

## CAREERS

Many students enter law school with plans to pursue public interest careers. Very few have well-formed ideas of exactly what kind of public interest work they wish to do, however. Often, the demands of law school and challenges of the legal market then get in the way and, three years later, some of those students find themselves on a career path that looks very different than what they originally envisioned. Don't let that happen to you!

*Every Georgetown law student has the ability and opportunity to become a public interest lawyer. There is a myriad of ways one can pursue a career in public interest law, and a myriad of ways to make it financially feasible. Very few students just fall into it, though. A public interest legal career requires a lot of thought and preparation. And starting early is one of the best ways to ensure that you stay focused and on track.*

Effective career planning starts with a comprehensive understanding of what public interest law is, what public interest lawyers do, and where public interest law is practiced. But that's just the beginning. While students often ask us to give them the public interest 'roadmap,' the truth is that every public interest path is unique. If you are serious about being a public interest lawyer, you will need to create your own roadmap. Fortunately, you have many resources at Georgetown to help you along the way.

### WHAT IS PUBLIC INTEREST LAW?

Public interest law generally refers to law-related work performed on behalf of individuals, organizations, or causes that would otherwise lack effective representation within the legal system. Another way to think about public interest law is that it involves clients or issues that are not typically served by the for-profit bar. It is generally considered to encompass government as well as non-profit practice. As is typically done, this manual uses the terms public interest law and public service law interchangeably.

Practicing law in public interest settings is **very** different than practicing law in private sector settings. The environments are different, the clients are different, and often the type of legal work is different. Law students often do not appreciate these differences until later in or even after law school – after they have already made some critical career decisions. Students who educate themselves early about the various types of legal practices and settings, and then use their three or four years in law school to get exposure to those practices and settings, often have a much easier time ensuring that they don't veer too much from their original career goals.

## **WHAT DO PUBLIC INTEREST LAWYERS DO?**

Public interest lawyers are found in all types of legal settings. Some public interest lawyers engage in “direct service” or “individual client representation,” representing individual, organizational, or governmental clients in adjudicative proceedings (e.g., litigation or administrative hearings) or transactional matters (e.g., contract negotiations or real estate deals). This type of legal representation is quite similar to that found in private sector settings, albeit involving very different clients and environments. Examples include indigent criminal defense and representation of poor or low-income clients in civil matters such as domestic violence, public benefits, landlord-tenant disputes, and community economic development transactions.

Other public interest lawyers engage in law-related work that is not focused as much on individual representation as it is on bringing about social or political change. Such work may entail lobbying, public education, community organizing, and/or class action or impact litigation. This type of legal work is much more common in public interest settings (particularly in non-profit organizations) than in private sector settings. Law reform organizations can be found at the state, regional, and national level. Examples of organizations doing this work include the ACLU, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., and Earthjustice Legal Defense.

## **WHERE IS PUBLIC INTEREST LAW PRACTICED?**

Public interest law is practiced predominantly in non-profit organizations and government agencies, but is increasingly practiced in inter-governmental entities and small “public interest” law firms as well. Public interest law is also practiced in private sector settings in the form of pro bono representation.

Non-profit or non-governmental organizations (NGOs): NGOs are legally constituted organizations created by private persons or organizations with no participation or representation of the government. NGOs enjoy tax-exempt status from the federal government. The main types of law-related NGOs are legal services (also known as direct service) providers and policy/advocacy organizations. Examples of the former include the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, San Francisco Legal Assistance Foundation, and Whitman-Walker Legal Clinic; examples of the latter include the Global Justice Center, The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and Human Rights Watch.

Less common NGOs engaging in law-related public interest work include think tanks, such as The Brookings Institution and The Cato Institute.

Government agencies: Legal jobs exist at all levels (federal, state, and local) and in all branches (executive, legislative, and judicial) of the government. When most law students think of being a government lawyer, they think of litigation—filing and trying law suits in court. However, lawyers working for the government are just as likely to advise clients, draft regulations, or set policy as to file law suits.

Among the three branches of the **federal** government and independent agencies, the executive branch and independent agencies employ the greatest number of attorneys. In 2008, there were some 97,000 employees with full-time, permanent legal positions with executive and independent agencies.\* At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) is the largest employer of lawyers. DOJ includes the offices of the United States Attorneys, who prosecute federal crimes, as well as “Main Justice,” which represents the government in various civil and criminal matters. DOJ does the majority of the litigation for the federal government.

