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Summer Legal Fellows: Experience Reflection

Western New England University

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This summer I was fortunate enough to be placed at Western New England University for a fellowship through the Summer Legal Fellows Program at Siena. Here, I had the opportunity to work with Professor Arthur Wolf in conducting research on a current issue within our political culture that has been a focal point in President Trump's administration thus far. Similarly, the topic was relevant to the Springfield area (where Western New England University is located) in which locales, as well as the mayor, raised concern for. During my eight week fellowship, I gained academic skills that will better prepare me for my future in law school. Through this experience I grew both as a student by improving my academic and research skills, but also as a person in general, in which I gained more confidence in myself and became more independent.

I started my internship at Western New England with both excitement and a bit of apprehension as I was unsure of the type of work I would be doing and had never been away from home for more than a few weeks at a time. However, after meeting with Art (Professor Wolf) I knew I had nothing to worry about. During our initial meeting, Art presented four topics to both Jessica and me. He informed us that it was completely our choice in deciding which topic to choose to research and which direction we would take for the duration of our time there. It was this instance that I found myself a bit surprised and at the time, a bit uneasy. As an undergraduate student, I have had the option to decide how to craft my work but always had some criteria that needed to be met. Instead, Art gave us full discretion in how we would like to

work. I have now come to appreciate and prefer this working arrangement as it taught me keep well managed and organized work habits.

After careful considerations, I decided to focus on President Trump's Executive Order, "Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States," which ultimately threatens to revoke federal funds from any location that is considered a sanctuary jurisdiction. Art first presented the question to me of whether President Trump's Order was constitutionally legal or whether it was unconstitutional. I remember thinking that this would be easy to answer; it was either constitutional or it was not. Looking back now, I realize how naive I was and how I overlooked the intricacies of these issues. I began researching and quickly became engrossed in the issue that plagued so many individuals on a daily basis in which many fear being deported, while others may fear higher crime rates, and states fear losing critical funding.

At our weekly meetings, Art would ask both Jessica and me questions about our research in order to get us to view our work from many different directions. However, we personally still had the final decision concerning our work. Working with Art reminded me to keep an open mind when conducting research and to try to frame the context in many different lights to gain different perspectives rather than prejudicing a topic after minimal research.

In conducting our research, Jessica and I were assigned to a law Librarian named Artie Berns. Artie showed us how to research using WestLaw and LexisNexis Advanced. Utilizing these two programs provided us with a tremendous advantage as we anticipate law school because we were taught how to find the sources we needed while learning what different cues and terminology meant. This will better prepare us for law school as will already have

knowledge of the programs we will potentially be using while other students will just be learning them.

The research paper I wrote at the end of my internship improved my writing abilities for the fact that it was one of the longest and one of the more intricate papers I have completed to date. Crafting this paper pushed me out of my writing “comfort zone” and I feel more confident and prepared entering my senior year at Siena and in anticipating law school.

On a more personal note, this experience afforded me the opportunity to grow as an individual. As a commuter student, I have never been away from home for more than a few weeks at a time. This experience allowed me to gain confidence in myself and become more independent in which I improved my cooking and housekeeping skills. I am now confident that I will feel secure and happy should I decide to attend law school away from home.

Overall, the experience I have been privileged to have this summer will be one that I will keep close to me in the future. I was fortunate enough and honored to have been selected for such a competitive program and for the opportunity to work with Art at Western New England University. I have gained a close relationship with the faculty I have worked with. I also gained and improved in my academic skills by learning the intricacies of legal researching and writing and have developed more confidence in my work. I have grown as an individual in my personal life in which I am much more confident in myself. I am forever grateful to both Dr. Cutler and Professor Wolf for granting me with this incredible opportunity and I look forward to sharing my experience with others, as well as carrying what I have learned with me through law school and further.