

Deason Center

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Deason Summer Externship Program Description

Thank you for your interest in participating in the Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center's Summer Externship Program. This letter explains our program, its purpose, and what being a placement site means for you and your office.

The Deason Summer Externship Program offers students a 10-week summer criminal law externship in a small, tribal, or rural (STAR) Texas community. Offered as a special section of the SMU Dedman School of Law's public interest externship program, the Deason Summer Externship Program draws on the Center's expertise and engagement in STAR justice systems. Deason externs will hone their legal skills and develop valuable mentorship relationships, while gaining first-hand experience in the challenges and rewards of working in a STAR community. At each site, a supervising attorney will work closely with the Deason Center to provide the student with a practical legal experience that provides meaningful work product for your team.

Before the summer begins, Deason externs will participate in an orientation program that grounds them in the fundamentals of Texas criminal law and procedure, and familiarizes them with important rules of professional responsibility. In addition, throughout the summer, externs will be required to attend a weekly seminar directed by Professor Pamela Metzger, Director of the Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center. The seminar will focus on some of the more unique aspects of rural criminal practice, such as the role of technology in local practice and the challenge of navigating personal and professional relationships in smaller communities. As you are the experts in rural practice, we very much hope that you will join us for these weekly events.

Ultimately, we envision an externship program that provides a transformative experience that helps to launch more law students into rural criminal practice careers. While some externs may have taken relevant upper-level courses or have interned part-time in a judge's chambers or at a law firm, few will have worked in a hands-on, front-line practice environment like yours. Fewer still will have had any exposure to the challenges and rewards of life and practice in Texas' rural communities. Your office's participation in the Deason summer externship may well be the most impactful part of a student's professional education.

If this program sounds like a good fit for your office, please email Kristin Meeks, Law Fellow, at deasonjusticecenter@smu.edu. Thank you for your interest in participating in the Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center's Summer Externship Program.