April 22, 2020

Dear Prospective Members of the Class of 2022:

We invite you to apply to join the staff of the Chicago Journal of International Law (CJIL). This letter describes CJIL, the staff selection process, and the responsibilities of staff members.

CJIL is a student-run, interdisciplinary forum for discussion and analysis of international law and policy issues. This fall, CJIL will begin its twenty-first year of publication. Despite its relative youth, CJIL has quickly gained attention in legal circles and is esteemed for the quality, depth, and creativity of its content. As of 2016, CJIL was ranked third among student-edited international and comparative law reviews in the United States.

Published twice a year, each issue of CJIL addresses a broad range of topics in international law while remaining consistent with the Journal’s commitment to presenting timely, accessible, and novel scholarly work. In addition to Comments written by student members, CJIL has previously published the work of prominent legal scholars, practitioners, and members of the judiciary, including Judge Richard Posner, Judge Patricia Wald, Judge Diane P. Wood, Ambassador Thomas Graham Jr., Deputy Assistant Attorney General Roger Alford, Professor Cass Sunstein, Professor Damien Geradin, Dr. Anne-Marie Slaughter, Dr. Max M. Kampelman, Dr. Stephen D. Krasner, Dr. Iris M. Young, Dr. Saskia Sassen, Dr. Phillip R. Trimble, Dr. G. Edward White, Dr. Robert O. Keohane, Dr. Paul W. Kahn, and Dr. Tom Ginsburg.

As members of CJIL, Staffers are provided with opportunities to engage with substantive law and interdisciplinary scholarship, while they further develop their legal research and writing skills.

Staff Selection Process

CJIL seeks students with excellent research, writing, and editing skills who are willing to learn through their journal work. Prior experience or knowledge of international law is not a prerequisite for membership. While some of our members came to CJIL with relevant experience, many Staffers have no prior engagement with international law. This has not diminished the quality of their Comments or made their contributions less valuable. Instead, Staffers find that the international framework enhances their reasoning skills, expands their legal knowledge in meaningful ways, and offers opportunities for writing and research that are transferable to any future legal career.
There are two routes by which transfer students can become members of CJIL. During the summer, accepted transfer students may compete for CJIL membership through participation in the Writing Competition. The Writing Competition for transfer students will begin on May 30, 2020 and conclude on June 11, 2020. CJIL selects members solely on their performance in the Writing Competition—1L grades are not taken into consideration.

The Writing Competition consists of two parts: an editing and a writing portion. Both sets of skills are critical to Staffer success. CJIL weights the competition 60/40, with greater weight assigned to the writing portion. Consistent with the policies of the other journals, all submissions are received and reviewed anonymously after being mixed with non-transfer submissions. We anticipate having up to thirty Staffers during the 2020-2021 academic year. New Staffers are required to attend Journal Orientation, which will be held virtually over the summer via Zoom.

CJIL membership is also available through the Topic Access program, which is open to students in their second or third year of study. Additional information about the Topic Access program will be available following the conclusion of the Writing Competition.

Responsibilities of Staffers

CJIL Staffers have three primary responsibilities: writing a publishable Comment, editing Articles and Comments, and reviewing the impact and originality of potential Comments. Staffers’ primary task is developing a Comment of publishable quality that addresses a legal issue in international law. Both the interdisciplinary nature of the Journal and the breadth of international law provide students with ample opportunity to engage with subject matter that piques their interest. Previous Comment topics include alternative approaches to piracy, novel resolutions to human rights and humanitarian crises, analysis of international copyright regimes, and whether social media companies may incite genocide. Each Staffer will be assigned a Comments Editor who will support, revise, and provide feedback throughout the writing process. Completed Comments, with faculty approval, satisfy the Law School’s substantial research paper (SRP) requirement for J.D. students and provide up to three credits through the Law School. Furthermore, Comments are eligible for publication within CJIL.

In addition to writing a Comment, Staffers participate in the editorial functions of the Journal. This includes editing, revising, and reviewing Comments and Articles. These editing exercises are commonly called “cite checks.” Staffers typically have two or three cite checks over the course of the year, generally lasting a week each. Additionally, Staffers must attend two “Ed-Fest” events, one in the fall and another in the spring. At each Ed-Fest, Staffers proofread Articles selected for publication. CJIL’s biannual publication schedule, predictable workload, and evenly-distributed editing responsibilities ensure that Staffers have flexibility to participate in non-Journal activities at the Law School.

Why the Work is Worth It

Members of CJIL have an invaluable opportunity to contribute to international legal scholarship, propose innovative solutions to pressing global problems, work closely with skilled faculty, and continue to develop legal research and writing skills. In addition to addressing salient legal topics, members collaborate with fellow students throughout the process. These cooperative efforts produce a publication of international legal scholarship that practitioners see both as quality commentary on and as a citable source of international law.

For each of us on the Board, CJIL membership has been a rewarding experience. Through engagement with preeminent legal scholars, participation in the process of peer review, and examination of influential scholarship, we each have grown not merely as students, but as future lawyers. Previous Staffers report that
their Journal membership was beneficial while pursuing both clerkship opportunities and professional positions with firms, government, and public interest organizations. We hope that you will consider applying for membership. Please feel free to email Neema Hakim at neemahakim@uchicago.edu or any member of the Board with any questions about CJIL or the staff selection process.

Sincerely,

The 2020-2021 CJIL Board:

Neema Hakim, Editor-in-Chief
Tyler Downing, Managing & Topic Access Editor
Jared I. Mayer, Executive Articles Editor
Steven Michael Foster, Jr., Executive Editor
Haylee N. Bernal, Articles Editor
Zach Heather, Articles Editor
Nyle Hussain, Articles Editor
Ana Carolina Luquerna, Articles Editor

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