

Some general tips for writing your Cmiel Internship Statement of Purpose

Audience

The proposals will be reviewed by an ad-hoc committee with a variety of backgrounds and interests. They may be faculty members from diverse disciplines and colleges across campus, community members and/or your peers. Write for an intelligent, but not specialized audience. You should avoid jargon and discipline specific technical language as much as possible.

Reviewers will be sifting through many proposals. Well-written and organized proposals are therefore critical. Aim for clarity. Good grant proposals require multiple revisions; they should include an introduction, well-articulated responses to the three guiding questions, and a conclusion.

Answering the Questions

In answering the three guiding questions (Why are you interested in pursuing an internship in human rights advocacy, research or education; How will the proposed internship experience further your personal or professional goals; How will the proposed internship experience further the sponsoring organization's mission or goals?) you'll want to convince the reviewers that what you propose to do matters both to you and to the organization for which you will be working. To do so requires imparting some basic information about both the organization and you. In answering the three questions, you must tell the reviewers (a) your organization's mission; (b) the specific project on which you will be working; (c) why it is important; (d) why you are the right person for this job; (e) your goals and objectives; and (f) how you propose to achieve them.

Cmiel internships seek to enhance student's experience through their exposure to work in human rights related fields. They are not designed as a means for students to achieve specific academic goals *per se* (i.e. dissertation research, clinical rotation). Instead explain how working on a human rights issue will further your personal or professional goals and how your work will promote the objectives of the organization.

Using a Human Rights Framework

Finally, the best proposals will specifically employ a human rights framework. For example, you may be involved in a project that aims to bring clean drinking water to a rural area of a developing country. You should make explicit how you understand clean water in this location as a fundamental human rights issue.

To help you think about how your work fits into a human rights framework, we offer this explanatory note about human rights from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:

Human rights are commonly understood as being those rights which are inherent to the human being. The concept of human rights acknowledges that every single human being is entitled to enjoy his or her human rights without distinction as to race, colour, sex,

language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Human rights are legally guaranteed by *human rights law*, protecting individuals and groups against actions that interfere with fundamental freedoms and human dignity. They are expressed in treaties, customary international law, bodies of principles and other sources of law. Human rights law places an obligation on States to act in a particular way and prohibits States from engaging in specified activities. However, the law does not establish human rights. Human rights are inherent entitlements which come to every person as a consequence of being human. Treaties and other sources of law generally serve to *protect* formally the rights of individuals and groups against actions or abandonment of actions by Governments which interfere with the enjoyment of their human rights. The following are some of the most important characteristics of human rights:

- Human rights are founded on *respect for the dignity and worth of each person*;
 - Human rights are *universal*, meaning that they are applied equally and without discrimination to all people;
 - Human rights are *inalienable*, in that no one can have his or her human rights taken away; they can be limited in specific situations (for example, the right to liberty can be restricted if a person is found guilty of a crime by a court of law);
 - Human rights are *indivisible, interrelated and interdependent*, for the reason that it is insufficient to respect some human rights and not others. In practice, the violation of one right will often affect respect for several other rights.
- All human rights should therefore be seen as having equal importance and of being equally essential to respect for the dignity and worth of every person.

(<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/ABCannexesen.pdf>)

For specific questions about the statement of purpose or other Cmiel Funded Internship questions, please email jo-butterfield@uiowa.edu.