

Peter Potter
August 2019
Summer Legal Fellows
Dr. Cutler

This summer, I participated in the Summer Legal Fellowship at American University Washington College of Law in Washington, D.C. Going into this program, and Siena College as a whole, I was excited about this unique student/mentor relationship in a location of my choosing. I appreciated the seamless application process and Siena's support for Summer Legal Fellows students throughout summer. The program is a fantastic opportunity to connect students to potential law schools, and gave me insight on the workload of others in my chosen field.

I started my internship on June 3. I was introduced to an online legal database, and became acquainted with my mentor, Kathleen. I explained that I was thrilled to be in D.C., so if she knew anyone or has any work pertaining to political law, international law, telecommunications, etc., I would love to help research or work with it. It was interesting to help the College's file management efforts to transfer client's information from paper to cloud storage. As someone who works at Apple, it was informative to see how clinics, such as this one, manage data transfer of information.

The first week, my partner Diamond was abroad, so from my second day on, I was tasked with sorting through files dating from 2009-2011- to throw out research from WestLaw, Lexisnexis, duplicate files, etc. Initially, I was nervous throwing away files due to the nature of their contents. It was fascinating to see personal texts, banking records, medical records- everything you think is and will remain private- shuffled across the desk of an intern 10 years later. The files contained immigration asylum cases, domestic abuse cases, as well as other tax

related materials. While I wasn't sure what many of the files meant, it was informative seeing evidence and court records. One of my favorite things to do was read the court transcripts- it was interesting to see the dynamic in the courtroom. I feel like I grew a lot just reading each file's contents and seeing what even clinic attorneys deal with. It shed new light on immigration and the asylum process. I'm thankful to have been exposed to primary source material in a time where asylum is such a divisive conversation.

When Diamond came, a professor tasked us with researching information on climate asylum seekers. I found it informative researching organizations efforts towards immigrating those seeking asylum due to climate related matters. (Link [here](#) for work). It was a good experience working with a professor very passionate about a cause.

The following weeks, Diamond and I worked box by box sorting files and throwing out files. We were given time to study for the LSAT, which is something weighing on both of our minds. On days that were slow and Kathleen was on vacation, I took the opportunity to tour The Capitol Building, sit in our House and Senate Committee Assignments, and feel the political ambiance of DC, which is what I have a real passion for. I was also able to contact people at The State Department to start testing for my possible work experience.

Another additional side job I did was copytype an unreadable PDF to a copyable word document. This was difficult for me at the time, because at the time, I was only working with an iPad, as my computer had been issued for recall. I had to learn quickly to comply with a task's time requirements on an unfamiliar format. It also was a task interrupted before getting done; Kathleen asked Diamond and I to write the names of clients stored in the database on a spreadsheet. Because this new assignment was assigned around 3:00pm and needed immediate

attention, I was unable to finish formatting and editing the document properly for the other professor. Instead of making excuses for it why it wasn't completed properly, I asked the professor to send me the work completed by a different student as a source of feedback in an area I was unfamiliar with. I think this was important for improving situation management skills, making me better prepared for law school.

Unfortunately, my apartment was adamant I leave on the exact day of the 8 week mark- as they were shuffling another student in right as I was leaving. During my last full day as a Summer Legal Fellow, I was tasked with writing the Call Numbers of library books in professor's offices. While going door to door, I met a professor who is currently working with Telecommunications Law and is doing extensive research on Chinese affairs in US development- my Capstone topic. Luckily, I was able to get her information, so I'm hoping she can direct me to reading materials for this topic.

While I'd say my experience as a Summer Legal Fellow was different from others in the program, I also think it's important to remember that it is what you make of it. While I was in D.C., I was exposed to new material that progressed my intellectual scope, visited on House and Senate Committee assignments, made contact with Congressman Paul Tonko's office, made contact with The State Department, saw President Trump speak at the Lincoln memorial on July 4th, and made new friends and contacts to reach out to when I return to Washington, D.C. This was an important experience for me. It was a top goal of mine to do this fellowship in DC or N.Y.C. since before I was even accepted to Siena College- as a Junior in High School sitting in on Dr. Cutler's class. It was a fantastic learning experience for me. I'm thrilled to have achieved and completed what was once thought as a long term goal- to be SLF in D.C.