

Midwest Public Interest Law Career Conference

Michelle Mohr Vodenik, Director and Public Interest/Diversity Advisor, Career Service Office

MPILCC, the Midwest Public Interest Law Career Conference, is an opportunity to meet and interview with Chicago and Midwest-area public interest organizations. The annual conference is coordinated by a coalition of Chicago area law school career service offices, of which Chicago-Kent is a part. Last year, 100 students from Chicago-Kent participated, as well as 40 government and public interest agencies.

This year's conference will be held on Saturday, February 6, 2010 at Northwestern's Law School Campus. The conference offers students the opportunity to interview for summer law clerk positions and entry-level attorney positions. While most of the summer positions are unpaid or invite outside funding, there are positions that offer a stipend. In addition, you can meet with representatives from public interest and government organizations during "table talk." Table talk is a good way to become familiar with a wide variety of public interest and government employers. You can pass out your resume, ask about internships, both in the summer and during the school year, and find out about post-graduation opportunities. Table talk is from 9am-12pm and is one of the most important periods of time during which students can make valuable connections. As a registrant for MPILCC, you can also respond to online resume requests for internship positions (volunteer or paid), fellowships and entry-level attorney positions throughout the school year.

If you would like to bid to interview with employers or apply for positions with employers seeking resumes online, you have to register by noon on Thursday, December 10th. To register send an email to Susan DeCostanza at sdecostanza@kentlaw.edu with your first name, last name, middle initial, email address, and graduation year. You will then receive a password on or about December 14th, so that you can upload your resume and bid for interviews with employers. The bidding takes place between December 14th and January 8th, after which time, you will receive an interview schedule. If you bid, it is very important to include all of your public interest, community activities, and volunteer experiences on your resume. Government and public interest employers care about your commitment to serving the public. As with any interview opportunity, be sure your resume is free of all mistakes and is easy to read. Cover letters are not needed. Schedule an appointment with a career counselor to discuss your resume and your interests, so that you have the strongest possible resume to upload online.

For most students, finding funding for the summer is very important. The Kent Justice Foundation at Chicago-Kent provides financial support to approximately ten-fifteen students who spend their summer at an unpaid government or legal aid agency. Another great source of funding for students is the Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) summer internship, www.pili-law.org, which provides a stipend of \$5000 in the summer and provides an opportunity to submit your resume to legal aid organizations and several

government agencies who are seeking summer students. All students can apply for a PILI grant beginning on December 1. For a list of additional summer funding resources, as well as opportunities that include summer funding, visit the PSLawnet (Public Service Law Net) website at: www.pslawnet.org, and go to: “Career Central” and “Financing a Career or Summer Job.”

If you do not receive any interviews, or you do not register in advance for the conference, you can still attend and meet many of the employers through table talk. You can also show up at the conference early and try to receive an interview on the day of the conference, because people who don’t check in at the conference on time, lose their interview slots, and their slots are filled by the people who arrive early. For those of you who receive interviews ahead of time, be sure to arrive on time or you will lose your interviews! Visit the MPILCC website at www.mpilcc.org for all conference details and watch for a special workshop session on “Preparing for MPILCC” when you return to Chicago-Kent after the winter break.

If you are interested in a public interest or government legal position in the Chicago area, I encourage you to attend this conference. If you are interested in government or public interest opportunities outside of Chicago, I also recommend the annual Equal Justice Works Conference in Washington DC, held every October.