Nearly all other federal executive branch agencies (e.g., the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Federal Communications Commission) also employ lawyers. The size of the legal staffs and the type of legal work the lawyers do vary greatly depending on the work and mission of the particular agencies. Offices with independent litigating authority include the Department of Labor, Office of the Solicitor; the Social Security Administration, Regional Counsel’s Office; the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Office of the General Counsel; and the Securities Exchange Commission, Division of Enforcement. Furthermore, the majority of agencies have “coordinate jurisdiction” with the DOJ, meaning that DOJ attorneys initiate all lawsuits and handle any depositions and oral arguments, while the agency attorneys draft the legal papers and provide the subject-matter expertise. Students who may prefer to work with clients to help them comply with the law, rather than litigate, should consider “attorney advisor” or “counselor” positions. For example, lawyers at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are divided into “counselors” and “litigators.” The counselors work on congressional inquiries, Freedom Of Information Act requests, rulemaking, and citizen petitions. The litigators, on the other hand, partner with DOJ to pursue litigation regarding the FDA’s work.

The United States Congress has many lawyers on staff as well. Many work as staff counsel on Committees or as legislative assistants or legislative directors in the offices of individual Senators or Representatives. Some non-partisan legal positions also exist, in offices such as the Office of the Legislative Counsel.

The federal judiciary includes the U.S. Supreme Court, federal courts of appeal, and federal district courts; all use lawyers in different capacities. Many recent law graduates spend one or two years working for individual judges as “judicial law clerks.” Various staff attorney positions also exist in a number of federal courts.

**State and local governments** have comparable legal positions and agencies to those of the federal government, although typically on a smaller scale. Criminal prosecution is handled in most states by the office of the district attorney, which, depending on the state, may alternatively be called the commonwealth attorney, state attorney, or county attorney. State attorneys general represent the state in various civil

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\* Data available on Fedscope, [www.fedscope.opm.gov](http://www.fedscope.opm.gov). “Legal positions” includes attorneys as well as administrative law judges, various administrative and managerial positions, and paralegals.

and criminal matters. Municipal or county issues are typically handled by a city or county law department.

**Public defender offices** provide legal representation to indigent criminal defendants and are often viewed as sister organizations to legal services providers. Most are not NGOs, however, because they are typically funded by the government. Public defender offices exist at both the state and federal levels. Examples include The Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia, the Office of the Federal Defender for District of Maryland, and the New Hampshire Public Defender's Office.

Inter-governmental organizations (IGOs): This manual uses the term IGO to refer to any organization that is created or governed by two or more nations. The most known IGOs, at least among law students, are the United Nations and its sub-entities (such as the World Bank, World Health Organization, and the United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees) and the international criminal tribunals.

Public Interest Law Firms: Public interest law firms are for-profit firms that represent individuals who or groups that are under-represented in the legal system. These firms usually represent plaintiffs who are suing governmental or corporate interests for employment discrimination, labor violations, environmental damage, or other harms. Depending on the firm, compensation may be received through reduced client fees, attorneys' fees, or class action fees. A sub-category of public interest firms that specialize in personal injury or other tortious conduct claims are sometimes referred to as plaintiff firms. Public interest law firms are typically small and are culturally more akin to non-profit public interest employers than corporate law firms.

Public Interest and Private Practice: Public interest law is not restricted to non-profit, government, or public interest law firm settings. Many attorneys in private, corporate law firms practice public interest law through their pro bono work. For some, combining pro bono work with private, corporate law practice is the ideal professional balance. For others, doing pro bono legal work while in private practice is a great way to obtain expertise and skills for an eventual transition into public sector practice. No matter what the reason, lawyers who opt to begin or spend their careers in private practice still have ample opportunity to be public interest lawyers!

## **PUBLIC INTEREST SALARIES**

Salaries for public interest lawyers vary considerably, depending on the type of work, employer, and location. Most federal agencies use the "General Schedule," or GS Pay Scale, which may be found at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/08tables/> (note that salaries are higher in some metropolitan areas, including DC). Many other jobs, including staff attorney positions with non-profits, public defender positions, and assistant district attorney positions, may be as low as \$35,000 or as high as \$92,000. For more information, see the research about public sector salaries compiled by NALP, the Association for Legal Career Professionals, at <http://www.nalp.org/content/index.php?pid=147>.

