

# J. D. Certificate in Public Interest Law

## Information Guide

### Benefits of achieving the Certificate in Public Interest Law

- Illustrates commitment to public interest law, distinguishing you in a way that can help secure employment in the surprisingly competitive area of public interest law
- Provides the opportunity to participate in career counseling designed specifically to help you meet your public interest career goals
- Allows you to customize coursework to match your personal interests and career goals
- Puts you on a list to receive announcements and invitations to events, conferences, and other opportunities geared toward public interest students

### Requirements for the Certificate in Public Interest Law

#### I. Letter of Intent

**Deadline:** At least 6 months prior to graduation. We recommend students submit this letter as early in law school as possible.

Every prospective candidate for the J.D. Certificate in Public Interest Law must submit a Letter of Intent to register in the certificate program. Please return completed Letters of Intent to the Center for Access to Justice & Technology in room 775. Students in the certificate program will receive email notices of upcoming events and deadlines in the Public Interest Certificate Law Program.

Students submitting the Letter of Intent are not bound to complete the Certificate in Public Interest Law or the required courses. Withdrawal from the program can be made through inaction or through formal notice to the Center for Access to Justice and Technology.

Available at: [www.kentlaw.edu/academics/pil/PICertLetterofIntent.pdf](http://www.kentlaw.edu/academics/pil/PICertLetterofIntent.pdf)

#### II. Public Interest Career Planning Meeting

**Deadline:** Within 6 weeks after submitting the Letter of Intent

After filling out the Letter of Intent to participate in the Public Interest Certificate Program, students must complete the Public Interest Career Plan Survey, available at the Career Services Office or online. This form helps Career Services Counselors determine each student's public interest career goals. The Career Services Office also uses the results of the survey to funnel goal specific information to interested students.

After completing this survey, students should contact Michelle Vodenik in the Career Services Office, [mvodenik@kentlaw.edu](mailto:mvodenik@kentlaw.edu), regarding your Public Interest Career Planning meeting.

Available at: [www.kentlaw.edu/academics/pil/PICPIInterestSurvey.pdf](http://www.kentlaw.edu/academics/pil/PICPIInterestSurvey.pdf)

You may also obtain a copy of the Public Interest Survey in the Career Services Office in Suite 360.

### **Career Services Office**

The Career Services Office provides valuable resources and guidance specifically designed for public interest students. Career Services Counselors can help students define their career goals. They also can help students identify internships, externships, fellowships, and volunteer opportunities that will help them reach those goals.

Website: <http://www.kentlaw.edu/depts/cso/>

Office: Suite 360

Phone: 312.906.5171

Email: [kentcso@kentlaw.edu](mailto:kentcso@kentlaw.edu)

### **III. Curriculum Planning Meeting**

**Deadline:** Complete prior to graduation.

Due to the breadth of substantive areas of public interest law, each student meets with the Director of the Public Interest Certificate Program, Professor Ron Staudt. After submitting a Letter of Intent students should contact Professor Staudt to schedule a Curriculum Planning Meeting to discuss courses they wish to take to fulfill the Certificate requirements. See section IV. Coursework Requirements for examples of courses that meet the Certificate Requirements.

Each semester, prior to course registrations for the following semester, Professor Staudt holds a "Course Picking Session" for students to learn about upcoming public interest law courses and ask questions. Student attendance at this session meets the Curriculum Planning Meeting requirement.

#### **Certificate in Public Interest Law Program Director**

Professor Ron Staudt

Office: Room 743

Phone: 312.906.5326

Email: [rstaudt@kentlaw.edu](mailto:rstaudt@kentlaw.edu)

### **IV. Coursework Requirements**

**Deadline:** Complete prior to graduation.

The Certificate in Public Interest Law requires a **total of 12 credit hours** of public interest law coursework, including both required and elective courses as detailed below.

**Required Courses:** Students must complete these courses for 6 credit hours:

- **Public Interest Law & Policy** (3 credit hours): This course provides students with an overview of the issues faced by lawyers when they represent low-income clients and serve under-represented and disenfranchised groups. This course covers the meaning of public interest law, techniques used by public interest lawyers, and court decisions and legislation related to topics such as low-income housing, medical care, immigration, environmental issues, poverty, and access to courts. This course also explores ethical and professionalism issues that public interest lawyers face.
- **Legal Writing IV - Public Interest Law** (3 credit hours): This course helps students develop writing skills necessary for a successful career in public interest law. Students participating in Law Review, Moot Court Honor Society, Judicial Externships, or other certificate programs may substitute another course in lieu of Legal Writing IV – Public Interest Law. Students considering taking a substitute course should discuss this with Professor Ron Staudt during your Curriculum Planning Meeting or in a follow-up meeting.

