wrong. If you are preparing for an interview with a public defender office or a prosecutor's office, reach out to specialist PI/PS advisers to help you prepare.

6) Other Questions You May Encounter

- If you are applying for work in a location you have no ties to, expect questions about why you want to work there.
- If you worked in a different field prior to law, expect to be asked why you want to switch.
- If you list language ability on your resume, you might be interviewed in that language or asked about it.

Your Questions for the Employer

Have two to four questions to ask the interviewer. Be ready to ask them (and any follow-up questions) at any point in the interview—not all interviewers wait until the end. You do not need to ask every question you bring, but if the interviewer answers one during the discussion, you want to have backup.

You can ask questions such as:

- *How do you choose your cases/projects/clients/priorities/advocacy agenda/communities served/legal mechanisms? How do you staff your cases/projects/advocacy efforts? Do you work in teams? Do staff members stay with the same project from start to finish?*

- *How does your organization work with others in the field?*
- *How do departments work together? Is there coordination among your various advocacy efforts? \What is the balance between litigation and policy work [or other advocacy mechanisms that they employ]?*
- *How do departments work together? Is there coordination among your various advocacy efforts?*
- *How have your priorities changed over time? Why?*

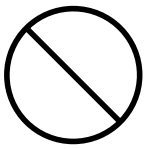
Also, you can ask about the following—but make sure you do not appear uninformed about their work!

- Specific legal issues or policies related to the work they do.
- The effects of a recent court ruling, piece of legislation, or current event on their work or future agenda.

You can also ask questions about the following, but make sure to balance these with substantive questions:

- The summer program, but only if the information has not been covered in the interview and is not readily available elsewhere. Do summer interns have one supervisor, or multiple? How are interns assigned work? Questions about supervision, training, and expectations are fair, but also ask probing questions that show you have given thought to the organization and their work.
- If they do not mention a hiring timeline, inquire. (This does not count toward your two to four questions.)

Your questions are very important. They illustrate your preparedness, knowledge, and commitment.



Important Note: What NOT to Ask

Do not ask about the employer's finances, turnover rates, salaries, work hours, vacation policies, or internal politics. These can wait until you have an offer. Do not ask questions that are answered on their website or that make you sound unfamiliar with their work, like "What cases are you working on?" (You should know this already.) Also, be careful with personal questions. Some interviewers like to talk about themselves, but others consider questions such as "What do you like and dislike about this job?" to be inappropriate.

INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONS

If you are asked questions that make you uncomfortable, you do not need to answer. These might include personal questions or questions about previous salaries, your politics or religion, and so forth. Politely explain that you are not comfortable discussing that topic. Ask if there is another issue they would like to discuss. Do not get angry or emotional. You can reach out to a PI/PS adviser after the interview to discuss additional action.

After the Interview

Send a Thank You Note

Opinions vary as to whether you should send these for every internship interview, but our general advice is to do so. The protocol for postgraduate jobs is clearer: you should definitely send a thank you. A handwritten note is not expected; indeed, email is best. Assume your emails will be forwarded to everyone who participated in the interview, as well as any other hiring managers.

Email the people who interviewed you a brief note thanking them for taking the time to meet with you, reiterating your interest in the position, and perhaps highlighting something specific from the interview that reinforced your enthusiasm for the role. Do not try to correct mistakes you made at the interview. If something has come to your attention since the interview that you think will interest them (like a news article), attach it to the email and mention it in the text.

You may send one email addressed to all your interviewers, especially if it was a group interview, or separate emails to each interviewer, making sure they are tailored to that person. (See our samples). Send the note within 24 hours. Check for typos and errors.

If you do not have your interviewers' email addresses, search for them on the organization's website or figure out the email naming conventions (e.g., firstname.lastname@employer.org).



Grad Tip: Thank You Notes

Opinions regarding thank you notes from practicing lawyers who interview for jobs do not vary. Always follow up with a thank you email within 24 hours. Even if your interviewers do not expect a thank you note, if other applicants send one, you will look bad.

Do Not Make Promises You Can't Keep

In thank you notes and follow-up emails, reiterate your interest in the position but choose your words carefully. If, after your interviews, one job stands out as your top choice—meaning you would definitely accept an offer—tell that employer so explicitly. But do not tell or even suggest this ("this would be my dream job") to more than one employer. Doing so can damage your professional reputation and that of Columbia Law School. You will be in a very bad position turning an employer down after you have told them they were your first choice. (See Negotiating Offers for more information.).

Maintain a Professional Relationship

Do not connect with your interviewers on social media, including LinkedIn.

Follow Up

If you have not heard from the employer within the response time they specified, follow up by email or phone. If they were not sure when they would get back to you or did not indicate a timeframe, feel free to contact them in two weeks. If information relevant to your application becomes available, send it. If you receive another offer, contact the employer immediately, explain the situation, and ask when they will decide. (See Negotiating Offers.)



IMPORTANT: After Accepting an Offer...

Once you accept an offer, you must withdraw your applications to all other employers. Accepting an offer and then later turning it down reflects poorly on you and on Columbia students as a whole. If you feel that truly extraordinary circumstances require you to turn down an accepted offer, immediately contact a PI/PS adviser.

Let Your References Know When You Get a Job

They will be pleased to have been of help! Letting them know how the job is going in a month or so is another way to thank them and keep in touch.

