

# 2023 VLS Summer Stipends and Externships Informational Session

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Presented by the Public Interest Office and the Legal Clinic

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# Summer Stipends and Externships

Two alternative forms of support for students who engage in unpaid legal internships for the summer:

- **Stipends:** competitive, not guaranteed, OR
- **Externship:** available to any student who chooses to enroll in the summer externship courses

Stipends – will be competitive this year!!

- Traditionally, two forms of stipends:
  - Vanderbilt Law School stipends – available to students working in the public interest, broadly defined, over the summer
  - VLS Legal Aid Society Public Interest Stipend Fund (PISF) stipends – available only to students working on behalf of underserved communities over the summer; a 1-hour auction service or pro bono requirement historically applies
- All stipend applicants must apply online: <https://redcap.link/stipend2023>
- Deadline is Sunday, April 2 and decisions will be made by Friday, April 14

## Stipend Eligibility Requirements

- Students must work in public interest, broadly defined: government offices, offices of international organizations, judiciary, nonprofit organizations, prosecutors' offices, public defenders' offices.
- Students must be engaged in legal work under the supervision of at least one lawyer.
- Students must full-time work for 5 weeks to receive a half summer award (\$3000) or full-time 10 weeks to receive a full summer award (\$6000). Students may only receive a full summer award or a half summer award; awards cannot be prorated.
- Students receiving stipends may seek and receive external sources of support to supplement their stipend, but cannot receive more than a combined total of \$7500 from Vanderbilt and external sources.

## Stipend Award Process and Criteria

- Stipend decisions are made by the administration.
- Factors to be considered include:
  - A student's enthusiasm for public interest work;
  - A student's career goals and how the summer experience will impact the student's career;
  - The quality of the student's application materials;
  - GPA is not a factor;
  - Need, only to the extent that you are receiving student loans and/or you wish to add information on your application about your financial situation. *Note that need is not a factor for PISF stipend awards.*
- All stipend applicants will automatically be considered for VLS named summer stipend awards, such as the Garrison Public Interest Fellowships, the Cheek Business Law Summer Fellowship, the George Barrett Social Justice Summer Stipend, the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, and the Branstetter Dispute Resolution Stipend.
- Preference is given to rising 3Ls over rising 2Ls.

# Externships

- Students must be engaged in unpaid work (no stipends, no payment of any kind).
- Students must be supervised by an attorney who is a full-time employee of the organization and who has been licensed at least three years (there may be some flexibility on this last requirement in certain instances).
- May be at any public interest or government organization or in a corporate legal office:
  - Nonprofit advocacy organizations
  - Legal aid offices
  - Government agencies
  - Judicial chambers
  - International organizations
  - Prosecutor's or Public Defender's Offices
  - In-house
- Questions? Email [externships@law.vanderbilt.edu](mailto:externships@law.vanderbilt.edu).
- Course descriptions and applications – <https://law.vanderbilt.edu/academics/clinical-legal-education/externships.php>
- Tuition fee for summer externship credit is \$200 per credit hour.
- Financial Aid is available for students enrolled in summer externships.



## Externships – in or around Nashville

### IN NASHVILLE SUMMER EXTERNSHIP COURSE

- 2 sessions: **May 22 – June 23** and **June 26 – July 28**  
Can enroll for either or both sessions (five weeks of full time work for each session)
- 3 credits for each session
- Cannot be paid at all
- List of Pre-Approved Sites – if you are working at one of these sites, you just need to submit your enrollment form and a letter or email from the employer accepting you for unpaid work at the location
- Employer Not on List of Pre-Approved Sites: Submit application so that the site can be vetted
- There will be weekly classes at the law school
- Application found on the law school's Clinical Legal Education Externship website - <https://law.vanderbilt.edu/academics/clinical-legal-education/externships.php>
- **Applications Due by Friday, April 28**
- Questions? Email [externships@law.vanderbilt.edu](mailto:externships@law.vanderbilt.edu)

## Externships – outside Nashville

### OUTSIDE NASHVILLE SUMMER EXERNSHIP COURSE

- May enroll for anywhere from 1 – 6 credits; 55 hours of work at the site for each hour of credit
- Cannot be paid at all
- May be anywhere in the world
- Must identify an individual faculty supervisor as well as a site supervisor
- Must submit the application so that the site can be vetted
- There will be a mandatory orientation meeting prior to the end of exams
- Application found on the law school's Clinical Legal Education Externship website - <https://law.vanderbilt.edu/academics/clinical-legal-education/externships.php>
- **Applications Due by Friday, April 28**
- Questions? Email [externships@law.vanderbilt.edu](mailto:externships@law.vanderbilt.edu)

## FAQs

- **Can I combine a stipend and an externship (each for half a summer)?** – YES, so long as you are very clear about the dates and receive the stipend for a period of time and the externship credit for another period of time. You may not receive stipend support and externship credit simultaneously.
- **Can I do more than one externship placement?** - YES, so long as the Nashville placement falls within the Nashville time period; out of Nashville externships can be combined in any order.
- **If I am not approved for a stipend, can I receive externship credit?** – YES, so long as the supervisor agrees to our requirements for externship site supervisors; the date for externship applications is after the date for stipend decisions, so that you may apply for externship credit in the event you do not receive a stipend.
- **What if I have applied for a position, but have not heard by the stipend deadline; can I still be considered?** NO. The deadline has to be firm as there is a finite amount of money and the funds will be committed once the decisions are made.

## FAQs, cont.

- **What if I have applied for a position, but have not heard by the externship deadline; can I still receive credit?** YES, so long as you are in contact with the Legal Clinic or Dean Miller to let them know what is going on. They will work with you on getting credit so long as you are in process by the application deadline.
- **Is there a maximum number of externship credits I can receive?** YES, 6 (unless you do a full semester externship, in which case it is 8). These are the number of credits that can apply towards graduation; you can register for more than this number, but only the maximum will count towards graduation.
- **Can I work half-time and receive either credit or a stipend?** - YES. If you have an in-Nashville externship, you can work half-time for 10 weeks and receive 3 credits. If you have an out-of-Nashville externship, you simply count the hours. You may receive a half stipend for 10 weeks of half time employment.
- **If I have an unpaid internship at a law firm, may I receive externship credit or a stipend?** Unfortunately, no.

## FAQs, cont.

- **How do I find a faculty supervisor for my outside-Nashville externship?** JUST ASK. Most faculty are very receptive to supervising students; you may ask a full time faculty member, a member of the legal writing faculty, a law librarian or an adjunct faculty member. You may also ask an administrator who is also a lawyer.
- **Can I do an externship if I do the Venice program?** YES. The second Nashville session begins after the Venice program ends. And you could do an out-of- Nashville externship at any point after Venice ends.
- **Can I receive a stipend and go to Venice?** YES. You would only be eligible for a half stipend as you would not have a full ten weeks available after Venice.
- **Is there a maximum number of summer credits I can count towards my graduation requirement?** You may receive a total of 8 summer credits during summer(s) at Vanderbilt. You may earn those credits during one summer or both, but you may not count more than 8 summer credits towards the graduation requirement.
- **What if I have received a Dean's Leadership award?** You may take the DLA as a summer stipend, or you may have it posted to your student account and then use the funds to pay for externship tuition and use the remainder for summer living expenses. Because you may designate the DLA as a stipend, you are not eligible for either a PISF or a VLS stipend.