

## Students Get Inspired, Get Experience with Columbia Law School's Public Service Fellowships

[by Erica Winter]

Getting a paid legal job for your first summer after law school is a rare thing. Getting paid by the law school is rarer still.

Students at Columbia Law School—many of them just finishing up their first years—are doing public interest work this summer with funding from Columbia Law's Public Service Fellowships (PSF).

"I've learned so much from so many amazing people," says Phil Selden, who is doing a summer clerkship with the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office (Maryland). Selden, who will start his second year at Columbia Law in the fall, is the recipient of the Columbia Law School Washington, DC, Alumni Association's Paula Jewell Fellowship, a \$4,200 summer stipend covered under the PSF umbrella and administered by the law school's Center for Public Interest Law.

Eddie Jauregui, also going into his second year at Columbia this fall, is spending the summer interning with the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund in New York. His \$4,200 PSF is allowing him to work on impact litigation benefiting gay and lesbian civil rights. With its high societal and legal profile right now, gay and lesbian civil rights is "the most interesting area of constitutional law right now," says Jauregui.

Jauregui's desire to work on impact litigation—as well as the encouragement from his Civil Procedures professor, Suzanne Goldberg, former staff attorney at Lambda who worked on the recent landmark Supreme Court case *Lawrence v. Texas*—sealed his decision to work at Lambda this summer.

Even rarer than first-summer finding is that Jauregui finds his first-year theory courses are "directly applicable" to his work at Lambda, he says. "Constitutional Law and Civil Procedures are immediately put to use here," he says. In his

first staff meeting, for example, staff attorneys discussed landmark Supreme Court decisions and whether they should continue to cite them as support for a current case.

Most of Jauregui's work is legal research on "a lot of very different procedural questions," mostly involving state constitutions, Jauregui says. The work is different from what he imagined, with very little focus on the high-profile issues of gay marriage and gay-adoption laws. Instead, Jauregui is working on cases involving discrimination and harassment of gay, transgender, and HIV-positive people.

The skills he is learning are "universally applicable," says Jauregui, involving such issues as choice of law and statutory interpretation. For example, Jauregui has written one motion to compel that was recently submitted to the court. The motion, for a discrimination case involving a person with HIV, is to collect medical records from a doctor who refused to perform surgery. These motions are used in any lawsuit, and learning about them would benefit Jauregui "if I were a corporate lawyer for IBM [and] being sued by a vendor," or a civil rights attorney.

Learning civil rights and constitutional law from those who are steeped in it "has been the best part of my internship," says Jauregui. "The lawyers here are tremendous."

Selden, too, loves his job this summer and the range of experience it is giving him in regard to his becoming a prosecutor one day, he says, and in the hope of working to prevent crime, not only punish it.

The Montgomery County State's Attorney,

Douglas Gansler, is a "wonderful boss to work for," says Selden, who has worked on both trials and case preparation this summer.

On a national level, Selden is working on the early stages of evidence preparation for Maryland's case against the "D.C. Snipers," a man and a 17-year-old juvenile accused of going on a shooting spree in the Washington, DC, area, including Montgomery County, where six people were killed.

The defendants were already tried and convicted in Virginia, so Selden's work involves cataloguing and inventory of evidence received from the other state, as well as research of relevant Maryland statutes. He is learning that a prosecutor must be "exact and precise with the evidence," Selden says, "I must try to be as close to perfect as possible... That's really demanding."

But because of the impact that a conviction has on a defendant's life, Selden also says he "has a greater appreciation for how serious a task you have as a prosecutor." In this work, a prosecutor "must be thorough, but also careful and compassionate," he says.

He has also learned to work under a lot of pressure.

While sitting next to his boss in the trial of a rape case, the State's Attorney leaned over and told Selden to go back to the office and draft a stipulation as quickly as possible. The case, reopened and tried after 14 years because of a recent hit on a DNA database, involved an older local woman and reinforced for Selden that prosecutors represent victims and that "everybody has a mom."



So Selden hopped up, ran back, drafted the stipulation and ran it by an attorney in the office. He returned to the courtroom, gave the stipulation to Gansler, who looked it over and then gave it to the judge. They won a conviction in the case and "made me feel really good about going to law school," says Selden.

This summer experience on both the local and national levels has been "a blending of policy, practice, and theory all in one," says Selden. "It really has been the ideal internship," says Selden. "I would have done this work for free."