STUDENT GUIDE
TO
GENEVA EXTERNSHIP PLACEMENTS
Updated May 2015

Introduction

In the Geneva International Fellows Program Memo potential Geneva externship program students can find detailed descriptions of the various agencies which offer placements to Michigan Externs. These descriptions, provided to us by the placement agencies, are a useful guide to these organizations, however, we recognize that it might help you in making your selection if you had more information about the kind of work you may undertake in such placements, the working environment, level of supervision, working style of the agency, etc. For that reason, we have compiled this "Student Guide", to give you more insight into what you might be able to expect from the various placement agencies. We hope that this assists you in ensuring your preferences for placement agencies best matches your particular skills and attributes, and the kind of working environment you prefer.

Please note that this "Student Guide" reflects only the views of former Geneva Program student externs, and should not be considered as the views of either the University of Michigan Law School nor the various placement agencies. It is an informal attempt to give you an "insiders' view" of the experiences that past externs have had during their time in Geneva, and should be read in light of the fact that individual experiences can differ vastly. We asked former Geneva Externs to reflect on questions such as: What is the day-today work at your agency like? What is the level of supervision and involvement with your colleagues? What is the office atmosphere like? What are the key differences between an externship at this organization or any of the others which your classmates were placed at? What are the specific skills (including interpersonal skills) that would bode well for someone working here?

We asked each Geneva Program alumnus to think about what they would have liked to have known when they were in the process of selecting which agencies to apply for. This is what they wrote ...

(Agencies where placements are being offered but where no description exists below are either new agencies to join our program, or agencies for which the former students have not submitted their advice - this could be for a variety of reasons.)
GAVI Alliance

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at GAVI prior to 2012.)

Advice from 2012 Geneva International Fellow

GAVI is a great organization, and working as in-house counsel, you will get exposed to a range of assignments. Much of what GAVI does deals with funding, and a lot of the work is transactional and relates to funding instruments. At the same time, there is also the typical in-house counsel work that ranges from drafting internal policies to working on HR matters to issues relating to leases. The legal department worked with basically every other department of the Secretariat, and it was a great opportunity to see how these types of organizations are structured. It also provided a lot of internal client interaction.

The legal team is made up of the Director of Legal and two attorneys, and I received assignments from everyone. The working environment is open-space, and it is collaborative, congenial environment. Everything I did was substantial, and I think this differentiates this externship. My supervisor was wonderful in trying to tailor the assignments to what interested me, and he was very willing to let me take on more responsibility as the externship progressed. I also received feedback on every assignment, and my supervisor and the other attorneys went out of their way to provide guidance and answer questions on projects I was working on.

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at GAVI in 2013 or 2014.)

Advice from 2015 Geneva International Fellow

This report is meant to provide a detailed discussion on expenses (and saving tips). Out-pricing other metropolis such as New York City, Tokyo, Hong Kong and even London, Geneva is among the world’s most expensive cities. Living in Geneva as an unpaid or underpaid intern is thus a constant challenge. However, with careful planning and strategic resource allocation, you can make the most out of your stay in Geneva and more under a reasonable budget. With its central location, Geneva also makes a perfect basecamp for traveling in Europe. For those interested in Gavi-specific information, please consult my final report.

Airfare

My advice: get a mileage credit card for a potentially free round-trip ticket to Europe. The last week of December or the first week of January is usually off-peak where 60,000 miles can get you a free round trip to Europe (you still need to pay taxes and fees, which would come about $100-180 depending on the airlines).

During summer, I applied for a credit card that gives 30,000 miles upon signing and 20,000 more for spending US$ 2,000 in the first three months and 1 to 5 miles per every dollar spent. As a rising 2L who participated in the EIW, I was on callback trips for the entire month of August and used the credit card exclusively to cover the expenses (which are, of course, reimbursed by firms). It also helped that I’ve already had some miles from before, mostly thanks to the callback trips.

If getting a credit card doesn’t appeal to you, try to buy the ticket as early as possible. If
booked several months in advance, a round trip to Geneva should not cost more than $1,000. The prices go up fast towards the end of the year, and although there are some last-minute deals, you probably don’t want to spend time searching through flight tickets during the finals.

**Housing**

Finding affordable, short-term housing in Geneva is extremely hard. If you are outside and want to get it done with housing search in advance, foyers and AirBnB would be the best bet. Similar to college dormitories, foyers offer a small room with shared bathroom and kitchen and start around CHF 600+ per room (deposit and additional costs not included). As for AirBnB, it is virtually impossible to find any room under CHF 1,000 (and sometimes CHF 1200 if it’s in Geneva proper). For the month of January, for example, I shared with another extern a one-bedroom apartment that we found on AirBnB. The apartment was in Charmilles (a residential neighborhood about 15-20 minutes from the UN area) and we each paid a little over $1,200 for one month, everything included.

Once you are in Geneva, however, you will be able to look for more affordable places, especially if you speak some French and are/or willing to search through several French sites matching prospective landlords and tenants. Glocals and a couple of clubs on Facebook are in English and more geared towards expats (meaning that there are more short-term housing options), but the prices can be slightly higher. Websites and online forums that are mostly in French, however, are more for the locals, and while it is harder to negotiate the duration of your stay, the prices tend to be lower and you will get a real Swiss experience, living and interacting with locals.