Georgetown's Loan Repayment Assistance Program, the federal College Cost Reeducation and Access Act, and individual employer loan repayment programs allow students to pursue public sector work, despite debt and low salaries.

Georgetown Law began its [Loan Repayment Assistance Program](http://www.law.georgetown.edu/finaid/lrap/index.html) (LRAP) in 1986 to assist JD graduates in pursuing careers in the field of public interest law. Graduates who qualify for LRAP benefits receive assistance with monthly student loan payments in the form of interest-free loans from Georgetown Law. LRAP provides assistance to: 1) JD graduates who are employed or self-employed on a full-time, paid basis, in a law-related capacity by a non-profit entity that has as one of its primary purposes the rendering of legal services to or on behalf of persons or organizations that could not otherwise obtain like services, and 2) JD graduates who are employed on a full-time, paid basis, in a law-related capacity by a government agency that has as one of its primary purposes the rendering of legal services on behalf of the public. To learn more about LRAP, see <http://www.law.georgetown.edu/finaid/lrap/index.html>.

## **CREATING A PUBLIC INTEREST CAREER ROADMAP**

As with any roadmap, you can't find your way unless you begin with at least somewhat of an idea of where you want to end up. Engaging in some self-assessment and educating yourself about the public interest legal market can help you narrow down the possibilities, which can otherwise seem overwhelming. Here are some basic tips to assist in this process:

### **1. Pursue your passions and play to your strengths.**

Although public interest lawyers share a commitment to serving the under-represented, they don't all share the same passions or possess the same skills. Figuring out *your* passion and *your* strengths is critical to fulfillment as a public interest lawyer. As you go through your law school years, you should continuously reflect upon your various experiences. What classes have you most enjoyed? What issues resonate most with you? What legal work do you most enjoy – research and writing, litigation, lobbying, regulatory enforcement, transactional work? Public interest work is incredibly varied, and finding the right niche for you will greatly influence your professional happiness and success.

### **2. Learn early about the differences between the private sector and public interest legal markets.**

We cannot overstate the importance of appreciating how different the private sector and public interest legal markets are, especially for summer and entry-level legal jobs. Georgetown students are fortunate to have numerous opportunities in both markets, but at various points in law school you will be faced with choosing one over the other. While there is no wrong choice, each choice can have significant consequences for your public interest career path. Understanding those consequences will assist you in making informed decisions along the way. It's perfectly OK if your path takes turns that you

didn't initially envision, but you should be making affirmative choices to change course rather than simply following the crowd. By making affirmative choices, you can smoothly incorporate changes into your career path, rather than abandoning your original path altogether.

At Georgetown, it can appear that students have many more large law firm options than any other type of legal work, at least after first year. That is not really true, but looking for a large firm position is in some ways easier than looking for a public interest or government position. That is because most large law firms hire along the same timeline and in the same manner (on-campus interviewing). Unfortunately, public sector employers simply don't have the resources to recruit in the same way as large law firms or each other. Large law firms and public interest employers also look for different attributes in candidates. These differences are spelled out in detail throughout this section of the manual. Educating yourself early on about those differences is critical to making choices that don't foreclose other choices in the future.

### **3. Don't assume you can't afford a public sector career.**

What do entry-level lawyers make in non-profit organizations or government agencies? (See below.) Does our loan repayment assistance program (LRAP) cover government employment? (Yes.) Is there an income cap for LRAP eligibility? (No.) What will be your monthly loan payments if you continue to borrow at the rate you are currently borrowing? (It depends, and the Financial Aid Office can help you make this determination.) If you can't answer these basic questions, you probably don't know whether you can afford a public interest career.

We hear from students *all the time* that they have to work at a large law firm because of their law school debt. Unless you've done the math, though, that is simply a cop-out. It is absolutely fine to work in a large law firm, but choosing to do so only for financial reasons when you don't fully understand your financial situation is a terrible career choice. If you are serious about pursuing a public interest career, you should also be serious about knowing how LRAP can work for you, what you will make as a public interest or government lawyer, and how you can manage your debt during and after law school.

