Immigration Research Project Internship

Dr. Anette Sikka, Legal Studies Department

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How should students contact? Email
How should students submit cover letters and resumes? Email

General Description

Dr. Anette Sikka is a professor in the Legal Studies Department. She holds a PhD in Law from the University of Ottawa and a J.D. from Dalhousie University. She is also a licensed attorney in the state of Alabama practicing immigration and refugee law, the field in which in which she also conducts research.

Internship or Job Description

Dr. Sikka is creating a research project supporting legislative reform around immigration in Illinois and on the national level. The goals of the project are to promote reform of detention and deportation procedures against people participating in the criminal justice system. Dr. Sikka is looking to collect information on instances of people being detained and put into deportation proceedings for attending court, cases where people were detained while filing complaints as victims of crime, including seeking protective orders from violent and abusive partners, and those who feel threatened by immigration consequences if they appear as witnesses either in court or to law enforcement.

The project will involve first reviewing laws and policies from states that attempt to address increasingly harsh immigration enforcement. Students will also collect and analyze law enforcement policies and municipal resolutions to this effect. This data will form the basis for designing interviews with key members of the immigrant-serving communities, focus groups of affected immigrants and other sources that arise as the project goes forward. Students will be involved in all parts of the project’s design and structure, and will potentially interact with any of the following: members of the immigrant-serving community, local, state or national political actors, and/or members of immigrant communities.

Basic student learning anticipated

Students will exercise and develop many skills during the course of the project: They will learn how to develop research protocols that are methodologically sound and can support real-world legislative or policy reforms. They will learn how to involve people in their research as
participants and informants in an ethical way, including how to interact with research ethics boards. Students will be required to interact with community and/or government officials and to do so in a professional and efficient manner while not losing sight of their goal as researcher. And they will learn the art of interviewing for purposes of qualitative research, and their role as interviewer. During the data-gathering period, students will also be required to develop skills in state governance, determining the best course of action for legislative reform proposals in particular fields.

In the process of developing skills through creating and carrying out the research, students will also be actively engaged in learning the substance of immigration law and policy. As immigration law is a complex topic intertwined greatly with other forms of law, students will be required to learn not only relevant portions of immigration law itself, but how those portions conflict with other state laws, federal laws, and constitutional provisions. The research students will conduct into these substantive issues will form the basis for deciding what we can or cannot do at the Illinois state level.

Students will be working exclusively with Dr. Sikka as there will be no outside agency to be paired with. However, students will be introduced to relevant immigrant rights advocates and will be guided on network-building in non-governmental spheres. In addition to legal research, community-building will be an essential part of students work for this project. Students will become more familiar and more confident interacting with various groups and they will learn how research can support various groups’ reform endeavors.

**Hours per week:** TBD

**Number of weeks:** 15

**Position Available:** Spring (2 students)

Unpaid

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