Tip: Use a Tracking Chart

A chart can be invaluable for tracking your applications.

Sample Thank You Notes

Joint Email to All Interviewers

To: Margie Howardson; Dee Dee Weber
Subject: My Interview

Thank you again for meeting with me earlier today. I enjoyed learning more about the work of the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch and meeting your staff. HRW's work is incredibly important, and I am especially interested in the new direction your work will be taking with the indictments of Congolese warlords by the International Criminal Court. I would welcome the opportunity to work with you this summer—especially, but not only, on your report regarding the responsibility to protect. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,
Rosa Garcia
rg4455@columbia.edu
(212) 454-4554 (home)
(917) 692-6685 (cell)

Separate Emails Sent to Two Different Interviewers in the Same Office

Email 1

To: Jane Sykes
Subject: Thank You

Dear Ms. Sykes,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me yesterday. After speaking with you and the Transgender Law Center (TLC) staff, I think the Policy Advocate position is the right fit for me on both a professional and personal level. I would be thrilled to contribute to TLC's legal and policy initiatives and to promote your legal education efforts. On a more personal level, I embrace your long-term goals of ensuring authenticity, equality, and trust. You have a passionate team, and if given the opportunity, I will work hard to meet their high standards.

Again, thank you for speaking with me.

All the best,
Leslie Schorr

Email 2

To: Clarence Wood
Subject: Thank You

Dear Mr. Wood,

Thank you for meeting with me yesterday. I enjoyed speaking with you and the Transgender Law Center (TLC) staff and learning more about your work changing laws, policies, and attitudes to safeguard the rights of your transgender clients and their families (and all transgender people in the U.S.). I would be honored to contribute to the team, and I believe that my work at LDF over the past four years has been great preparation for the Policy Advocate position. TLC would be a welcome transition for me, professionally and personally.

Thanks again. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

All the best,
Leslie Schorr

Negotiating Offers

What If I Get Multiple Offers? Or My Second Choice Makes an Offer Before My First?

Employers usually assume that students have other pending applications, and they know that they might not be your first choice. That said, treat all employers with respect. Respond to a prospective employer's email within 24 hours (and if you can respond even faster, they will likely appreciate it).

If you get an offer from a public interest employer that is not your first choice, your response should first include words of appreciation. If the employer has not set a firm deadline, you may ask for one to two weeks to give them your answer. They do not have to give you this time, but they might do so. See sample email.

Then contact the employer of greatest interest, explain that you have another offer but that they are your first choice, and ask if they have a timeline for their decision. If they have already told you their timeline, you can ask if they can give you a decision before your offer deadline. ***Remember: only do this with one organization.***

You can also reach out to other employers you interviewed with to let them know about your deadline and ask if they could have an update on your application by then, *but do not tell them they are your top choice*.

It is reasonable for an applicant to want as much information as possible prior to accepting an offer and withdrawing from other opportunities, just as it is reasonable for an employer to be unable to advance their timeline.

Remember to get back to the first organization by their deadline. Do not ask for additional time!

If you apply to corporate firms for summer positions, you will likely receive offers before you hear from public interest employers. If you are actively pursuing public interest or government jobs, you may ask a firm to extend its acceptance deadline as late as April 1. Firms are not obligated to grant an extension.

Please note: you may hold open only one law firm offer in such circumstances. See advisers from the Office of Private Sector Careers and the PI/PS Office for guidance.

What If I Want to Change My Mind After Accepting an Offer?

Once you have accepted an offer, you should not change your mind; ***accepting a job or internship is a final decision***. Please remember that the legal marketplace is a small world. Employers speak to each other, and even the public interest and the private sectors are not as separate as you might think. You do not want to burn any bridges. Additionally, poor behavior on your part may hurt other Columbia students' chances with that employer. If you have questions, please see a PI/PS adviser.



Grad Tip: Postgraduate Salaries

The PI/PS Office encourages graduates, especially women and people of color, to negotiate salaries from a place of knowledge about the job market. To that end, we have collected data on the salaries of alumni in public interest, government, and international nongovernmental jobs. The Salary Survey includes class year, geographic region, benefits, and links to available salary schedules. Questions? Contact Grace Shim at ghc2102@columbia.edu.

Sample Negotiating Emails

Sample 1: Request for More Time

To: Mark Farell
Subject: Summer Internship Offer

Dear Mr. Farrell:

Thank you so much for your offer to work as a legal intern at the Guggenheim Museum this summer. As you know, I am passionate about the intersection of art and intellectual property issues, and I am eager to learn about the legal issues that arise in running a nonprofit.

I would like to request a week to think about your offer. Unless I hear otherwise from you, I will contact you with my decision by the end of next week. I hope this will not inconvenience you.

Best Regards,
Kaori Lim

Sample 2: Request for More Time

Dear Mr. Farrell,

Thank you so much for your kind offer! As a first-year law student, I am in the process of finalizing my summer schedule and sorting out important logistics, including financial considerations and housing. I want to make a thoughtful decision about my summer placement and give the opportunity you have offered the attention it deserves.

Would it be possible to extend the offer deadline by two weeks? I will be sure to reach back out as soon as more factors are finalized.

Thank you so much for your understanding, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to potentially work with your organization.