### **4. Finding a public interest job often requires patience and flexibility.**

While the public interest market is more diverse than the law firm market, it is also a more competitive one in many ways. Most public interest legal employers do not have the resources to hire regularly or on any consistent timeline. This can make finding a public interest job anxiety-provoking, especially when many graduating law students have lined up law firm jobs early in their final year of school. But if you have planned well, and then can stay patient and flexible about your options, you have an excellent shot at landing a very satisfying public interest job. It may not be your dream job, but it could very well help get you to your dream job much earlier than if you got sidetracked by a firm.

**5. A demonstrated commitment to public interest work is the most important job qualification for most public interest employers.**

One of the major differences between the private sector and public interest legal markets is that most public interest employers are much more interested in your previous public interest work than your academic credentials. Generally speaking, the earlier you start gaining public interest experience, the more competitive you will be for future positions. Fortunately, our location in Washington, DC, makes it easy to get started in building a strong public interest resume! You can start as early as first-year through the Pro Bono Pledge, which is described in the Community section of the manual.

**6. Everyone connected with Georgetown’s public interest community is eager to help you.**

If you are someone who cringes at the word “networking,” you’re not alone. Fortunately, you don’t need to be a great networker to have a successful public interest career. You do need, however, to rely on people – a lot. Public interest work is neither easy to find nor easy to do, and you should take every opportunity to seek out advice, guidance, mentorship, and job prospects from other public interest advocates. The first step is to get involved in the Georgetown public interest community. You will find that everyone connected to our community – OPICS, professors, peers, and alumni – is committed to helping others pursue their public interest dreams.

## **THE PUBLIC INTEREST JOB SEARCH**

Now that you have a basic understanding of what public interest law is and some guidelines for planning a public interest career, it’s time for the nuts and bolts of the public interest job search. The rest of this section of the manual is broken down by year of law school, in order to provide you with the specific information you need in the time frame that you need it.<sup>†</sup>

### **THE 1L JOB SEARCH**

**1. Timing: When to Look**

November 1<sup>st</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup> are often considered the magical dates for first-year summer job searching. Under National Association of Law Placement (NALP) guidelines, first-year students are not supposed to make individual appointments with career advisors before November 1<sup>st</sup>, and are not supposed to send applications to employers before December 1<sup>st</sup>. The NALP guidelines do not, however, preclude 1Ls from attending career-related programs or coming into the OPICS office and speaking with a counselor prior to November 1<sup>st</sup>. On the contrary, we encourage you to begin

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<sup>†</sup> For the most part, evening students can view the information for 1Ls in this manual applies to your 1E and 2E years, 2L to your 3E year, and 3L to your 4E year. Some exceptions to this general rule exist, and major exceptions are noted throughout the manual.

gathering information about public interest career opportunities as early as possible, including meeting with your OPICS Section Advisor for a general career discussion.

**The vast majority of public sector summer internships are advertised and solidified in the spring semester.** To that end, you do not have to start your summer public interest job search until after exams, with these two possible exceptions: 1) if you are interested in *particular* employers for the summer; you should at least check the employers' websites or inquire in OPICS by or before November 1<sup>st</sup>, because a few employers operate on earlier timelines (particularly those with extensive security checks, such as the CIA or FBI); and/or 2) if you plan to spend the summer in the same location that you will be spending your winter break, you might want to contact employers there and, if possible, set up interviews with them during the break.

**All first-years should come back from winter break ready to begin the summer job search in earnest.** If possible, work on your resume and other application materials over winter break, because some employers have deadlines soon after second semester begins. OPICS counselors are usually around over winter break to assist with resume reviews and job search strategizing.

## **2. What public sector legal employers seek in applicants**

Public sector employers seek candidates who are committed to the employers' missions. Prior community service, coursework, and even travel can highlight your interest and dedication. Language skills are often greatly valued for work with immigrant communities. Other important skills include oral and written communication, but may also include patience, flexibility, and compassion. Research thoroughly the employers to which you apply so you can articulate your interest and the strength of your application in your cover letter and an interview.

## **3. The 1L public interest application packet**

Every public interest employer is different, but the application packet for most employers includes at least a cover letter and resume. Some employers will also ask for a writing sample, transcript, and/or list of references.