Because one of my goals while in Geneva was to improve my French, I did an extensive search on French websites and Facebook clubs, but I ended up finding my current place on GIA (Geneva Interns Association) page. I had a small room in a very clean flat owned and resided by a Swiss landlord in Eaux-Vives (up-and-coming neighborhood with lots of shops and bars, takes about 30 min to the UN area and 5~10 min to where I took French lessons and dance classes). Despite a couple of issues, I really enjoyed my neighborhood and the price: CHF 800 per month plus half of the utilities (expecting 40-60 CHF per month), and importantly, no deposit.

Other externs live in various neighborhoods, including: Paquis (close to work and to virtually everything, prices vary widely); Champel (a little further from the UN area but safe and affordable); Servette (close to work, relatively affordable, but can be loud, dirty and slightly unsafe at night); Carouge (far from the UN area but probably the cheapest neighborhood in Geneva with lots of great ethnic restaurants); and Plainpalais (student area, young and lively and generally affordable).

**Transportation**

Tip: use the recherché d’itinéraire on the front page of tpg.ch to estimate the travel time and frequency of the transportation to and from your organization.

Unless you live near your organization, getting a monthly card (CHF 70 as of April 2015) is strongly recommended. You not only have access to buses and trams in Geneva but also boat taxi and local trains.

I bought the demi-tariff (CHF 175, gives discount on train tickets in Switzerland), but I
would not recommend it unless you plan to travel quite a bit within Switzerland. Compared to other externs I did not travel much partly because I’ve already lived and travelled extensively in Europe before, and also because I wanted to use the weekends to get to know the locals and speak some French. I traveled a couple of times to France (Paris, Lyon, small towns near the border), and it is actually slightly cheaper to buy the tickets from the French railroad website!

**Food and Dining**

Geneva is an expensive place to eat out. A cup of coffee costs 3-6 CHF, lunch special runs from 12 to 20 CHF, and dining out for sit-in dinner would cost at least 25 CHF and definitely more. Lunch at various UN cafeterias costs 8 to 15 CHF, which is actually a great deal given the price levels in Geneva. In fact, one of my reasons for traveling outside Switzerland is to eat out and well at a much lower price.

As a coffee addict and someone who needs to have breakfast, I have been grateful to my organization (Gavi Alliance) for providing free breakfast (butter and chocolate croissants and various breads, all kinds of fruits) and unlimited coffee and tea. I was also lucky that my supervisors and coworkers treated me to lunch and even dinner, and my local acquaintances have invited me to their place to make sure I try some Swiss cuisine.

If you like cooking, Geneva is actually a decent place to live in. Although ingredients are more expensive than in the States, they all are of the excellent quality and have great flavors that are hard to find in mass-produced vegetables and fruits in the States. If you cook quite a bit, grocery shopping in France would help lower the expenses a bit, but otherwise go to Migros for fresh produces and Denner or Ridl for shelf items. On average I’ve spent about CHF 20-30 for cooking (dinner on most weekdays and some weekend) and CHF 50-100 for eating out and drinking, per week.

For wines, beers and chocolates, try SaFI (surprisingly under-utilized duty free shop within the UN Palais): alcoholic beverages, chocolates, and some other food items are about 10-15% cheaper than otherwise. It’s near the main gate, so if you are working for one of the UN organizations, you can get your grocery shopping done before leaving work. Safi also sells cosmetics and other items (even bags, jewelry, etc.), but you can find French products cheaper across the border.

**Learning expenses**

A major reason for my coming to Geneva is to improve my French, so I was willing and ready to invest in my education. I registered for a 12-week-long semi intensive course at Migros, which cost about CHF 600 including the books. If you are planning to stay in Geneva for the summer as well, you might want to look into semester-long offerings at various schools in Geneva.

I have also registered for dance classes at a school called Dance Area (2 courses per week, CHF 155 per month if you are student). I have been taking dance classes since college and all over the world (in NYC, Hong Kong, Seoul, Berlin and Ann Arbor), and the quality of instruction and facilities as well as the diversity of class offerings are top notch given the relatively small size of Geneva. Given that it is Geneva, the price is also very reasonable.
The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM): The Legal Unit

Advice from 2009 Extern

The Geneva Externship Program is the best opportunity available for learning how international law operates at an institutional level - something that I believe is vital for all types of international legal work. For me, the best part of the program was visiting various international organizations and hearing about the role that lawyers play at each institution. Every visit opened my eyes to a different, unique opportunity in international law. In this regard, the Geneva Program is much more than an internship. It offers a sampling of career options for students interested in international law.

My experience working with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria was equally beneficial. As a young organization, the Global Fund offered many lessons on how international organizations are formed and maintained. Much of my research was centered on this issue. The Global Fund's legal department is a dynamic group, which everyday encounters the unexpected legal issues that arise in the infancy of an institution. While the legal department does not specifically focus on public health issues, I would nevertheless recommend this internship to law students interested in global public health. Legal interns frequently review grant agreements for legal enforceability - a task that certainly provided me with the opportunity to learn about the public health interventions being designed to fight the three diseases around the world.

Most importantly, the Global Fund is an outstanding place to work. I found the staff to be sincerely committed to the organization's mission. The Global Fund's purpose is very clearly set out, and I believe this provides a focus that many of my prior places of employment have not had. Finally, the legal department faces more questions than its lawyers can tackle. The department relies on its intern, so trust that your work will be valued and immediately put to use.

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at the Global Fund in 2008 or 2010.)

Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow

The Global Fund is a great place to work, and follows a private-public partnership model, which has proved particularly powerful at the international level. The organization is lean for the massive amounts of money that moves through it — 22 billion dollars over the last ten years, which is much larger than most agencies' budgets. Because the Fund is a financial institution, and not an implementing entity, it contracts out the actual implementation activities, so Fund employees aren't the one distributing medicines, their contractors are. As a result, most of the work at the Fund is contract related. You will learn the nuts and bolts of reviewing grant contracts, amendments to the contracts, and researching whether specific policies are compatible with the Global Fund's internal governance documents. However, the Global Fund has some 600 employees, and the legal problems this poses are also myriad. Institutional work can also be invigorating, and varies from tax questions (do employees living in France have to pay VAT?) to larger issues (can the Global Fund be defined as an International Organization under the classical definition and so gain access to privileges and...
The Fund just hired 6 new lawyers, but there will still be plenty of substantive work that must be done. The entire Legal team is friendly and responsive. They often go out for lunch together - be sure you go out with them! From previous work at the UNRWA to major firms, these lawyers have a lot of experience and knowledge which they are always eager to impart to the curious student. It might also be helpful to talk to these lawyers before you do site-visits, for example attorney who does IP work for the Fund before visiting WIPO. Finally, be sure to meet with as many people as you can in the Fund itself. By meeting with the different departments you will get a better idea of how the Fund is organized and works as a unit. Also, be ready to put in some hours to learn the ropes. The demands can be heavy at first, but once you master your role you will be treated like the other lawyers, and given just as much responsibility.

**Advice from 2012 Geneva International Fellow**

The Global Fund (TGF) is a great place to work if you're interested in learning about some or all of the following: the role of an attorney as an in-house legal officer; the day-to-day operational legal work of a public interest financing institution; the institutional and incidental legal issues facing such organizations; global public health development; getting a feel for what it's like to be an international lawyer; trying out transactional work; experiencing what it's like to work somewhere that is often scrutinized by the media and development world; and learning about the structure and organization of an ever-evolving public-private partnership. I have found my time here to be an invaluable learning experience in all of the above.

With a new General Manager and an army of McKinsey and BCG consultants, the structure of TGF has changed dramatically in 2012. The heart of this organization is its Grant Management Division, and its resources have been shifted heavily to reflect this fact. As such, the Legal Unit has been split into two teams: the Grant Management and Institutional Legal Officers. There is one GMLO placed within each regional team within the Grant Management Division (e.g., High Impact Africa, West/Central Africa, Latin America & the Caribbean, etc.). The GMLOs draft and review contracts (grant agreements) at every stage in the life of a grant and provide legal advice on any issues that may arise (e.g., grant recipients in Chad seeking to insert a force majeure clause into their contract with TGF). The ILOs handle other legal issues facing their client (TGF), for example, negotiations with private sector partners, potential litigation, human resource issues, and intellectual property, to name a few areas.

Most of my work as an intern took place before this division of the Legal Unit, when each legal officer did work in each area. As such, I worked in the operational realm on various types of contracts with grant recipients for about 2/3 of my time. I then received various institutional projects from lawyers, such as tax issues (how can TGF use its privileges and immunities in the USA to avoid paying sales tax in DC hotels?), intellectual property issues (developing institutional policies on how and when grant recipients may use our trademarks, writing a cease & desist letter and initiating action on a cybersquatter), and private sector issues (due diligence on a potential partner, drafting a Memorandum of Understanding with a potential donor). There is a steep learning curve in that you really have to understand how the organization is structured and functions before you can be useful (I highly recommend scouring their website to get a sense of this before you begin), but once you get there, there is
no shortage of work and you will be treated like another lawyer. As I'm interested in global health issues, I also requested to attend country team meetings and attended brown-bag-lunch-and-learn talks about the three diseases and our efforts to eradicate them.
The office atmosphere is on the formal side (I was the only intern and it's not quite a "let's all get drinks after work!" crowd like WHO or ICJ), but very congenial. I recommend joining your colleagues for lunch and a ski trip or two to get to know them on a more personal level. All of them have been great to grab coffee, hear about their career path, what they like and don't like about working here, and what advice they have for me. My supervisor, Liz Hunt, is busy but very approachable and always looking for interesting work to give me the most well-rounded experience possible. I only had to work late a handful of times, otherwise it is a very 9-5 (or 9:30-5:30) type of environment for interns. When I stayed later than that, attorneys would often encourage me to go enjoy Europe and resume tomorrow.

You will enjoy and do well with this externship if you are looking to really dig into and understand the type of work I've described above, are willing and able to take initiative both to drum up the type of work that interests you and to build professional and personal relationships, and are eager to get a feel for what it's like to use your legal skills to further a goal you care about. I would absolutely do this externship all over again and am quite sad to leave! Good luck!

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at the Global Fund in 2013, 2014, or 2015.)
International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD)

Advice from 2008 Extern

I went into my internship at ICTSD with no knowledge of international trade and really no interest in learning anything about international trade (or at least nothing more than I needed to make it through the internship). It just happened to be the one internship opportunity the first year of the Geneva Program with an environmental dimension. But working at ICTSD ended up being one of the best internships I have ever had. I even so much as told them that if they ever opened a Washington, DC office I would come back and work for them.