Best,
Kaori Lim

Sample 3: Following up on an Outstanding Application with No Other Offer Pending

To: Ronen Goldberg
Subject: Summer Internship Application

Dear Mr. Goldberg,

I am a second-year student at Columbia Law School who recently applied for a summer internship with your office. I wanted to confirm that you received my application materials and follow up on the status of my application. I remain very interested in Advancement Project's work and the opportunity to intern in your office. If you need further information from me, please let me know.

Sincerely,
Sarah Dermot

Sample 4: Following up on an Outstanding Application with a Pending Offer from an Employer That Is Not Your Top Choice

To: Edith Kim
Subject: Summer Internship Application

Dear Ms. Kim,

I am a first-year student at Columbia Law School who recently applied for a summer internship with NYLPI. I am writing because I have been offered another position and have been asked to respond by December 15th.

I remain very interested in the chance to work at NYLPI this summer and am hoping you can let me know if my application is still being considered. If so, I would very much appreciate the opportunity to interview with your office before mid-December.

I have attached my application materials for your reference. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Suraj Patel

Sample 5: Following up on an Outstanding Application After an Interview, with an Offer Pending

To: Ben Weiner
Subject: Summer Internship Application

Dear Mr. Weiner,

It was wonderful to meet with your team last week and learn more about the summer internship program at the Center for Appellate Litigation. I am writing because I have received an offer for another position for the summer and I have been asked to respond by December 15th. I remain very interested in spending my summer with CAL. Would it be possible to have a decision on my application before December 15th?

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Shaina Barrett

Sample 6: Following Up on an Outstanding Application at Your *Top-Choice Employer* with a Pending Offer that Is Not Your Top Choice

IMPORTANT: Send an email like this to ONLY ONE employer, and do NOT say that an office is your first choice if it is not (see discussion above). Also, it may be better to discuss this via phone. Consult with the PI/PS Office.

To: Paula Williams
Subject: Summer Internship Application

Dear Ms. Williams,

I am a second-year student at Columbia Law School who recently applied for a summer internship with your office. I am writing because I have been offered another position and have been asked to respond by December 15th.

I am most interested in spending my summer as an intern with the U.S. Attorney's Office, and your office is my top choice. I am hoping you might be able to provide me with a status update for my application. If possible, I would very much appreciate the opportunity to interview with your office before mid-December.

I have attached my application materials for your reference. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Elliot Green

How Do I Politely Decline an Offer? What If I Hope to Work with the Employer in the Future?

There is no stigma in declining an offer, if you are polite and timely. This is true even if you hope to work with the employer in the future. For instance, you may decline an offer to work with a particular organization for a summer but still hope to work with them in the future, either during your next summer or following graduation. In that case, you will want to take extra care to give the employer your reason for not taking the offer and be clear about your hope to maintain a relationship with them and possibly work with them in the future. Reasons for declining an offer from an organization that you remain interested in can range from geographical considerations to strategic considerations, such as wanting to diversify your range of experiences (for instance, turning down a policy job in favor of working in direct services first). If you have questions about how to phrase a response to an employer, please speak to a PI/PS adviser.

Sample 7: Declining an Offer

To: Jennifer Alvarez
Subject: Summer Internship Offer

Dear Ms. Alvarez,

Thank you for your offer to work as an intern in your office this summer. I have decided to pursue another opportunity, but I greatly appreciate you taking the time to meet with me.

Best,
John Lee

Sample 8: Declining an Offer with the Hope to Work with the Organization in the Future

To: David Blake
Subject: Summer Internship

Dear Mr. Blake,

Thank you very much for your offer to work at the New York Civil Liberties Union this summer. I greatly enjoyed meeting you and your team and I am inspired by the work that you do. Due to family circumstances, I need to spend this summer in California and cannot accept your offer. I plan to spend next summer in New York and remain in New York after graduation, so I sincerely hope to have another opportunity to work at NYCLU in the future.

Sincerely,
Jasmine Butler

Guide to Networking and Informational Interviews

This section contains guidance on:

- How to network
- Setting up an informational interview (including sample emails)
- Preparing for an informational interview (including questions to ask at the interview)
- Following up on an informational interview
- Acing table talk at a career fair

Networking is very important for finding a job and learning about fields of practice. Yet, students and graduates often forget or avoid it. We encourage you to embrace it! It is essential to your journey.

Statistics show that a tremendous number of successful applicants learn about jobs through contacts. Networking can give you a foot in the door, whether that is because you learned of an opening through a contact or you already made a good impression on the employer through a previous meeting.

Networking and informational interviews also provide invaluable information about an employer, helpful in preparing for an interview or deciding whether to accept an offer.

In public interest, networking often consists of conversations with people who share your interests or work in fields or at employers you want to explore.

Networking is also part of your larger learning process. It can:

- ➔ Introduce you to practice areas, current issues, organizations, and the lawyers who work for them.
- ➔ Provide insight into what it is like to work in a particular office or geographic area.
- ➔ Spark ideas on how to make the most of your law school years.
- ➔ Inspire you! It is motivating to meet people doing the work you want to do.

Networking is not a job interview, and you should not expect it to lead to one immediately. Rather, it is a conversation (spontaneous or planned) in which you seek information and additional contacts. In public interest, networking often consists of conversations with people who share your interests or work in fields or at employers you want to explore.

How Do You Network?