Your resume should detail your educational and work experiences, and should particularly highlight your public interest experience, volunteer service, activism, and anything else that demonstrates a commitment to public service. If you have relevant language skills, those should also be prominently indicated. **Public interest resumes do not need to be limited to one page.**

Cover letters should be individually tailored to the respective employer. Public interest employers want applicants who share their passion and dedication, and a cover letter is the best vehicle for convincing them that you do. Each cover letter should convey your commitment to public service work generally and your interest in the employer's specific work. It should also discuss any relevant language, research, writing,

or other skills you have developed. Good cover letters take time to craft, but they can make the difference between getting an offer or not.

Most first-year students use one of their Legal Research & Writing documents as their writing sample, but you can use a different sample if it is relevant to the employer's work and demonstrates your research, writing, analytic, and organizational skills. Although many public interest employers do not consider first semester grades, some do and will ask for a transcript. Never miss a deadline because an employer asks for a transcript and you haven't yet received your grades. Instead, state in your cover letter that you will forward your transcript as soon as it is available. Public interest employers typically value employer over academic references, but this is not true across the board. Three or four references are usually sufficient.

Click here to access the [\*OPICS Guide to Public Sector Legal Job Applications\*](#).

#### **4. How to look for a public sector summer position**

Unfortunately, there is no “one-stop shopping” for public sector employment. However, there are many ways to find opportunities. First, figure out what you want to look for – think about what you want to get out of the summer, whether it is increased knowledge in a particular subject area, skills such as research and writing, litigation, or language fluency, or inroads into the public interest community in a particular geographic area. Upper division students are a great resource for learning more about particular employers.

OPICS hosts two “formal” public sector recruiting programs to help students connect with employers. The Government Interview Program (GIP), held over several days each September, is a recruiting program for government employers interested in interviewing Georgetown 2Ls and 3Ls students for **paid** summer and post-graduate employment. Every February,<sup>‡</sup> Georgetown Law and George Washington University Law School co-sponsor the Public Sector Recruiting Program, which includes over 150 local and national public sector employers that recruit students through pre-scheduled interviews, resume collections, and informal information exchange.

In addition, OPICS encourages students to participate in the Equal Justice Works (EJW) Career Fair, held in DC each October, which is the largest annual gathering of public sector employers.

OPICS and the Office of Career Services also provide opportunities to students through the International Internship Program (IIP). Through IIP, during summer 2008 Georgetown students interned abroad with 82 different organizations—government bodies, non-governmental organizations, private law firms, and corporate in-house legal departments located in 35 countries. Approximately one-third of the internships have been in the public sector each year, and these include jobs with the UN, the International

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<sup>‡</sup> The 2009 Public Sector Recruiting Program will take place on Saturday, January 31, 2009.

Red Cross, the Justice Studies Center of the Americas, and the Constitutional Court of Korea.

Most public interest internships are found through individual outreach, and OPICS provides resources to help students identify opportunities and make contacts. Key resources include Symplicity, Georgetown's online job posting database; PSLawNet, a comprehensive database of international and domestic internships and permanent public sector jobs, including post-grad fellowships; and the University of Arizona College of Law's Government Honors and Internship Handbook, an online directory of federal, state, and local government internship and permanent positions.

Many additional resources are available from the OPICS website, <http://www.law.georgetown.edu/opics/>, and in our office, McDonough 212. We invite you to make an appointment with your Section Advisor to discuss which resources best suit your needs and interests.

## **5. How to accept or decline public interest internship offers; how long to decide**

When you receive a job offer, feel free to accept immediately. If you have other outstanding offers and/or are waiting to hear from additional employers, you may ask for time to decide: contact the employer by phone; express your enthusiasm; and inquire as to the date by which the employer would like you to make a decision. Generally a decision should be made within ten days of receipt of an offer. When rejecting an offer, do so by phone, and graciously express the difficulty of your decision. When an employer calls, let the call go to voicemail if you are in a loud location or are unsure as to what you will say should they make you an offer. Return the call within 24 hours, even if you are asking for more time.

## **6. How to fund a public interest/government internship**

The majority of public interest internships are unpaid, but all Georgetown law students are guaranteed funding through the Equal Justice Foundation's summer fellowship program. To be eligible, the internship must involve law-related work for a public interest organization or government entity and must be for a minimum of five weeks. In addition, the internship must be either unpaid or draw only a small stipend. For Summer 2008, 1Ls received \$3,250 and 2Ls received \$4,000 for full-time (10 week) internships.

