

Deason Summer Externship Program Information for Prospective Placement Sites

Program Overview

The Deason Center Summer Externship Program is an academic program that combines a rural criminal law practice class with hands-on fieldwork in prosecution and public defense offices in small, tribal, or rural (STAR) areas of Texas (“placement sites” or “placement offices”). During the course of the summer, externs work for 10 weeks at their assigned placement site. Placement offices assign externs to do substantive legal work and give externs constructive feedback on the quality of their legal work and their professional conduct.

Educational Objectives

- Teaching students about substantive legal issues and practical ethical challenges that arise in rural criminal practice.
- Improving students’ professional skills, including legal analysis and reasoning, drafting, problem solving, communication, teamwork, and fact-finding.
- Introducing students to practice management, time management, workplace culture, and professionalism.
- Helping students understand the role that prosecutors and public defenders play in rural legal systems and rural communities more broadly.

Faculty Supervision

The Deason Center’s Director, Professor Pamela Metzger, will serve as the externs’ faculty supervisor. During their mandatory weekly one-hour companion course, students will explore weekly topics relevant to criminal law practice in a rural setting. Externs will also communicate regularly with Professor Metzger and will submit short reports and reflection papers that document their work and learning experiences. (Externs are instructed that that their communications with Professor Metzger must not violate any client confidences or waive any privileges.) At the end of the externship, students will complete an assignment that requires them to look back on their externship experiences and reflect on what they have learned.

Field Supervision

At each placement site, one attorney will be designated as the field supervisor. The placement supervisor will assign and supervise the extern’s work and the extern will report directly to that supervisor. As faculty supervisor, Professor Metzger will be in regular communication with the field supervisor to be sure that the externship is running smoothly. She will also be available to support the field supervisor if questions arise about strategies for assignment and supervision of externship work.

Formal Evaluation

Throughout the summer, Professor Metzger will maintain an evaluation log. At the middle and at the end of the program, field supervisors will evaluate the quality of students’ work, their legal skills, and their professionalism. To facilitate this process, the Deason Center will provide field supervisors with evaluation forms. Externs will complete similar self-evaluations and evaluations of the externship program.