The easiest way to network is to talk to existing contacts, such as classmates, professors, PI/PS Office staff, family members, and former employers, about your professional interests and goals. In turn, those individuals may supply job leads, advice, information about a particular employer or position, or connections in the field. Take advantage of our office, alumni, fellow students, professors, internship and pro bono supervisors, and speakers who come to campus.

Informational interviews are probably the most important type of networking. Although they may feel awkward, the process is quite straightforward:

1. **Make contact (usually by email) with individuals at organizations or in fields of interest.**
2. **Ask to meet with them to learn more about their work.**

You can suggest meeting at their office or over coffee or lunch or ask what they prefer. Some may only be able to speak by telephone or Zoom, and while remote meetings can make it harder to establish rapport, they are still valuable.

You can contact people whom you do not know, such as individuals you heard about through networking (be sure to mention your mutual acquaintance) or who you met in an informal setting or at a meeting. You can contact Columbia graduates. You can even cold call someone with whom you have no direct tie, such as an employee at an organization of interest. They may be willing to meet because of your interests—**public interest lawyers want talented and thoughtful law students to become excellent lawyers and join their efforts!** Even if they say no, there is no harm in trying

Remember that the purpose of an informational interview is to obtain information, not to get a job. Make sure your contact knows that you understand this. They may be more willing to meet with you, especially if there are no jobs currently available at their workplace.

More Tips

- Columbia events can be turned into networking opportunities. After a panel with an interesting speaker, approach the speaker, introduce yourself, and network. Ask for a business card.
- Attend meetings on interesting subjects and network with attendees (for example, at professional organizations like bar association meetings).
- Stay in touch with contacts you make through internships/externships.
- Check employer websites or get on their email lists. Attend their events and network.

Be creative and confident—but do not be pushy or inappropriate.

If you have a summer job in a city or country that you might return to after graduation, set up informational interviews while there. These could turn into great leads for jobs or fellowship hosts and

will help you gather information about the local job market. People are often more willing to meet if your time in their location is limited but you have a serious interest in returning.

Setting Up an Informational Interview

You would typically send an email to request an informational interview. Look at the samples in this toolkit and remember that you should frame yours to reflect who you are. There is no one right way to draft your request; however, you should follow some simple guidelines:

- Introduce yourself and clearly state the purpose of your email.
- If applicable, mention any person who referred you or any mutual acquaintance. Or, if you met them briefly (such as at a law school panel), include the context in which you met them.
- Personalize the letter so it does not seem like a form letter—for example, include the name of the organization or area of law they work in, so they know you wrote the letter specifically for them; or include the topics that you discussed when you met them; or mention shared interests.
- Convey your background (if any) in the field and your interest in their organization.
- Identify what you would like them to do (meet with you, accept your call, provide information).
- Make clear that you are not looking for a job or job interview, but for advice/guidance or information.
- Identify next steps (for example, tell them that you will call them in a few days).
- Remember to attach your resume so they have more information about your background, unless your email provides this information and you want to set a more informal tone.

Follow up by phone within a few days of sending your request for the interview.

Responding to Introductory Emails

As you network and search for jobs, you may be introduced to an employer through a mutual contact, such as a professor, adviser, or previous employer. These introductions often take the form of the contact emailing you and the prospective employer together to make the introduction. To show your interest, respond to these emails in a timely manner (i.e., 24 hours or less), and ideally before the employer responds. Include the mutual contact so they know you have responded. The best practice is to move them to the BCC line and note this in the body of your response.

Sample Emails for Setting Up an Informational Interview

Sample 1: Response to an Introductory Email

To: Jacob Varna
Bcc: Professor Yang
Subject: Connecting about Housing Work

Thank you for the introduction, Professor Yang. I am now moving you to BCC.

Mr. Varna,

I am grateful to Professor Yang for introducing us, as I am greatly interested in pursuing work in housing advocacy after graduation. I would love to have a chance to hear more about your organization and discuss your work. Is there a time in the next few weeks when I might be able to give you a call?

Best,
Shannon Brown

Sample 2: Request for Informational Interview

To: Miranda Hayes
Subject: Meeting this summer

Dear Ms. Hayes,

I am a second-year student at Columbia Law School interested in legal advocacy on behalf of veterans. As a former Marine, and through my work at the Veterans Justice Project at Legal Services NYC this past summer, I am aware that many veterans lack access to information and are often unable to enforce their legal rights. I will be in Douglasville this summer while working at the Veterans Law Center. Darlene Atkins suggested that I contact you to learn more about your work while I am in Georgia.

I would appreciate the opportunity to hear more about the Georgia State Bar Association's Military Legal Assistance Program and its work helping veterans. I hope to return to Georgia to work on issues concerning veterans after I graduate. Any advice and insights you have about your work and the Georgia job market in general would be greatly appreciated.

I will be in Douglasville from May 15 to August 1 and would be available to come to Atlanta during that time. I will call your office next week to see if we can arrange a mutually convenient time. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,
Lester Aboye

Sample 3: Request from a Student to a Recent Graduate

To: Emily Brown
Subject: Referred by Columbia PI/PS Office

Dear Emily,

I am a third-year student at Columbia Law School and am currently applying for public defender positions. My adviser at the Office for Public Interest/Public Service Law and Careers, Murphy Mitchell, suggested I reach out to you. I have been invited to interview with the Philadelphia Defenders Association in two weeks and would love to talk with you about your experience there. I would be grateful for any time you might have.