Many external sources of summer funding are also available. PSLawNet maintains a comprehensive list of funding sources in "Summer Funding Sources" at [www.pslawnet.org](http://www.pslawnet.org), and OPICS compiles a list of funding resources as well. Some of these specialized sources of funding can provide special mentoring opportunities and are honors that you can list on your resume. An example is the Peggy Browning Fund, which sponsors 28 fellowships for labor-related organizations around the country;

applications are available in late November and due mid-January (full details are at [www.peggybrowningfund.org](http://www.peggybrowningfund.org)).

## **7. Thinking beyond the first year**

Students often feel bombarded with information about 2L year and the 2L summer job search before 1L year has ended. Early Interview Week (EIW) receives a great deal of attention and many large corporate law firms host receptions for 1Ls in the spring. We recommend that you read at least the beginning of the 2L Job Search Chapter, which discusses EIW and other options facing rising 2Ls that may lead you to ask, “Do I have to?”

## **THE 2L JOB SEARCH**

As second year approaches, your public interest career planning should begin to get more serious. The reason for this is two-fold: 1) it is at this point that each student must make a critical decision about whether to spend a summer and/or a few years post-graduation in the private sector; and 2) your second year summer, whether in the private sector or public sector, can have a substantial impact on your post-graduation employment options. This chapter will address each of those questions and then describe the various summer options available for second year students.

### **1. Private vs. public: aka “Do I Have To?”<sup>§</sup>**

In a perfect world, no one wanting to pursue public interest legal work would be faced with the question of whether they “have to” or “should” go to a corporate law firm. Unfortunately, the legal market is far from a perfect world. Thus, many rising 2Ls find themselves in a position they never thought possible: spending at least a summer in a law firm.

Do you “have” to spend a summer in a firm? Certainly not. Should you? It depends. They are very good reasons to consider spending a summer with a law firm, just as there are very good reasons to spend it with a public interest organization. Whichever direction you choose, however, will have consequences, and you will make a much more informed choice if you appreciate how those consequences could affect your post-graduate job search.

If you spend your second summer at a firm, you miss out on eight to twelve weeks of working with a public interest organization or government agency, where you would further establish your commitment to public interest work, gain valuable experience, and make connections with potential post-graduate employers.

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<sup>§</sup> Many students also ask, “Do I Have To Join a Journal?” We address this question in the Curriculum section of the Manual.

Students who plan to apply for post-graduate project fellowships should be particularly thoughtful as to where they spend their second summer, since that employer can be your sponsor for your fellowship applications.

The most obvious reason to spend at least a summer in a firm is money. Large law firm summer salaries can help students tremendously with third-year tuition and allow them to keep their debt down. Although many government agencies and some non-profit organizations have paid internship programs for 2Ls, the salary is typically a fraction of a law firm salary. (This salary disparity becomes even more substantial for post-graduate employment.)

Another reason to spend a summer in a firm is that large law firms constitute the only sector of the legal employment market that routinely makes offers of post-graduate employment from their second-year classes: Large corporate law firms typically hire a 2L “summer class” and make offers to most or all of those students at the beginning of their 3L year. In contrast, public interest employers will interview students for entry-level positions beginning in the fall of the 3L year, and offers may be made throughout the year, after graduation, and in some cases only after bar admittance.

A third reason is that large law firms can provide good training for *some* public interest law jobs. Note, however, that, though this is true for some post-graduate positions, most summer positions are too short for the training to be of much lasting value. Furthermore, contrary to popular lore, it is NOT true that big firms provide good training for all types of public interest work. Criminal defense, for example, requires trial and client interaction skills that are quite different than those developed at a large corporate law firm.

So, should you do it? Every student must weigh the pros and cons and make his or her own informed decision. Some students don't have to spend much time thinking about it—they simply know a firm is not for them. Other students will go so far as to interview and receive offers before making final determinations about which way to go. Your OPICS Section Advisor can help you as you think through your options. And remember, no decision is fatal!