My favorite thing about ICTSD - the people. There are a lot of young people that work there and there are always other interns at some point during the program. The people you will work with are from all over the world and speak any number of different languages (don't worry, the agency works in English). When I was there, there were people from France, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Argentina, Venezuela, England, India and China... just to name a few. They are friendly, collegial, and immediately make you feel like you are part of the organization. I often went to lunch with them, was invited to go out with them after work, and when I went back to Geneva during the July following my internship, we all went out to see one of our colleague's perform with his band at an Irish Pub (this may be reason enough to work there!).

The work was also very rewarding. I am not particularly interested in litigation. Rather, I prefer to spend my days working on various policy issues. That's what my educational and work background is in, and that's the area where I would like to stay. If you're interested in doing something outside of the typical job description of a "lawyer," this will be a great internship experience for you. Because I have an interest in environmental law, I worked in the environment group. I spent my days researching and drafting articles on any number of trade and environmental issues for some of the organization's periodicals. At one point I was spending a significant amount of time researching and writing about biofuel sustainability requirements (which now is a huge academic interest of mine). It was great because you got to see your work go from a few sentences on a page, to print, then to mass distribution.

Advice from 2009 Extern

Working at ICTSD will provide externs with a phenomenal introduction to all aspects of international trade and sustainable development, with particular focus on the Dispute Settlement Understanding of the World Trade Organization.

A substantial portion of my externship centered on researching and writing articles relating to trade for one of ICTSD's several publications - Bridges Weekly. Over just four months, I was responsible for the creation of approximately thirty short articles, all of which were published and properly attributed. In addition, I ghostwrote the foreword for nearly a half dozen ICTSD research papers, since printed and in circulation. Lastly, I composed several documents for internal use relating to legal trade, and was responsible for the editing of several research papers in pre-publication.

In light of my experience, I feel that applicants possessing very strong writing ability will continue to be rewarded with the opportunity to compose a wide variety of written product,
the majority of which will be published. As such, a background in editing and non-legal composition is recommended for an ideal candidate. Although proficiency in French, and secondarily Spanish, is most directly beneficial at ICTSD (which publishes in over a half-dozen languages), neither is required by this externship.

Non-writing aspects of my externship related primarily to helping organize and facilitate two ICTSD "dialogues" - large expert roundtables open to the public and hosted off site, and focused on a specific aspect of international trade. Both of the dialogues I helped with related to increasing participation of least developed countries within the multilateral trading system and I found very interesting. Preparation for the events obviously involves a bit of administrative work, however, the events themselves and the requisite planning present phenomenal opportunities to meet and interact with experts, policy makers, and ambassadors. For a candidate wishing to continue in international trade, I found that ICTSD was well known and respected, with many staff members moving regularly among international organizations and other non-governmental groups. It appeared that experience at ICTSD opened a door to other opportunities for those who did great work and were motivated to take advantage of those chances.

Regarding day-to-day life at ICTSD, I cannot speak highly enough about my experience. Office atmosphere was extremely collegial and laid back, yet academically and professionally stimulating, as externs will work with very talented colleagues from literally dozens of nationalities. As rewarding as I found my work to be, I similarly enjoyed impromptu debates in the hallway or on the office patio about a wide range of topics. My co-workers were friendly and welcoming, and I have made several friendships that I hope to continue far into the future. Staff members take their work seriously, but also their personal happiness, and lunch is often a lengthy affair followed by a coffee break later in the day. A relaxed policy on vacation time allowed me flexibility to travel extensively.

The office itself is also very nice, with each extern provided (while I was there) with a desk sharing one of the twenty or so offices at ICTSD, each with featuring floor to ceiling windows and access to a patio which surrounding the office on all sides. Unimpeded views of either the French Alps or Jura mountains assisted when writers block set in. Externs work independently for the most part, although my supervisors were extremely accessible at all times and provided helpful feedback and oversight when needed. Compared to other externs within Geneva, it not only appeared that I was given some of the most significant substantive work among them, but also benefited from one of the most enjoyable work atmospheres. All in all, I found my time at ICTSD extremely rewarding and am confident future externs will find the same.

**Advice from 2010 Extern**

My day-to-day work at ICTSD consisted mainly of two categories: work for the publications unit (in my case Bridges) and work for the specific unit to which I was attached (in my case the Dispute Settlement Unit). The early days of each week would usually be spent researching and writing short news articles covering WTO cases. My remaining time was spent completing various tasks for my unit. This work varied, from being fairly administrative (i.e. working on updating a contact database), to somewhat substantive (such as working on a WTO paper with legal analysis). The organization does not do direct litigation, but instead focuses more on capacity-building, networking, and policy analysis to promote the goals of trade and sustainable development.
The office is comprised of very friendly, intelligent and diligent staff who not only like to get work done, but also to enjoy themselves. The office sits at the top floor of its building and no intern is denied breathtaking views of the Swiss Alps. On nice days staff members often gather for lunch on the deck, contributing to a relaxing, collegial environment.

There are a number of qualities that would help someone succeed at this externship. (1) Most of the employees here already have a graduate degree, so having a masters degree in addition to being a JD candidate may be helpful. (2) It probably is not required to have substantial background in the topic of a particular unit to which you would like to be assigned, but in my case, a prior course in international trade would have been extremely helpful. Similarly, academic or professional experience in climate change, development, IP or agriculture for example would help in their respective units. (3) An extern should have a willingness to do menial tasks in addition to the substantive. Because ICTSD is an NGO, with funding limitations, more administrative work tends to be spread among the project staff (which includes interns). (4) Being willing to socialize is key, as that helps work get done both internally and externally. (5) Finally, an extern here would benefit from being open to doing additional work from other units. I learned a great deal and received some very interesting assignments from areas outside of dispute settlement as well as inside.

**Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow**

The International Center for Trade and Sustainable Development is a great place to advance your understanding of substantive WTO law, and contribute to fascinating research and writing relating to case developments in the WTO Dispute Settlement system, where member states go to settle their trade disputes. In fact, it is one of the only agencies where you will get to work on case law and conduct legal analysis based on judicial precedent (the decisions of the WTO Appellate Body). On top of that, the disputes are far ranging, including anti-dumping and countervailing duties, cotton subsidies and cross-retaliation, and export bans on seal products to name a few, so there is a variety of specific topics to choose from.

While the work is interesting, it requires a significant amount of effort on the extern's part, and the person who fills this position should be self-motivated and able to meet time sensitive deadlines. The supervisors are easy-going and great to work with, but they often just give you a general outline and leave the rest to you. That is not to say that the supervisors are not helpful. They are very good at helping you hone your writing and direct your research, as well as answer any questions about difficult points of law. Part of the work of the ICTSD extern involves writing for its weekly trade periodical, an experience that will improve your writing and expand your knowledge of trade law and policy, but also require time management skills because of the strict deadlines. But perhaps the best part of working at ICTSD is engaging your colleagues, all experts in their respective fields and very friendly to boot. I cannot think of another agency where you get to consult with a former WTO panel member, the people who actually hear the disputes, or the equivalent of judges at the WTO. If you want to improve your writing and learn about a fascinating area of international law from the people who shape it, then ICTSD is the placement for you.

**Advice from 2013 Geneva International Fellow**

I will echo some of the comments from past ICTSD externs in saying that this is a vibrant, laid back workplace full of young, motivated people from all over the world. That being said, they're also remarkably talented in their respective fields and take their work and the success of ICTSD generally very seriously. In terms of the Trade Law Programme, the
programme for which you will do the bulk of your work, it’s a fantastic opportunity to gain
a deep understanding of global trade rules, particularly the WTO and the Dispute Settlement
Body, which adjudicates trade disputes between Member states ranging from Vietnam’s
allegedly illegal subsidies on warm-water shrimp to the EU’s ban on seal products to ‘feed-in
tariffs’ – price guarantees – for renewable electricity generators in Ontario. What is really
nice is that while you will spend quite a bit of time tackling the legal complexities of the four
WTO Agreements and the adjoining case law, you’ll also have to research completely
random (and sometimes fun) topics like how an electricity market functions, why purse-seine
fishing is only effective at catching tuna in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean, or why
Iceland thinks killing seals is their sovereign right.

One thing to note is that the institution is not primarily comprised of lawyers, most of the
employees are policy experts. However, I also got the chance to work directly with the
former Deputy Director General of the WTO, so there certainly are legal experts to reach out
to. That being said, getting feedback and having questions answered will require proactivity
on your part. It’s a very entrepreneurial place where everyone is trusted to fashion their own
initiatives, plan their own work. As such, if you participate in some broader research
projects, you’ll likely only get a general outline of what is needed and it will be up to you to
run with it and figure out what will be the best way to conduct that research. My colleagues
were always friendly and accessible, but it’s the sort of place where you really only get
guidance if you ask for it. But, this is also somewhat of a benefit because you’re trusted with
a great deal of autonomy and substantive work from the beginning.

If you enjoy writing, particularly non-legal writing, then you’ll enjoy working at ICTSD.
Some of your time will be spent writing articles for the weekly trade periodical, Bridges
Weekly. These are fun little research projects – typically 600-1200 words – and force you
into a journalistic mode of writing which emphasizes clarity and concision over legal detail.
I found it very valuable to practice translating hundreds of pages of legalistic jargon into a
couple pages of prose that would are digestible by a layperson.

The office is great. You’ll likely share a spacious office with one or two other interns, and
have a floor-to-ceiling windows with views of the mountains surrounding Geneva. There’s
also a balcony that wraps all the way around the building, and as soon as it gets nice,
everyone spends long leisurely lunches outside. Also, the water cooler dispenses sparkling
water. This is a great place to work if you’re a self-starter, comfortable with less proactive
supervision, and are interested in WTO law, specifically issues associated with developing
countries.

**Advice from 2014 Geneva International Fellow**

ICTSD provides its interns with a great opportunity to get exposure to international trade law,
predominantly related to the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Dispute Settlement
Mechanism (DSM). While I was told in advance that a background in trade law would not be
necessary, I think taking a trade law course before beginning the externship is very valuable.
If you are more interested in environmental policy and you are proactive, there are many
opportunities to get involved with teams outside the international trade programme working
on issues like fisheries management, climate change and energy, intellectual property, green
goods, etc.

Despite spending the majority of my time with the trade law programme at the beginning of
the externship, overtime I was able to find work with the climate change programme, which matched better with my personal interests, environmental law. This is one of the great aspects of ICTSD. The organization is big enough that there is never a lack of work to be done on relating to a diversity of issues, but it is small enough that you feel like everyone is approachable. In fact, there is a wonderfully collegial culture at the organization that often extends beyond office hours. The people at ICTSD are truly their greatest asset.