Please let me know what might work for you. I have attached my resume. Thank you very much.

Rosa

Sample 4: Networking Email

To: Hon. Claudia Damasceno
Subject: Follow-up to our conversation

Dear Judge Damasceno,

I enjoyed meeting you today at the New York State Bar Association Committee on Women in the Law meeting. Thank you so much for your offer to brainstorm with me about new career directions. Would you be available to meet in the next week or two for a quick coffee?

In the meantime, I will contact Professor Kirby at Columbia, as you suggested, for any contacts she may have, as well as Carol Baldwin Moody at Legal Momentum to learn more about their Women Valued Initiative and other gender justice work.

I have attached my resume for your reference. I hope to hear from you soon.

Thanks again,
Patricia Simmons
(301) 444-4444

Sample 5: Networking Email

To: Anne Finder
Subject: Legislative Affairs/Advocacy

Dear Ms. Finder,

I am a 2017 joint law/theology graduate from Columbia Law School. Dennis Choi gave me your name as someone to connect with in the Chicago area regarding work in policy advocacy. I remember meeting you as a 1L, when you were working with the Chicago Democratic Party. I am now a third-year associate at Sherman Sterling and have realized that firm life is not for me. I recently interviewed with the Pew Charitable Trusts for a position in criminal justice policy. Their feedback was that I have a strong resume, but they are looking for someone with more direct political experience, i.e., a legislative aide or someone with political or legislative advocacy experience.

I am searching for ways to get this experience, in either Chicago or New York. I am hoping that you will be willing to talk about relevant organizations or government agencies in Chicago and advise me on who to contact. I am willing to volunteer or to take any entry- or mid-level positions to get on this career track. I am available to meet in person next month or speak by phone if you prefer. I have attached my resume. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,
Igor Klovkov

Sample 6: Networking Email

To: William Mwangi
Subject: Columbia alum interested in immigration advocacy

Dear William,

Professor Elora Mukerherjee at Columbia Law School recommended that I reach out. I graduated from the Law School in 2016, in the class behind yours. I am an associate at Davis Polk, where I have focused my pro bono work on immigration and immigrant rights. I supervised the work of twelve associates doing immigration advocacy at JFK in January 2020. This experience solidified my passion for, and commitment to, public interest work as a full-time career.

I am hoping you might have 15 minutes for a phone call in the next two weeks to talk about the Legal Aid Society Immigration Law Unit's innovative work. I understand you focus on immigrants held in detention, an area of particular interest to me. I welcome the opportunity to connect.

Warmest regards,
Cynthia

Tips for Informational Interviews

While networking opportunities may arise unexpectedly (at parties, reunions, meetings, etc.), much of your networking will happen through informational interviews.

Informational interviews are different from regular interviews. They tend to be shorter (usually 15 to 20 minutes), more relaxed and conversational, and driven by the person who requested to meet—you! So come prepared. Bring questions to ask. Bring a pad or tablet for notes (after asking for permission to take notes). Limit your notetaking, however, to focus your attention on the other person; your goal is an engaged conversation.

Bring a list of questions to ask but focus your attention on the other person; your goal is an engaged conversation.

Aim to impress with your knowledge of the individual's area of law, their employer, and their work. Do not ask anything readily ascertainable on their employer's website! Be ready to answer questions about your interest in this area of law or organization and your own background and goals. The contact will be assessing you while providing you with information.

Types of Questions to Ask (Do Not Ask Anything That Is on the Website!)

- *Can you tell me about your job, your primary responsibilities, and your role at the organization?*
- *How did you get this job? What is your background?* (Some find this question intrusive.)
- *What issues do you focus on? What legal strategies do you employ?*
- *Does your organization work with others in the field? Which ones? How?*
- *What are the cutting-edge issues in your field?*
- *How has this field changed in recent years? What changes do you anticipate in the future?*
- *What can I do to be marketable in your field (internships, classes, membership in professional organizations, training, language skills, volunteer and pro bono work, etc.)?*
- *What skills are needed to work at an organization like this?*
- *Do you know of any organizations that will be hiring?*
- If you proceed cautiously, it is okay to ask about "work culture" and "quality of life."
- *Do you know anyone else I can talk to? Do you have any job search strategies for me?*

After the Interview

At the meeting's close, ask for a business card so that you can follow up. People expect to be asked. Send a short thank you (email is fine) immediately after the interview. (See the samples.)

Keep in contact without being imposing or invasive. Build on the interview—for example, reach out to contacts the interviewee provided or follow their suggested tips. If the interview leads to a job or

something else significant, let them know and thank them again. It may be helpful to schedule a follow-up email in your calendar.

Be organized about your networking. Keep a list or chart of contacts, dates of communication, and the substance of your conversation. Keep copies of correspondence.



Tips for Table Talks

Employer information tables at career fairs ("table talk") allow you to learn about employers and lay groundwork for future applications. Table talk *can* result in an internship offer, so take advantage of the opportunity.

Preparing for Table Talk at a Public Interest Job Fair

Make a Plan

- ❑ From the list of participating employers, identify those of interest and check when they will be holding table talk. Prioritize—select eight to twelve employers to target.
- ❑ Plan to visit employers you did not get an interview with—slots are usually assigned by lottery, so do not view it as a rejection. For virtual fairs, try to get a table talk slot with employers.

