

PUBLIC INTEREST PROGRAMS AT THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
DICKINSON SCHOOL OF LAW

OVERVIEW

The Penn State Dickinson School of Law has a long standing history of dedication to public service in legal education going back to the 1960s with the formation of the Cumberland County Legal Aid Society. Two of the school's six **clinical programs** grew as an extension of the Legal Aid Society, and have been serving the local community for over 25 years through student representation of the disabled and impoverished in the Disability and Family Law Clinics. The students collaborated in 1990 to form the **Public Interest Law Fund**, an organization which enables students to receive summer fellowships for work in public interest organizations. More recently, the school has created and funded the full time position of the **Public Interest Fellow**, establishing one person at the law school who dedicates her full time and attention to the coordination and development of public interest initiatives. As the school grows and expands, it's commitment to public service has only become stronger as evidenced by the **Loan Repayment Assistance Program** and the three new clinics being added to the curriculum. As an educational institution, the law school encourages its students to explore public service both in and outside of the classroom. As a professional school, the faculty and staff strive to introduce the students to the professional responsibility of all lawyers to assist in bridging the justice gap with the hope that the students will internalize this responsibility early on in their professional careers. Penn State Dickinson is proud of its students' and faculty's achievements in the struggle for equal access to the law.

Equal Justice Works Fellowship Recipient – Paula Knudsen, Class of 2001

Louis J. Goffman Award for an Individual 2003 – Deborah Albert-Heise, Class of 1991

Louis J. Goffman Award for a Group 2000 – The Penn State Dickinson School of Law

THE MILLER CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEREST ADVOCACY

The Miller Center for Public Interest Advocacy houses the law school's voluntary pro bono matching program. The Center engages in outreach to public interest organizations, bar associations and pro bono programs and provides student research assistance to attorneys who are helping to provide access to justice for those who are unable to afford representation. After completing 60 hours of qualified service, students are formally recognized at a reception held in their honor as Miller Center Public Interest Advocates. This designation is also recognized upon graduation. While the Miller Center houses the formal pro bono program, many students who are recognized as advocates have served in the school's clinics or participated in summer fellowship programs and have contributed well above the number of hours required by the Center.

Settings where students have performed Pro Bono hours:

Dauphin County Public Defender
Cumberland County Public Defender

MidPenn Legal Services
Philadelphia Legal Assistance

Hagerstown Public Defender
YWCA Domestic Violence Clinic
Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center
Center for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights

NorthPenn Legal Services
Dauphin County Bar Association
American Civil Liberties Union
Community Justice Project

PUBLIC INTEREST ADVOCACY NEWSLETTER

The Public Interest Office publishes a monthly newsletter featuring upcoming public interest events on campus and in the community, fellowship deadlines, pro bono opportunities and spotlights on students and faculty who have demonstrated extraordinary dedication to public service. The newsletter is circulated to all students, faculty and staff.

SUMMER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS

The Public Interest Law Fund:

PILF, established by students in 1990, is an organization dedicated to promoting the practice of public interest law. It's fundraising and outreach efforts raise thousands of dollars each year to underwrite the Cherie T. Millage Summer Fellowship Program. The Fellowships encourage students to pursue summer employment in public service and allow for those dedicated students to receive otherwise unavailable compensation for their work as advocates. In addition to funding and administering the fellowship program, PILF has spearheaded such initiatives as the **Penn State Dickinson School of Law Guide to Public Interest Opportunities**, an annually updated resource for Dickinson students laying out both local and national public interest opportunities for students.

Interest on Lawyer's Trust Accounts Grant Program:

Using IOLTA funds, the law school is able to sponsor students who work full-time in Legal Services offices during the summer. The program provides much needed services to the community and an education unattainable in the classroom for students. Grant recipients enroll in the Legal Problems of Indigents course preceding their placement in preparation for their time in local Legal Services offices.

CLINICS

For more than 25 years, the law school's clinical program has been dedicated to providing free legal services to eligible persons in surrounding neighborhoods. In recent years, the clinical program has doubled in size and now offers six public interest settings which provide desperately needed services to the community and uniquely valuable educational experiences for the students.

- **Disability Law Clinic:** Offers free legal services to Cumberland County residents with issues related to disability in areas including social security and special education issues.
- **Elder Law Clinic:** Students are a primary legal resource to elders in issues concerning health care and neglect, among others.
- **Family Law Clinic:** Provides free legal help to people with issues concerning the family such as divorce, child support, custody, and other matters.
- **The Inmate Assistance Clinic:** Students engage in problem solving through answering the legal questions of inmates and making referrals when appropriate.

- **The Children’s Advocacy Clinic:** Students represent the best interest of the child in a number of settings including dependency and neglect, custody and contested adoption hearings.
- **The Refugee Clinic:** Students represent detained immigrants in hearings before an administrative law judge and through appeals to the Board of Immigration Appeals.

FIELD PLACEMENT CLINICS

Penn State Dickinson’s externship program is a 3 credit course offered to second and third year students. Students earn credit for work performed outside the law school in courts, public service law offices and governmental law offices. The year long program offers students an opportunity to gain experience outside the classroom in a variety of settings while still being connected to the law school through the field clinic supervisor.

VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE / TAX COUNSELING FOR THE ELDERLY

This volunteer program, held in the spring, gives students a client counseling opportunity by helping local residents prepare their federal, state, and local income tax returns. The Dickinson School of Law has been the site of the VITA/TCE program for 24 years. In 2005, the program had 49 student volunteers who assisted 373 taxpayers from six counties through the filing process.

LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The law school has recognized that fostering an understanding of our professional responsibility to close the justice gap often requires financial assistance for those who choose to dedicate their careers to that purpose. In response, the Loan Repayment Assistance Program was created to assist Penn State Dickinson graduates in their pursuit of social justice careers. Recipients of LRAP who work in public interest law and are making less than \$45,000 a year receive substantial assistance with the repayment of their education loan obligations.

THE PUBLIC INTEREST LAW FUND AND OTHER STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Penn State Dickinson’s diverse student body has a myriad of options for extra-curricular student centered activities. The Student Bar Association, the umbrella organization for all student organizations, participates in independent public service activities such as blood drives and fundraising for charitable donations while also supporting the various individual groups in their public interest initiatives. For a more complete, though ever expanding listing of the student organizations active at the law school, please visit <http://www.dsl.psu.edu/groups/studentorganizations.cfm>.

A sampling of Student Public Interest Groups:

Dickinson Law Public Interest Law Fund
 Minority Law Students Association
 The Environmental Law Society
 Woman’s Law Caucus

Amnesty International
 Project S.T.A.F.F.
 OUTLAW
 ACLU Student Chapter

PUBLIC INTEREST 101: CURRICULUM

Many of the faculty members at Penn State Dickinson pride themselves on the emphasis given to professional responsibility and humanitarian implications of the law throughout the school's curriculum. From courses on legislation to patent law, Dickinson professors recognize that no course in a legal education is complete without recognition of those most in need of the law's protection. In addition to the awareness of public interest concerns flowing throughout the school's curriculum, the school offers many courses specifically addressing the legal needs of underrepresented communities.

Public Service Course Sampling:

Legal Problems of Indigents	Elder Law
Protecting Individual Rights Under State Constitutions	Family Law
International Protection of Human Rights	Juvenile Law
Gender and the Law	Labor Law
Post Conviction Process	Mediation

CAREER FAIRS, CONFERENCES AND RETREATS

The Penn State Dickinson School of Law encourages its students to attend multiple network building public interest events. The school's membership in Equal Justice Works and PSLawNet provides students with an opportunity to attend the Equal Justice Works Career Fair in the fall as well as access the PSLawNet job database year-round. In the spring, the school participates in the Consortium of Greater Philadelphia Area Law Schools' Public Interest / Public Service career fair. Penn State Dickinson has annually sent students to the Peggy Browning Fund National Law Students Workers' Rights Conference and has begun funding student attendance at the annual Lavender Law Conference. Our students have been a strong contingent of those attending Yale Law School's annual Robert M. Cover Retreat for many years and Penn State Dickinson students were responsible for the organization of the 2006 retreat: The Faces Behind the Cases.

THE DIRECTOR

Gary S. Gildin
Professor of Law and
The Honorable G. Thomas and Anne G.
Miller Chair in Advocacy

Professor Gary Gildin is one of the nation's pre-eminent teachers of trial practice and techniques. In 1999, he was honored by the Roscoe Pound Foundation with the Richard S. Jacobson Award, given annually to the nation's outstanding trial practice teacher. In 2000, he was named to the Honorable G. Thomas and Anne G. Miller Chair in Advocacy. As holder of the Miller Chair, Professor Gildin serves as the Director of the Miller Center for Public Interest Advocacy. In his capacity as Director of the Center, Professor Gildin

oversees the law school's pro bono program which is designed to encourage law students to accept the lawyer's obligation to serve the underrepresented. Additionally, he participates in trial advocacy skills training for lawyers in public interest and legal services organizations that provide legal assistance to the poor.

Outside of his work as the Director of the Center, Professor Gildin teaches trial practice skills, constitutional criminal procedure, and civil rights law, serves as the faculty advisor for the student run Public Interest Law Fund and maintains his role as an officer of the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania. He has published widely in both advocacy and civil rights law and has a special interest in issues related to religious liberty.

Professor Gildin is an honors graduate of the University of Wisconsin and Stanford Law School.

THE PUBLIC INTEREST FELLOW

Kate Cramer Lawrence
Public Interest Fellow

Kate Lawrence obtained her law degree from the University of Denver College of Law where she was the recipient of a Chancellor's Scholarship offered to a select number of qualified students committed to pursuing careers in public interest law. In 2004, she was awarded the Outstanding Student Attorney designation in the Civil Litigation Clinic where she advocated for multiple asylum clients in federal immigration proceedings.

As the Public Interest Fellow, Kate Lawrence coordinates the law school's pro bono program, facilitating student research assistance for public interest attorneys and private attorneys working on pro bono cases. Additionally, she serves as the liaison between all public interest initiatives at the law school, connecting with students, Financial Aid, Career Services, Admissions and more. The Public Interest Fellow circulates a monthly newsletter, updating the law school community on public interest opportunities and highlighting students and faculty who have demonstrated a strong commitment towards bridging the current justice gap.