May 11, 2021

Dear rising 2Ls and 3Ls:

We invite you to apply to join the staff of the Chicago Journal of International Law (CJIL) through the Topic Access Program. This letter describes CJIL, the responsibilities of Staff Members, and the Topic Access Program.

The Topic Access Program is an important aspect of the Journal’s recruitment efforts and every year we welcome new Staff Members through Topic Access. These students often go on to become members of the CJIL Board and their Comments are typically strong candidates for publication. For example, CJIL’s 2020–2021 Editor-in-Chief, Neema Hakim, joined CJIL through the program, and his Comment was published in Volume 21.1. Last year, we welcomed six new staffers through Topic Access, four of whom have gone on to join CJIL’s Board, including Topic Access Editor, Savannah Mora, whose Comment will be published in Volume 22.1. CJIL membership is an excellent qualification for many opportunities in the legal field. Each year, past CJIL members accept offers for excellent clerkships and quality legal jobs at law firms and in government. Journal membership is also a valuable qualification for those interested in academia.

This year, we are excited to announce an expansion of the Topic Access Program. Instead of administering the program on a schedule of universal deadlines, which has been the practice in years past, we will be accepting applications to the program on rolling basis throughout the year. The CJIL Executive Board hopes that the new rolling admissions format will help make Topic Access even more accessible to high quality candidates who wish to participate in our Journal. This effort aligns with CJIL’s goal of inclusivity in the candidacy process.

**The Journal**

CJIL is a student-run, interdisciplinary forum for discussion and analysis of international law and policy issues. This fall, CJIL will begin its twenty-third 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. CJIL is 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, Staff Members are provided with opportunities to engage with substantive law and interdisciplinary scholarship, while they further develop their legal research and writing skills.

**Responsibilities of Staff Members**

CJIL Staff Members have three primary responsibilities: writing a publishable Comment, editing Articles and Comments, and reviewing the impact and originality of potential Comments.

Staff Members’ 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 can be complicit in inciting genocide. Each Staff Member 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, Staff Members participate in the editorial functions of the Journal. This includes editing, revising, and reviewing Articles and Comments. These editing exercises are commonly called “cite checks.” Staff Members typically have two or three cite checks over the course of the year, generally lasting a week each. Additionally, Staff Members must attend “Ed-Fest” events virtually or in person. At each Ed-Fest, Staff Members proofread Articles and Comments selected for publication. CJIL’s biannual publication schedule, predictable workload, and evenly distributed editing responsibilities ensure that Staff Members have flexibility to participate in non-Journal activities at the Law School.

**The Topic Access Program**

CJIL looks for students with excellent research, writing, and editing skills who are willing to learn through their work with the Journal. We invite and strongly encourage rising 2Ls and 3Ls to apply to CJIL through the Topic Access Program. The structure and rigor of the Topic Access Program lends itself to the production of particularly well-researched and well-written Comments. Historically, students admitted to CJIL through the Topic Access Program have been among the strongest candidates for Comment publication and Executive and Editorial Board membership. Prior experience or knowledge of international law is not a prerequisite for membership.

The Topic Access Program proceeds in three steps. First, candidates must complete a 3-page Topic Proposal which (1) describes an international legal issue and (2) suggests ways to address it through a Comment. Topic Proposals are considered by CJIL on a rolling basis. Once the Topic Proposal is approved, candidates advance to step two, the Topic Analysis. The Topic Analysis is an in-depth research analysis of the candidate or someone else’s Topic Proposal. Upon approval of the Topic Analysis, candidates proceed to the final step: the Comment Outline. **The candidate is admitted to CJIL as a Staff Member if the Comment Outline is approved by the complete CJIL Editorial Board.** More details and instructions on each of the foregoing steps are made available upon the candidate’s initiation of the Topic Access Program.

**The Topic Access Timeline**

As of this year, Topic Access will be administered on a rolling basis.

The timeline is below. Candidates are encouraged to work with the Topic Access Editor if they are unable to meet these deadlines. Requests for extensions will be evaluated and granted on a case-by-case basis. The
following timetable is subject to change according to the discretion of the Topic Access Editor and the Topic Access Committee.

**When can I start the Topic Access Program?**

- **Class of 2023:**
  - Rising 2Ls who didn’t complete in the writing competition can start the program as early as June 14th, 2021, one week after Spring Quarter 1L Exams.
  - Rising 2Ls who did participate in the writing competition can start the program after admission calls go out in mid-July 2021.

- **Class of 2022:**
  - Rising 3Ls can start the program as early as June 14th, 2021.
  - Rising 3Ls cannot start the program any later than August 18th, 2021.

**Is there a competitive advantage to starting the program earlier?**

- *CJIL* prioritizes quality and maintains a fixed quality standard for admissions throughout the year. Starting earlier does not give you an advantage over other candidates.