Because I switched between teams throughout my externship, it is impossible to describe an average week except to say that I always had articles to write for the organization’s periodical, Bridges Weekly. All the articles I worked on dealt with WTO disputes, however, you can always ask for additional articles on topics of interest.

Outside of Bridges work, I helped prepare sections of multiple research papers. For one paper, my role was collecting and analyzing raw data about participation in the WTO. In another paper, I was asked to analyze the trade law implications of national carbon labeling programs. Additionally, I was often asked to prepare internal documents and background papers in preparation for the never ending events that ICTSD organizes and attends.

Overall, ICTSD was a really positive experience that I would recommend to future students that interested in international environmental issues and/or international trade law. I successful extern will have strong writing skills and be very proactive. If you want to work with a specific team or on a specific project, you need to make your wishes known. Also, because we are a bit outside the United Nations bubble, you need to seek out events to attend and plan ahead because ICTSD does not give its externs a badge providing access to the United Nations or other IGO facilities.

**Advice from 2014 Geneva International Fellow**

Although it is difficult to describe exactly what the day-to-day work will be next year (note: new externs will have a different supervisor), I spent the first half of each week researching and writing about trade news. Although Michigan Law externs aren’t assigned to the publications programme, one of the ICTSD’s major functions is trade reporting through their weekly publication – *Bridges* – and in the environmentally focused monthly publication – *BioRes*. Because opinions are issued by the WTO’s dispute settlement body relatively frequently, and because there is always a high volume of articles that need to be written on trade negotiations or other trade issues, it is possible for an extern to spend a great deal of time working for the publications team.

As mentioned, publications work is essentially researching and writing. Sometimes this means writing about WTO cases and domestic laws affecting trade, but more often it involved writing about trade negotiations, potential trade disputes, and trade policy issues. The tricky part about this part of the work is the speed with which the writing process moves. Although I knew almost nothing about trade law coming into my externship, and I almost never knew anything about the specific negotiations or policies before I wrote about them, externs are expected to complete a draft of an article by Tuesday night or Wednesday morning. Most of the time this is invigorating – it can be fun to absorb a lot of new information, but at times I ended up working late or getting up early to complete assignments. This didn’t really bother me, but it can certainly be the case for externs, unless they are quick researchers and writers.
Fortunately, the articles are never extremely long (about 700-800 words usually), so it is never an impossible task to complete them. And if it was an impossible task, Sofia and Kimberley (the Bridges and BioRes editors, respectively) are very good at pitching in or taking over to make sure things were completed in a timely manner. Also, it’s worth noting that I often asked for more than I was expected to complete. But I enjoyed writing, so that’s where a lot of my effort went during my externship. If an extern preferred to work less with the publications team, I imagine this would be an option too, unless, of course, the extern is specifically assigned to work there.

As for the day-to-day work with the programme with which future externs will be assigned, I will not comment. I have very little idea. Most of my work took place with the publications team on Monday to Wednesday (Bridges is published on Thursday), and then during the latter half of the week with the Trade Law Programme where future externs will not work.

The office atmosphere reflects the task-oriented nature of the work. Often, on a Friday (and sometimes on a Thursday), the office empties out early. Then again, when there are major projects that need to be completed, people may stay up all night to complete them. In some ways, ICTSD is reminiscent of college or law school in this way, and, indeed, many of the employees are young. Additionally, interns are constantly rotating in and out. From early January to late April, at least 5-7 interns departed. The office maintains a casual dress code.

In many ways, I found the atmosphere of ICTSD to be one of my favorite things about the organization. People are friendly, helpful should you have questions on their field of expertise, and are generally respectful of your abilities. For example, in addition to the trust given me from the publications team, during my last few days at ICTSD I was asked to review a contract that ICTSD planned to sign with an academic search engine. After I pointed out a few shortcomings, I was asked to independently draft additional/replacement clauses – an experience that I certainly wouldn’t have in a summer associate position.

Moreover, the young, task-oriented work atmosphere of ICTSD means that when people aren’t working, there are many great social events to attend. Most of the friends that I made in Geneva – and Geneva was an awesome social experience for me – came through work, or through people I met because of work friends. Sure, there are a few people at ICTSD who aren’t particularly social or seem hesitant to trust you, but these people are few and far between. Get to know the interns especially!

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at ICTSD in 2015.)
International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)

Advice from 2009 Extern

The ICJ is a great NGO to work at. Everyone at the office is extremely bright and talented and I believe that everyone, excluding some members of the finance team, has a law degree. There are a variety of projects and everyone is very committed and passionate about their particular area, so it is very encouraging. Also, everyone really knows their area well so they are great resources. It is an exceptional environment in terms of an intellectual community and the willingness of everyone to share their expertise and really help you learn.

I particularly enjoyed my experience at the ICJ because I found that I was given great control regarding what I worked on. In particular, I was able to observe the entire 10th Session of the Human Rights Council and was even an ICJ representative at a meeting with the High Commissioner of Human Rights during which I asked the High Commissioner (nervously) questions on behalf of the ICJ. My main supervisor was Lukas Machon, the ICJ's representative to the UN, which allowed me to really observe and participate at all levels of the interaction between NGOs and the UN. I wrote several ICJ submissions to treaty bodies and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on country situations. Again, while I did more with the UN than the other ICJ programs I believe this was under my control and so if I wanted to get work in another area it would definitely have been possible.

