

As with most things this year, my Summer Legal Fellows experience was anything but expected. With a pandemic looming and record amounts of uncertainty, sites were unable to host students in-person, and so we worked with our host sites remotely for the entirety of the program. Initially, I was unsure how this would work as I had always viewed Summer Legal Fellows as a hands-on experience. However, Western New England was nothing but accommodating when it came to communication. As with most remote programs, it was not as fast-paced as it might have been if I had the opportunity for an in-person clinical, but I am incredibly grateful to have had this experience. From my time in other internships, I did have the opportunity to work in a practice and experience the day-to-day of a practicing lawyer. I am still deciding which path I want to follow throughout and after law school. Being able to see the other side of law which includes pro bono work, grant applications, and social initiatives, I feel I am well rounded in terms of legal experience. I left the comfort of seeing law as solely a career in a court and expanded my conception of what one can do with a law degree. Had I been in a program more closely related to my particular interests in the legal field, I may never have realized just how many options there are.

For the first part of the summer, my supervisor, another student, and I worked on solidifying the direction of the Center for Social Justice as a whole. The Center was a relatively new addition to the law school, and it is now under a brand-new director. From the website, it was clear that there was little direction beforehand, and so we were tasked with taking what was there, combining that with our own ideas, and creating a solid vision of what the Center is and what it will do. This came at the time in which racial injustice was in the spotlight of American society and media. Using this as a launching pad, we focused many of our initiatives, resources,

and messaging on the promotion of racial justice and diversity. This would eventually lead to our work on a pipeline initiative which the Center hope to implement in the coming year. My work on the website was specifically related to the resources page and the mission statement. For the resources page, I focused on the three biggest topic areas which are racial justice, economic justice, and the more ambiguous holistic justice. The last section worked as a catch all for areas such as housing inequality, injustices furthered by COVID-19, and access to justice. These are expansive topic areas; my job was to narrow down what resources I could find in order to give a reader a solid foundation on which to start, whether that be research of general curiosity. I also helped to solidify the mission statement of the Center. I did this by taking most of what was already on the website, about 4 separate statements, and condensing it all into one concise message. Other work I did included brainstorming tag lines for the Center and names for a digital content series on social justice.

The next and largest project was to research diversity pipeline programs. This research functions as preliminary work for the Center as it moves forward in developing its own diversity pipeline initiative. For this research, I created four separate memos in which both my research and opinions culminated. I was unsure at the start of this project in terms of my capabilities. I had little experience in areas of community outreach and diversity, much less designing a program. However, once I started, I was able to apply a lot of my own knowledge and experiences on how best to connect with those my own age. By the end of this project, I felt very accomplished, specifically in the fact that I had contributed to something greater.

The aforementioned feeling is easily applicable to my entire experience with Summer Legal Fellows. Unlike some internship experiences I have heard from acquaintances, my work

was not fluff work. There was a level of importance which underlined every project. Even the website, which may seem trivial to some, was of great importance to the Center and the greater Springfield community. The ability to communicate effectively, especially to those not of legal background, is a vital skill for any potential lawyer. I feel as if I was able to strengthen this skill over the course of the summer, as well as communication of complex ideas to others. The memos are a great example of this skill in action. With the amount of information I was given, there were many directions in which I could have gone in terms of what type of program to implement, each direction with its own nuances and subtle differences. Learning to communicate these differences was an important lesson in expression of opinions and ideas, a lesson which I had previously gone without for many years. This final project provided me the opportunity to incorporate all of my newfound skills into one final product that will not only be useful for me but for the Center as well.

My Summer Legal Fellows experience was not at all what I expected. Nonetheless, I was able to see a side of the legal profession, which is seldom recognized, and I have expanded my understanding of what a law degree can do. With that being said, I do not see myself pursuing this specific area of law. However, I do believe that exposure to a variety of options and ideas are the best way to determine what is best for myself and my career. I may not have found the exact path I would like to follow, but I have solidified my decision to go to law school. The help and advice that Western New England advisors provided answered any question I may have had, and I now have a host of resources available to me as I prepare to apply to law schools. At the beginning of the application process, I was mostly sure I wanted to be a lawyer, yet I was unsure if this program would even be right for me. I know now that it was the best decision I could have

made, and now, heading into law school within the next year, I am confident in my writing, research, and communication skills which will undoubtedly be vital to my continued academic success.