**How long do I have to complete each step of the Topic Access Program?**

- **Step #1: Topic Proposal**
  - A student can submit the Topic Proposal at any point during the acceptable window. (Please see “When can I start the Topic Access Program?”)
  - Students are encouraged to discuss potential topics with the Topic Access Editor before formally submitting a Topic Proposal. While the Topic Access Editor is available to provide guidance and feedback, whatever guidance and feedback she does choose to provide is in no way binding upon her or the Topic Access Committee in reaching their decision as to the student’s candidacy.
  - A student can only submit one Topic Proposal per class year. (Thus, a student could submit one Topic Proposal as a rising 2L and one as a rising 3L.)
  - Once a student has formally submitted a Topic Proposal to the Topic Access Editor, they are bound by that Topic Proposal and will not be permitted to submit another Topic Proposal that year.
  - After the student formally submits a Topic Proposal, the Topic Access Committee will let the student whether their Topic Proposal has been accepted within approximately one week of the submission date.

- **Step #2: Topic Analysis**
  - After a candidate’s Topic Proposal is accepted by the Committee, the Topic Access Editor will provide the student with a Topic Analysis assignment. The assignment will be provided to the student within two weeks of the acceptance of their Topic Proposal.
  - Once the student is given a Topic Analysis assignment, they have two weeks to complete it.
  - The Topic Access Committee will take approximately one to two weeks to decide, based on the student’s Topic Analysis, whether they can proceed to Step #3.

- **Step #3: Comment Outline**
  - Once the student’s Topic Analysis is accepted, the candidate has five weeks to complete the Comment Outline.
  - The candidate is admitted to *CJIL* as a full Staff Member if the Comment Outline is approved by the complete *CJIL* Editorial Board. The candidate will receive a final decision within two to three weeks of submitting the Comment Outline.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>STEP NUMBER</strong></th>
<th><strong>TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION</strong></th>
<th><strong>TURNAROUND TIME FOR APPROVAL</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1: Topic Proposal</td>
<td>N/A. The student initiates the program by formally submitting a Topic Proposal.</td>
<td>Approximately 1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2: Topic Analysis</td>
<td>1–2 weeks. The candidate has two weeks to complete a Topic Analysis after receiving their assignment. The candidate should take at least one week to work on the assignment. Earlier submissions will not be evaluated until one week has elapsed.</td>
<td>Approximately 1–2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3: Comment Outline</td>
<td>2–5 weeks. After the candidate’s Topic Analysis is approved, they have five weeks to complete the Comment Outline. The candidate should take at least two weeks to work on the Comment Outline. Earlier submissions will not be evaluated until 2 weeks have elapsed.</td>
<td>Approximately 2–3 weeks</td>
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**How long will it take me to complete the program?**

- A candidate who successfully completes the program will do so in approximately seven to fifteen weeks.

**I participated in the Writing Competition, and I am awaiting the results. If I start Topic Access after journal admission calls in July, will I be able to complete the program before OCI?**

- Students who completed the writing competition must wait until admission calls go out before starting the Topic Access Program. Journal admission calls typically take place in mid-July. A candidate who turned in a Topic Proposal the following week could know the result of their candidacy as early as late August. Although the candidate would not know the results before OCI screener interviews, which take place during the first two weeks of August, they could know the result of their candidacy by the time that callbacks take place in September and October. Additionally, candidates can let employers know that they are participating in the program and actively pursuing journal membership with *CJIL*.

**After Joining *CJIL* through the Topic Access Program**

Candidates who become Staff Members through the Topic Access Program are required to complete a Comment of at least 10,000 words and 125 footnotes by Spring of 2022. Topic Access Editor Savannah Mora will continue to guide Staff Members throughout the entire Comment process. A rising 2L must successfully complete Topic Access before November 1, 2021 in order to be eligible for board positions. While rising 3Ls are encouraged to apply, only rising 2Ls will be eligible for membership with the 2022-2023 *CJIL* Board.

Accepted Staff Members can expect to follow the regular Staff Member timeline of assignments and responsibilities. In addition to completing a Comment, Staff Members admitted through Topic Access can expect editing assignments for Volumes 22.2 and 23.1. Relevant deadlines for the Autumn Quarter are as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Projected Due Dates</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Pub Cite</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comment Draft #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment Draft #2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For each of us on the Board, *CJIL* membership has been a rewarding experience. Through engagement with preeminent legal scholars, participation in the peer review process, and examination of influential scholarship, we each have grown not merely as students, but as future lawyers. Previous Staff Members report that their Journal membership was beneficial while pursuing both clerkship opportunities and professional positions with firms, government, and public interest organizations.
We hope you will consider participating in the Topic Access Program. Please contact Savannah Mora, Topic Access Editor (smora@uchicago.edu; 360-305-6418) if you are interested in participating or have any questions.

Sincerely,

THE 2021-2022 CJIL BOARD:  
Amber S. Stewart, Editor-in-Chief  
Joshua A. Fox, Executive Editor  
Elise M. LeCrone, Executive Editor  
Maria K. O’Keeffe, Managing Editor  
Keila Mayberry, Executive Articles Editor  
Michael Morgan, Executive Comments Editor  
Savannah Mora, Topic Access Editor  
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