Do Your Research

- ❑ Research each employer. Learn about their mission and work.
- ❑ Consider which of the employer's divisions, units, or projects are of particular interest.

Have an Approach

- ❑ Outline what you will say and practice with someone. "My name is _____, I am a 1L/2L/3L/LL.M. at Columbia Law School seeking an [internship] for next [summer, fall, spring]. I am particularly interested in your organization because _____."
- ❑ Print plenty of copies of your resume to bring.
- ❑ Be ready to discuss anything on your resume but identify three experiences or skills to highlight.
- ❑ Craft four questions to demonstrate your interest in and knowledge of the employer. Also, plan to ask the interviewer about their work and career.
- ❑ Draft an individualized cover letter for your top-choice employers.

Arrive Early and Be Flexible

- ❑ Visit tables at in-person fairs when you see they are free, not necessarily in order of priority.
- ❑ Do not avoid an employer just because there are other students at their table. Read on for tips on creating an inclusive conversation if an employer representative is engaging several students at once. This will show your ability to lead and to work with others**.**

Taking the Lead in Table Talk

Create the interview.

- ❑ Initiate a conversation that will engage the representative at the table.

Be the interviewer.

- ❑ Introduce yourself, shake hands firmly if in person, and make eye contact.
- ❑ State your interest in the organization in a way that shows that you know and value its work.
- ❑ Ask your initial questions, mindful that you are in control (so far) and that it is your responsibility to make the representative comfortable and get them to talk.

Be interested and enthusiastic.

The representative will likely share more about their work if you make your interest clear.

- ❑ Talk about yourself in relationship to the organization's work.
- ❑ Try to focus the conversation on the organization's work, the relationship of your experience or interests to that work, and your dedication to addressing its core issues.

Be responsive to the interviewer.

- ❑ If the representative moves to their own agenda in the interview, give the lead back. Respond to their questions.
- ❑ Return to your questions or points when that seems like the best way to move the conversation forward.

Wrap it up.

- ❑ The employer is there to talk to many students, so be aware of the time.
- ❑ If you initiate the wrap-up, do not be shy about reiterating your interest, asking if you may leave a resume, and inquiring about the process for submitting a formal application.
- ❑ Make sure you have the information you need: the hiring attorney's name and contact information, the materials required, and the timeframe. Then ask for the representative's card, shake their hand firmly, smile, look them in the eye, and thank them for their time.

Follow up.

- ❑ Make a simple chart to track your follow-up. (You may want to modify this job tracking chart.)
- ❑ Your follow-up will depend upon the substance of your conversation (e.g., a cover letter and resume to apply for a job, a thank you letter if the informal interview at the table was considered "the" interview, a letter to forward the documents requested, etc.).
- ❑ It is appropriate to follow up a week or two after you expected a response. If you still do not receive one, move on. You have done all you can.

Appendix

An Overview of Public Interest Work

Public interest work is done in a wide variety of practice settings. Lawyers also use different approaches to advocacy. Employers focus on different issues or areas of practice. You will want to think about practice settings you prefer, advocacy approaches that appeal to you, and issues that engage you.

Below, we identify common practice settings and describe relevant types of work. (Be aware that at many employers these categories will overlap.) In the final section, we list public interest issues areas.

Practice Settings and Advocacy Approaches

Nonprofit Legal Services Organizations

Civil legal services organizations (referred to as "legal services" or "legal aid" in some jurisdictions) provide services directly to individual low-income clients, at no cost or on a sliding scale. This work is often referred to as "direct service work" or "direct legal services" because the lawyers work directly with their clients, on their individual legal needs. Areas of practice include housing, family, domestic violence, consumer, government benefits, employment, health, immigration, and education. Most legal services offices focus on a range of practice areas, although some specialize in one area or population. Some public defender offices (see below) also provide civil legal services.

Legal service providers have substantial contact with clients. Lawyers do significant client interviewing and counseling, investigation, meeting with witnesses, case preparation, out of court advocacy, negotiation, and litigation. They may appear in housing, family, immigration, or civil court or before administrative agencies. In some offices, they participate in law reform efforts or self-help and community education.

When assessing practice areas and organizations, consider things like caseload size, average length of case, utilization of oral advocacy versus written advocacy, procedural posture of the cases you would take on, etc. Talk to attorneys in different types of direct services to get a sense of what resonates with you.

Nonprofit Law Reform Organizations

Law reform organizations focus on efforts to bring about social change that will impact more than one person. Generally, they focus on a particular issue area or on a particular group of people. Lawyers in

these organizations tend to use a variety of advocacy tools, including "impact litigation" (litigation on behalf of selected clients, aimed at changing the law for many people rather than an individual client), "legislative advocacy" (to influence lawmaking bodies to enact or reform the law or help lobbyists and other advocates in their work), investigative reporting and media work (to publicize a legal problem or reform efforts), "policy advocacy" (which can take many forms but is generally geared at identifying legal problems and advocating for solutions such as legislative change or legal reform), and legal education (usually focused on helping individuals learn their rights and how to exercise them).

Lawyers at law reform organizations generally do significant amounts of legal research, writing, and analysis. Many are involved in large-scale litigation. They tend to become specialized in a particular subject. Law reform organizations focus on a wide range of issues (such as immigration, the environment, women, First Amendment, voting or other constitutional issues, civil rights, or human rights) and can work on both domestic and international platforms. Learn about international public interest work.