If you choose to go to a firm, you can still pursue public interest work. Some employers will allow you to spend part of your summer with a public sector employer, and a few firms will even pay full law firm salaries while you do so. (Click here for information on [firms that sponsor split summers](#).) Most firms encourage summer associates to participate in pro bono work, which can provide exposure to public interest lawyering.

## **2. The impact of students' second-summer jobs on their post-graduate job searches**

Ideally, your decision about what to do for your second-year summer should be intertwined with what you want to pursue post-graduation. One of the main reasons for

this is that the entry-level public interest job market is much more competitive than the second-year summer market, and what you do during the second year summer can help put you into a more competitive position for the post-graduate market.

If you go private, make sure you are “making up for it” by doing a fall externship, internship, or clinic, and be prepared to discuss your choice with prospective post-graduate employers.

If you go public, think about where you might want to be post-grad in terms of geographic location, type of legal work, specific issues, and work environment.

### **3. Searching for a 2L public interest summer position**

Second year students should be proactive about researching and pursuing jobs of interest. 2Ls are in a much stronger position than 1Ls because of their added experience and their ability to apply in the early fall—or even late summer.

A 2L public sector job search may begin as early as July, when the DOJ Summer Law Intern Program opens its online application. In September, Georgetown hosts its Government Interview Program (GIP), at which approximately twenty government employers interview 2Ls for **paid** summer internships. The Equal Justice Works (EJW) Career Fair, held annually in October in DC, is the largest gathering of public interest and government employers in the country. 2Ls and 3Ls apply online prior to the Fair and may be selected for pre-scheduled interviews. Table Talk is open to all students, including 1Ls.

Other than DOJ’s Summer Law Intern Program, GIP, and the EJW Career Fair, 2Ls should utilize the same resources they used as 1Ls. Some of most well-known and popular employers have early deadlines, and even employers that don’t might be willing to consider you early. You definitely want to be looking in the late summer and fall so you don’t miss deadlines and perhaps can even solidify your position with an employer that otherwise wouldn’t consider candidates until later in the year. As a 2L, you have much more control over the application process, so you should be deliberative about the process and follow up persistently with your first choice(s).

As indicated earlier, in contrast to large corporate law firms public sector employers are unlikely to make post-graduate offers even to 2Ls at the conclusion of the summer. However, your non-profit employer might be a good fellowship sponsor, or your government employer might offer an entry level honor program. Your time, energy, and commitment during the summer may be critical to a successful post-graduate application.

### **4. Summer funding for 2Ls**

Many government agencies have paid summer programs for 2Ls, and even some non-profits that don’t have paid positions for 1Ls have some kind of pay or stipend for

2Ls. Most non-profit and many government agency positions, however, still offer only unpaid positions, even for 2Ls. Nevertheless, a summer with a public sector employer is an investment for your future as an attorney, so with EJF funding, possible additional scholarships, and careful budgeting, it may be very worthwhile.

## **THE 3L POST-GRADUATE JOB SEARCH**

What should you be thinking about in terms of post-graduate employment? At a minimum, learn about the post-graduate options for non-profit and/or government employers. Learn what types of organizations and agencies usually, always, or sometimes have post-graduation positions at all. If you can't get your dream job right after graduation, what can you do to work up to it? How long will it take? What are the right stepping stones?

### **1. Public Interest Fellowships**

Fellowships are short-term, full-time public interest positions for new or recent law graduates. Most are offered for one or two-year periods, but they can be as short as six months and as long as four years. Fellowship venues include non-profit organizations, government agencies, law firms, and academic settings.

Fellowships fall generally into one of three categories: project fellowships, organizational fellowships, and clinical teaching or other academic fellowships. Organizational fellowships are established positions within existing organizations offered either at pre-determined intervals (e.g., every one or two years) or as funding allows. Hundreds of organizational fellowships are available every year. Clinical teaching fellowships are short-term positions with law school clinical programs. Most combine public interest practice with academic study or teaching, and some offer a degree at the end of the fellowship. Non-clinical academic fellowships typically focus on independent scholarly research, often at a law school or think tank.

Project fellowships are designed to fund the creation of new, innovative public interest law projects. Students seeking project fellowships must create relationships with public interest organizations for their project proposals; some students create a proposal based on their experiences with specific organizations, and others apply to organizations that have a proposal for which they are seeking a qualified student to sponsor. The student then applies to the project fellowship foundations, which select fellows and pay their salaries while the fellows work for the organizations. Skadden and Equal Justice Works are the most well-known project fellowships. OPICS maintains a fellowship alumni list and copies of successful fellowship applications from prior years.