Advice from 2010 Extern

This internship is ideal for a student who has an extensive background in human rights law and at least a working knowledge of humanitarian law; Judge Simma's seminar on the impact of human rights on international law is also recommended. Skills in any European language would be helpful but are not essential. Students who keep an open mind when it comes to the assignments they are given, and who are self-motivated in terms of seeking out new projects and forming relationships with a variety of staff members, are likely to be given a broad range of substantive and interesting legal work and will have the opportunity to learn about many cutting-edge areas of international law. They should expect to perform at least some tasks that are administrative in nature, but in general this type of work is kept to a minimum. They should also be flexible when it comes to the challenges of working for an organization that is undergoing significant transitions in terms of its mission, structure, and staffing.

Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow

The ICJ is a very welcoming and interesting place to work. All of the thematic programs (one of which you will be assigned to) make sure that their interns do substantive work along with traditional intern tasks. Although everyone at the ICJ speaks English, your fluency will make you a hot commodity and give you access to a wide range of written work. As with many of the Geneva placements, you might have to press for work that uses your traditional legal skills or puts you in the place of a practicing international lawyer.

Being at an NGO gives you a perspective that is distinct from most of the Michigan placements. No matter what program you're assigned to, you'll probably have some role to play during a session of the Human Rights Council, whether it's taking notes on the official sessions or helping to run a side event that tackles an issue from a non-state perspective. You'll also see the behind-the-scenes work that informs so many of the state-driven decisions
made in Geneva.

You'll like working at the ICJ if you care about human rights and the rule of law. You should also be prepared for work to come in waves; sometimes there's a lot to do and sometimes there's very little. Also good to know: the dress code is very relaxed. Jeans are ok, even t-shirts on slow days. A dressy suit is never needed.

**Advice from 2012 Geneva International Fellow**

Semantics: The workday varies for each person but in general people at the ICJ arrive between 9 - 9:30 am and leave around 6. This is flexible and people seem very willing to let interns leave early if they are traveling or have other commitments so long as they get their work done on time. Unless you have a meeting or are in the UN unit (which always dresses business casual) there isn't a formal dress code at the ICJ. Interns and full-time staff will wear jeans so I wouldn't worry about your attire too much, but would still dress up on the first day and keep it a little on the nicer side the first week or two when you are meeting everyone. Although I'm sure lots of fellows say this, I honestly believe that the ICJ is the best placement an extern can receive. This is the only organization that is comprised completely of lawyers, making it a rarity in the Geneva NGO/IO field. However, this does mean that you will likely be a little intimidated at first by both your colleagues and fellow interns. For example, the interns I currently work with include Barristers, former clerks for the European Court of Human Rights, solo publishers of UN organizational materials, former clerks for the International Court of Justice, a former member of the Swiss mission to Australia, and more impressive advanced degrees and credentials than you can shake a stick at. Your colleagues' accomplishments' will be even more impressive and varied. Nonetheless, don't worry! Everyone is extremely friendly, supportive, and modest.

Within Geneva and globally the ICJ is a very well regarded NGO, being one of (if not) the first ECOSOC recognized NGO at the UN. This year will mark its 70\(^{th}\) anniversary promoting human rights across the globe. For this reason we will often work closely with the UN and its related organizations as well as other NGOs on a range of high profile issues. Keep an ear to the ground and pay attention at staff meetings to what others are working on because although you will be assigned to a specific unit, interns who express interest in a topic are often able to work on it even though it may be with someone else in the organization. To say I enjoyed my time at the ICJ is an understatement. Everything about my experience was stellar; from the assignments and supervision I received to the atmosphere in general, I found it to be a great place to work. I understand that this may vary depending on where in the organization you are and the supervisor you have, but generally speaking I think I would have been happy almost anywhere.

The assignments I received varied throughout my experience. Although not mandatory, I would recommend spending some time over the break getting yourself acquainted in the area of international law that you will be working in. This will save you some time when you arrive and make a very good impression on your supervisor. I had to play catch up a bit because although I was well versed in domestic LGBTI law I did not have as deep an understanding on the international scale. Given that my supervisor was able to quote it from memory, it took me a few weeks to "catch up." Surprisingly, the ICJ is VERY hesitant about giving interns grunt work. The two times over four months that I did something like organize paperwork or files took me volunteering and convincing my supervisor that I really didn't mind. My supervisor was even very careful about giving me grunt legal work. I only had one
footnoting assignment in the very beginning of my internship and some small research assignments' throughout. My supervisor was very enthusiastic to let me try writing or analyzing things on my own, even if the first attempt or two didn't go well. She consistently reminded me that this was supposed to be a learning experience and encouraged me to take chances even if it meant making some mistakes. I was able to draft UN reports, ICJ briefing papers, and even an oral statement, which I gave, at the UN to the entire Human Rights Council plenary body.

I would say this is a good internship for someone who is motivated and wants to challenge himself or herself to develop skills in substantive analytical writing and thinking. This is also a good placement for someone who is social and outgoing because the number of interns here is higher than at most organizations and you will often find that the interns will often have social outings. For me, the ICJ interns became my primary social group for my time in Geneva.

I highly recommend this placement to future fellows!