Government Practice

There is an extraordinary array of legal jobs in all branches and at all levels of government across a variety of topic areas. As a rule, government legal jobs offer attorneys the opportunity to work on interesting and novel legal problems that impact the public. Even relatively junior attorneys can frequently assume great responsibility quickly and, in most cases, enjoy job stability. Government attorneys have the chance to serve the public while maintaining (with some notable exceptions) a satisfying work/life balance.

Lawyers work at all levels of government: local, state, federal and multinational. In fact, the United States is the largest legal employer in the world. The Department of Justice serves as the nation's law firm, employing thousands of attorneys nationwide in a variety of areas, including litigation (criminal and civil), policy, and rulemaking. In most states, the office of the attorney general serves a similar function—representing the state and its officials in civil and criminal proceedings. Of course, types of practices and areas of jurisdiction vary from state to state. Local law departments and municipal agencies also provide important legal services on behalf of the public. If you are interested in a particular state or municipality, you should research the practice of the offices in that area to understand the function of the office.

Government agencies at the local, state, and federal level employ attorneys in many different capacities. For example, many agencies have departments that engage in litigation, rulemaking, law enforcement, and the coordination of legislative and regulatory priorities. At a general counsel's office, an attorney may focus on litigation, ethics, labor and employment, or procurement, or serve as a general legal advisor to the agency and its principal. Government agencies focus on an enormous array of subjects, from the affirmative and defensive sides—environmental, antitrust, labor, health, reproductive rights, housing, civil rights, national security, monetary policy, international issues, and more. They also engage in "corporate" transactional work, such as real estate, contracts, and economic development.

The legislative branches of local, state, and federal governments also have lawyers who advise on legislation and other legal issues, formulate public policy, and represent lawmaker or institutional interests on committees or in other forums. For example, U.S. congressmembers employ lawyers in their personal offices, and congressional committees employ lawyers to advise committee members.

While legal jobs in the judicial branch are most often thought of as short-term clerkships, there are opportunities for lawyers to serve as staff attorneys or career clerks or in judicial administration.

The government legal world is vast and can be difficult to navigate. Students interested in government should consult with PI/PS advisers and our relevant publications to determine the best path.

Criminal Defense

Funded by the government, privately as nonprofits, or through a combination, these offices provide defense attorneys for indigent defendants in criminal cases. Some offices will also have attorneys handling appellate work or providing legal assistance for the civil consequences of criminal cases (for example, housing, immigration, and family issues). A public defender often has a varied caseload that can include misdemeanors like DUIs and low-level assaults as well as felonies ranging from weapons possession and narcotics to homicide and sex crimes.

In some jurisdictions, parents facing removal of their children are also provided with an attorney at no cost to them. Generally, these offices are called “family defense” or “parental representation” offices and function similarly to a criminal public defender.

Federal defenders defend indigent defendants in federal courts. These include financial fraud, national security, weapons-dealing, organized crime, trespassing on federal land, and many other areas. Federal defender offices typically do not hire directly out of law school but rather hire attorneys who have practiced for several years as defense lawyers in government or private practice.

As a general matter, public defenders—including new lawyers—are responsible for all phases of representation, including interviewing clients, investigating charges, interviewing witnesses, motion practice, legal research and writing, trial strategy, negotiation and plea bargaining, and preparing for and conducting hearings and trials. Some organizations employ an interdisciplinary approach, with social workers or other non-lawyers joining the team helping each client.

Students interested in public defense should consult with PI/PS advisers for more information.

Criminal Prosecution

There are local, state, and federal government offices that prosecute criminal cases. Prosecutors enforce criminal laws of the local, state, or federal jurisdiction they serve (some offices that are traditionally involved primarily in criminal prosecution also undertake certain civil work on behalf of the jurisdiction). Unlike criminal defense attorneys, prosecutors do not have individual clients.

At the local level, the district attorney's (DA) offices prosecute criminal cases and enforce the criminal laws of their jurisdiction. A notable exception to this general rule is Washington, DC, where general crimes are prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office. DA's offices are organized by county. Junior attorneys at a DA's office generally assume significant responsibility from the outset. Depending on the structure of an individual district attorney's office, an assistant district attorney is responsible for some or all phases of a criminal case, including the complaint, plea negotiations, arraignment, presentation to a grand jury, investigation, interviewing of witnesses, issuing of subpoenas, conduct of hearings, questioning of defendants, cross-examination of defense witnesses and, ultimately, trying of a case. An assistant district attorney's caseload may include homicides, narcotics, fraud, identity theft, cybercrime, hate crimes, violent crimes, domestic violence, sex crimes, larceny, child abuse, weapons possession, and more.

State attorney general offices will usually have a criminal division that investigates and prosecutes cases of statewide significance. Depending on the state, a state attorney general's office may focus on any number of issues, such as insurance fraud, public integrity issues, organized crime, or tax fraud.

U.S. attorney's offices prosecute federal crimes in federal courts. These include financial fraud, national security, weapons dealing, organized crime, and illegal entry to the United States. U.S. attorney caseloads are often lighter than at the local level, but the cases tend to involve longer and more complex investigations and trials. U.S. attorney's offices usually do not hire directly out of law school, instead seeking attorneys with several years in government or private practice.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) shares responsibility for the prosecution of federal crimes. The DOJ Criminal Division has specialized sections on fraud, narcotics, organized crime, and terrorism. In addition, DOJ lawyers provide policy and logistical support to U.S. attorney's offices.