Fellowship salaries vary significantly. Some salaries are as low as \$25,000, while others are as high as \$80,000. Currently, the typical salary is in the low \$40,000 range. Fellowship salaries are usually not negotiable. Most fellowships offer benefits such as health insurance and vacation, and many offer loan forgiveness that supplements Georgetown's loan repayment assistance program.

## **2. Government Honors Programs**

If you know you want to litigate, consider the Department of Justice (DOJ). The DOJ is the central agency for the enforcement of federal laws and as such, is the main litigating branch of the U.S. government. The DOJ's Attorney General Honor Program has an online application; the deadline in 2008 is September 2<sup>nd</sup>. See <http://www.usdoj.gov/oarm/arm/hp/hp.htm> for details.

A wide range of federal government agencies hires entry-level attorneys through their Honor Programs. Third year students seeking entry-level government jobs may participate in OPICS' Government Interview Program (GIP) in September and the Equal Justice Works (EJW) Career Fair in October.

In addition to those recruiting programs, the best resource for researching additional Honor Programs is the online *University of Arizona College of Law Government Honors and Internship Handbook*, at <http://www.law.arizona.edu/career/honorshandbook.cfm> (password protected; password available with a Georgetown login from <http://www.law.georgetown.edu/system/login.cfm>). The annually updated version is available on or about August 1.

Students interested in federal government work may consider the [Presidential Management Fellowship \(PMF\) Program](#). PMF is a leadership development program designed to attract new graduates of master's or doctoral level programs to public service, in positions analyzing and managing public policies and programs. Information on the 2009 PFM Program will be available in the late summer; the Program requires a Fall application.

## **3. Clerkships: Should you do one? How do they affect public interest job searches?**

A clerkship can be an invaluable opportunity to develop legal writing skills and a lifelong mentoring relationship with a judge. Some fellowship programs prefer to hire judicial clerks, and almost all encourage applications from clerks. However, juggling clerkship and project fellowship applications can be challenging: sponsoring organizations may wish to work with candidates who will not withdraw to accept clerkship positions; students are advised to apply only to judges from whom they would accept offers and to accept the first offer made; and most fellowships cannot be deferred. Therefore, we suggest you speak with the counselors in OPICS about the best strategy and timetable for you regarding clerkship and fellowship applications.

## **3. Additional public sector options**

Public interest employers do hire entry-level attorneys, even outside the public interest fellowship and government honor programs. Those two programs provide

uniformity, consistency, and regularity to entry-level hiring, but the majority of entry-level public interest jobs are found outside of those programs. The real difference is that these “independent” positions are typically found much later, often close to or after graduation. The reason is that most public interest/government employers only look when they have a need—i.e., someone leaves or a new position is created. Therefore, the timing of public interest job searches varies considerably.

Virtually everyone will find a public interest job. The question is often *when*, and for some students, that *when* is a very scary proposition, especially given that many of your peers know their post-grad plans almost as soon as they return for their third-year. But if you persevere, and seek out others who are eschewing the firm route, you will find great strength and comfort, and in the end, you will find yourself in a much more fulfilling position.

#### 4. General Tips

**Networking** and making contacts are very important to public sector searches. Contacting alumni via email or phone is a great way to make a connection with a non-profit or government agency; to that end, OPICS provides an Alumni Network Binder that students can search by geographic location. We encourage you to request informational interviews with alums.

**Informational interviewing** is a tool for students to build their knowledge about practice areas and also serves as an incredibly effective networking device. The goal is not to interview for a specific job; indeed, think of an informational interview as the reverse of a job interview. This is an opportunity for you to ask the questions, about (1) the day to day practice in a particular field; (2) the various career paths successful attorneys have taken in that field; and (3) the skills necessary for success in that field. This information can then be used effectively to write better cover letters and more clearly articulate your interest and applicable skills on an interview. After meeting with an individual for an informational interview, in most cases you should plan on maintaining contact with this person on a regular basis via email. The reason for this continued contact is simple: he or she may not have known of any job opportunities when he or she met with you, but might hear of an opening at a later time.