April 5, 2022

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.

CJIL’s Topic Access Program will be administered on a rolling basis throughout the year. The Topic Access program consists of two steps: the Topic Proposal and the Topic Analysis.

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. During the 2020–2019 school year, we welcomed six new staffers through Topic Access, four of whom went on to join CJIL’s Board.

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.

**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-fourth 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.

This year, the Topic Access Program will proceed in two 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. **The candidate is admitted to CJIL as a Staff Member if the Topic Analysis 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

Topic Access is administered on a rolling basis and only consists of two steps.

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 2024:**
  - Rising 2Ls who didn’t complete in the writing competition can start the program as early as 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 2022.

- **Class of 2023:**
  - Rising 3Ls can start the program as early as June 2022.
  - Rising 3Ls cannot start the program any later than August 2022.

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 candidate is admitted to CJIL as a full Staff Member if the Topic Analysis is approved by the complete CJIL Editorial Board. The candidate will receive a final decision within one to three weeks of submitting the Topic Analysis.

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<tr>
<th>Step Number</th>
<th>Timeline for Completion</th>
<th>Turnaround Time for Approval</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 Topic Access Editor will provide the candidate with a Topic Analysis assignment within two weeks of approval of the candidate’s Topic Proposal. The candidate has two weeks to complete the 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 1–3 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 four to seven 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 the second week of August. 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 2023. The Topic Access Editor will continue to guide Staff Members throughout the entire Comment process. A rising 2L must successfully complete Topic Access before November 1, 2022 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 2023-2024 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 23.2 and 24.1. Relevant deadlines for the Autumn Quarter are as follows:

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<th>Projected Due Dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pub Cite</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comment Draft #1</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comment Draft #2</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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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 Sraavya Poonuganti, Managing and Topic Access Editor (spoonuganti@uchicago.edu; 703-547-8101) if you are interested in participating or have any questions.

Sincerely,

THE 2022-2023 CJIL BOARD:

Miriam Kohn, Editor-in-Chief
Simmy Engelen, Executive Editor
Sraavya Poonuganti, Managing and Topic Access Editor
Tori Keller, Executive Articles Editor
Katherine M. Koza, Executive Comments Editor
Molly Stepchuk, Executive Online Editor

Michael P. Antosiewicz, Articles Editor
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Alberto Vargas, Articles Editor
Clare M. Chiodini, Comments Editor
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Marin Murdock, Comments Editor
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