Interested students should consult with PI/PS advisers and publications for more information.

International Public Interest Work

Types of international public interest work vary widely, as do the settings in which attorneys practice. See the International Public Interest Job Search Toolkit Supplement for a detailed overview. International public interest practice can include international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international criminal law, and other areas of public international law. Settings include U.S. government agencies working on international issues (such as the Departments of State or Commerce); intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) (such as the United Nations, World Bank, or Organization of American States), international mechanisms (such as the International Court of Justice); regional mechanisms (such as the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights); U.S.-based international nonprofits (such as Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International); and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) abroad (focusing on such areas as sustainable development, human rights, corporate accountability, or transitional justice).

The type of work varies greatly, although international employers generally require proficiency in at least one foreign language and demonstration of an ability to live and work within a different culture. It is important to identify the international work that interests you, considering location, type of organization, and area of law. Often—for a summer internship—you will be able to draw on pre-law school experiences.

Private Public Interest Law Firms

Public interest/civil rights law firms are mission-driven private practices that focus on litigation to address social or economic justice problems. These firms range in size from a few lawyers to more than 50. Some focus very specifically on an issue (for example, employment discrimination, civil rights, labor law, police brutality, or immigration) while others have a broad range of cases and matters, sometimes even including a small docket of private sector matters to finance the work. The litigation can range from direct representations to large class actions. Review the Public Interest/Civil Rights Law Firms FAQs and this list of firms and alumni who are happy to speak about their experience at them. (Requires UNI login.)



Important Note on Public Interest Law Firms

The inclusion of a law firm in PI/PS Office resources or communications does not guarantee that it will qualify for Columbia Summer Funding or the Loan Repayment Assistance Program. Past eligibility does not guarantee that a firm will qualify in the future.

To verify a firm's current eligibility, contact CSFhelp@law.columbia.edu and/or LRAP@law.columbia.edu before applying or accepting an offer.

Alternative Public Interest Lawyering

Some public interest organizations emphasize nontraditional approaches to law reform. These nonprofits deemphasize litigation in favor of such strategies as community organizing, coalition-building, media, education, and developing alternatives to litigation. While public interest organizations invariably use a variety of strategies to advance their work and the interests of the clients and communities they represent, some are designed to favor such nontraditional approaches.

For organizations that do community organizing and education or collaborate with community groups, lawyers work closely and frequently with community members. Other organizations may focus on project development, in which case research, collaboration with stakeholders, writing, and coalition-building would comprise much of the work. Another example of alternative public interest lawyering is serving as in-house counsel to nonprofits, such as hospitals, museums, universities or advocacy

organizations. Serving as in-house counsel in this capacity would entail mostly transactional work in a range of areas impacting the organization—employment, tax, contracts, etc.

Alternatives to Traditional Public Interest Lawyering

Of course, lawyers can and do work in many areas and organizations where they do not practice law at all. Legal training and skills can be useful in a range of positions that may not require a law degree, such as policy analysis, journalism, nonprofit management, foundation work, economic development, and alternative dispute resolution. Other skills and expertise would be important as well: for example, skills such as writing, program management, languages, or mediation, and expertise in financial or other technical areas. In almost all situations, however, we would encourage you to do legal work for at least your first summer, and—if you are so inclined—pursue non-legal positions later. Legal internships can be found at a range of organizations that would expose you to non-legal work as well. Only jobs that make full-time use of a law degree qualify for LRAP.

Courts

Working for the courts—such as clerking for a judge or serving as a court staff attorney or eventually serving in the judiciary—is another path. For information, contact the Office of Judicial Careers.

Academia

Teaching at a law school is another career option. For more information, consult Columbia's Careers in Law Teaching Program.

Legal Issues

There is a vast array of legal topics and subject areas that you can pursue with your law degree. Below are some examples of these issues.

AIDS/HIV

Animal Rights/Animal Welfare

Antitrust/Financial Regulation

Arts

Bankruptcy/Debt

Child Welfare/Children's Rights

Civil Rights/Civil Liberties

Community Development

Consumer Protection/Consumer Safety

Corporate Responsibility

Criminal Defense

Criminal Justice Reform/Prisoners' Rights/Abolitionism

Criminal Prosecution

Death Penalty

Democracy/Voting/Campaign Finance

Disability Justice

Domestic/Interpersonal Violence

Economic Development

Economic Justice

Education

Elder Law

Environment/Energy/Environmental Justice/Sustainable Development

Family Law

Farmworker/Migrant Worker Rights

Financial Regulation

First Amendment

Gender Justice/Women's Rights

Government Accountability/Anticorruption Work

Gun Regulation

Health

Homelessness

Housing/Eviction Protection/Foreclosure

Human Rights

Human Trafficking

Immigration/Refugee

Juvenile Justice/Youth Law

Legal Reform/Court Reform

Labor/Employment/Unions

LGBTQIA+ Rights

National Security

Native American Rights/Tribal Law

Nonprofit Law

Poverty

Privacy

Public International Law

Racial Justice

Reproductive Rights

Religious Freedom/Separation of Church and State

Technology/AI

Transitional Justice

Transportation

Veterans' Rights