**Elective Courses:** Students must complete 6 credit hours of elective courses in public interest law.

With the substantive scope of public interest law being so broad, many courses fulfill this requirement. Students should have their elective courses approved during their Curriculum Planning Meeting with Professor Ron Staudt. Courses taken pass/fail do not count towards Certificate requirements. Students are encouraged to include at least one of the following as their elective courses:

- Justice & Technology Practicum
- Public Interest Clinic
- Public Interest Externship
- Public Interest Seminar

### **Examples of Elective Courses:**

#### **Public Interest Elective Courses**

Administrative Law  
Civil Rights History  
Comparative Constitutional Law  
Disability Law  
Employment Discrimination  
Environmental Law & Policy  
Family & Employment  
Immigration Practice  
Federal Courts  
First Amendment  
Genetics and the Law  
Immigration Law and Policy  
International Human Rights  
Juvenile Law  
Laws of Privacy  
Legislative Advocacy  
Mediation  
Mental Health  
School Law  
State & Local Government Law

#### **Practicum**

Justice & Technology Practicum

#### **Seminars**

Access to Justice and Technology  
Capital Punishment and the Judicial Process  
Constitutional Torts (§1983)  
Emerging Technologies  
First Amendment Theory  
Free Speech and Contemporary Problems  
Legal Rights of Children  
Privacy in Employment  
Religion and the Constitution  
Reproductive Technologies  
Sexual Orientation & the Law

#### **Clinics**

Criminal Defense  
Low-Income Tax Payer  
Family Law  
Health and Disability Law  
Chicago Legal Clinic Practicum

## **V. Completion of the Chicago-Kent Certificate of Service**

**Deadline:** Complete prior to graduation.

Students seeking the Certificate in Public Interest Law must complete the pro bono requirements set by PIRC for the receipt of the Chicago-Kent Certificate of Service. Currently, PIRC awards the Certificate of Services to students who satisfactorily complete and document 50 hours of community service.

Learn more about PIRC and document your pro bono hours on PIRC's website:

<http://www.kentlaw.edu/publicinterest/pirc/50hours.html>

#### **Public Interest Research Center (PIRC)**

This student-staffed office assists other students achieve their public service goals. PIRC assists students in finding legal and non-legal volunteer projects including both one-time and ongoing service opportunities.

Website: <http://www.kentlaw.edu/publicinterest/pirc/>

Office: Room 654

Phone: 312.906.5089

Email: [pirc@kentlaw.edu](mailto:pirc@kentlaw.edu)

## **VI. Application for Completion of the Certificate in Public Interest Law**

**Deadline:** April 1st during student's final semester prior to graduation.

The Application for Completion is used by the Registrar to verify each student completed the coursework required for the Certificate in Public Interest Law. Please return completed Applications for Completion to the Center for Access to Justice & Technology in room 775. After submission if any information on this application changes, please submit a new application.

Available at: [www.kentlaw.edu/academics/pil/ApplicationforPICert.pdf](http://www.kentlaw.edu/academics/pil/ApplicationforPICert.pdf)

## **Other Chicago-Kent Public Interest Law Resources**

### **Kent Justice Foundation (KJF)**

The Kent Justice Foundation's mission is to enable Chicago-Kent students to pursue unpaid summer internships at public interest organizations. KJF raises money by holding various fundraisers throughout the year, which they provide as stipends to qualifying students for summer fellowships.

Website: <http://www.kentjusticefoundation.org/>

Email: [kjf@kentlaw.edu](mailto:kjf@kentlaw.edu)

### **The Center for Access to Justice and Technology (CAJT)**

Chicago-Kent's Center for Access to Justice & Technology strives to make justice more accessible to the public by promoting the use of the Internet in the teaching, practice, and public access to the law. CAJT is a leader in building knowledge tools for lawyers and using them for low and moderate income people. CAJT's A2J Author® software is used by lawyers in nearly every state. Hundreds of thousands of people use A2J Guided Interviews® every year to learn about their legal rights and prepare simple forms for court.

There are many ways in which students can get involved with CAJT, either as volunteers or for work-study.

- **Self-Help Web Center (SHWC)** – Students can spend time at the Daley Center, helping self-represented litigants search for legal information and complete online legal forms. These students have the opportunity to gain real-world experience by working directly with litigants.  
Website: <http://www.kentlaw.edu/cajt/shwc.html>  
Email: [shwc@kentlaw.edu](mailto:shwc@kentlaw.edu)
- **Access to Justice Student Editorial Board (A2J SEB)** - Similar to a law review board in its structure, A2J SEB is a student-run Chicago-Kent initiative that focuses on training students to use A2J Author®, creating A2J Guided Interviews® and researching access to justice issues.  
Website: <http://www.kentlaw.edu/cajt/a2j-seb/Welcome.html>  
Email: [a2jseb@kentlaw.edu](mailto:a2jseb@kentlaw.edu)