

Deason Center



Deason Rural Externship Program Information for Prospective Placement Sites

Program Overview

The Rural Criminal Externship Program allows second- and third-year law students to earn academic credit by working and studying in prosecution and public defense offices in Texas' small and rural communities. For nine weeks during the summer, externs do substantive legal work at their assigned placement sites. In turn, attorneys at the placement sites provide externs with constructive feedback on their legal work and model the ethical and professional standards required of criminal practitioners.

Educational Objectives

- Teach law students about the challenges and rewards of rural criminal practice.
- Improve students' professional skills, including problem solving, fact-finding, issue identification, legal analysis, and legal writing.
- Introduce students to practice management, time management, appropriate workplace culture, office communication skills, and other features of legal professionalism.
- Help students understand the role that prosecutors and public defenders play in rural legal systems and the communities they serve.

Faculty Supervision

The Deason Center's director, Professor Pamela Metzger, will serve as the externs' faculty supervisor. Students will participate in a weekly online seminar that explores topics relevant to criminal law practice in a rural setting. Externs will also communicate regularly with Professor Metzger and submit short reports and reflection papers documenting their work and learning experiences. (Externs are instructed that their communications with Professor Metzger must not violate any client confidences or waive any privileges.) At the end of the externship, students will complete an assignment that requires them to look back on their externship experiences and reflect on what they have learned.

Field Supervision

At each placement site, one attorney will be designated as the externship field supervisor. The field supervisor will assign and supervise the extern's work, and the extern will report directly to that supervisor. As faculty supervisor, Professor Metzger will be in regular communication with the field supervisor and support the field supervisor if questions arise about strategies for assignment or supervision.

Formal Evaluation

Over the summer, field supervisors will complete three evaluations of their students' legal skills and professionalism. To facilitate this process, the Deason Center will provide field supervisors with evaluation forms that can be completed and submitted online. Externs will complete similar self-evaluations and evaluations of their externship experience.

Application

Offices interested in hosting an extern should complete the attached application and return it to the Deason Center at deasonjusticecenter@smu.edu by Friday, February 18th.