Advice from 2013 Geneva International Fellow

The ICJ is a very relaxed environment. The dress code is very casual and people come into work some time between 9 and 10. I had very loose supervision. I was given assignments and then allowed to take the reins on almost all aspects - from content to formatting, and some times even to substance. Most of my assignments did not have a strict or tight deadline, and many of my projects were long-term projects that stretched over a long period of time. The ICJ is one of the only non-UN internships, so that lends a completely different feel. Although the ICJ interacted with the UN a fair amount, it is primarily an NGO. Furthermore, the ICJ is made up entirely of lawyers, so it truly is a legal organization and you will not find yourself doing non-legal or policy work, although sometimes doing international legal work can sometimes feel more like policy work. You will work exclusively within one division of ICJ, for the most part, which means you will work mostly with the same one or two people for the duration of internship, and you will not always get prompt feedback on your work. The ICJ is made up of people from all over the world, so it is very helpful to be open-minded and curious about other cultures. Some of my favorite moments were having lunch with the other interns and learning about each others' cultures. You'd like to work here if you're the kind of person who is self-directed and laid back, yet who is proactive in finding new assignments; who enjoys meeting new people, yet does not mind working on projects by oneself and with minimal collaboration or interaction with others.

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at the International Commission of Jurists in 2014.)

Advice from 2015 Geneva International Fellow

Day-to-day work
My day-to-day work was fairly varied. Most of the time, I had one major research and writing intensive project and completed shorter projects as needed. I completed two main research memos for a Practitioners Guide on the topic of accountability that will be published in a year. One memo was on the international anti-corruption frameworks as they relate to judicial accountability and another was on the vetting in the judiciary in the context of transitional justice.
I had other shorter-term projects. I worked on compiling notes from a forum that had taken place the previous semester in order to turn it into a comprehensive report. I was asked to follow certain news stories and keep my supervisor or others up to date on any developments. I also had to review a few cases and write a brief summary, if the organization was interested in possibly intervening in that case. In addition, I was asked to review a few submissions that would be made to the UN or other bodies.

Another day-to-day task is going to various meetings with the supervisor or another staff member. I have gone to a few meetings without any supervision when no one else was able to as well. In that capacity, the intern usually takes notes and listens, or can make comments depending on what the supervisor asks him or her to do. In addition, the intern may be asked to attend a few sessions of the Universal Period Review, which takes place in February. Depending on the department, you may also have department meetings to discuss how to move forward on a specific project or to just get everyone up to speed. The intern may also be asked to help a treaty body or another organization in some small way. For example, I was asked to record a treaty body session for a few days.

The day-to-day work is very different when the Human Rights Council (HRC) is in session in March. When it is March, if you are working for the UN Programme or your supervisor is heavily involved with the UN sessions, you will have to be at the UN quite a bit. The HRC has the main sessions where the topic of discussion is either the human rights situation in a specific country or a general human rights concern. There are also side events that the ICJ may be directly involved in or would just like to have someone present. Finally, there are informal consultations on draft resolutions, which the ICJ finds important to follow. In all of these events, the intern usually takes notes, the level of detail depending on the type of event. The HRC may take over the entire month of March for the intern, so all the other projects would have to be put on the backburner.

**Level of supervision and involvement with your colleagues**

My experience at the ICJ in regards to supervision has been very pleasant. Usually, we would have a meeting every couple of weeks to discuss the progress that we have made, challenges that have come up, and next steps in order to keep us on track on any projects or tasks. This is also the time that everyone reviews any major work product that has been put forward since the last meeting and makes suggestions. I have always felt very comfortable asking questions on any assignment I had and everyone is willing to help and answer those questions. It has helped that my desk is in the same office as my supervisor and the other colleague on my specific team. This way I feel that I am always in the loop.

Not specifically about the ICJ, but something to note in general, is that it is important to understand how your supervisor and others would like to receive information. Some would much rather receive an email with a question or comment, while others may want to be approached in person and have an on the spot discussion. Although this could be sensed, it may be a good idea to sit down with your supervisor at the beginning and outline the specific expectations on the matter. Also, if the supervisor does not give you feedback on major assignments, it may be a good idea to ask for a meeting.

**Office atmosphere**

Aside from the finance department, most people here work 9AM to 5:30 or 6PM. During the HRC, however, those work hours are usually extended for anyone who has work related to it.
If you are sick or would like to take a vacation day, your supervisors will usually be very understanding. Interns are allowed two vacation days per month.

The atmosphere in the office is very casual. Unless you have external or important internal meetings, you do not have to dress very professionally. Most people wear jeans on the regular basis here. Everyone is really friendly and often people will get lunch together. Sometimes the office will have a happy hour organized, to which everyone is usually invited. Also, if it is someone’s birthday, there is usually a small celebration in the office. In general, everyone is extremely friendly and helpful if you have any questions.

**Key differences between an Externship at ICJ versus others**

The ICJ is really great about allowing you to explore your own interests. Especially during the HRC, I was able to attend a number of events that I was interested in, even when the ICJ was not. I was also able to attend UPR sessions based on my own interests. Additionally, if the intern is interested in the work of another thematic or regional group within the ICJ, it would not be a problem to ask to be involved more on their cases, research, or potentially attend some meetings. Of course, it is important to ask the immediate supervisor to make sure that any of these activities are okay with them.

The ICJ is also incredibly good at providing the intern with substantive work instead of administrative or simple tasks like taking notes. There is a lot of analysis and legal research of international standards. In fact, it seems that the interns have the more intriguing assignments because the legal advisers often have to complete mundane tasks like budgeting and grant applications. This does not seem to be the case in some of the other organizations, where many have to spend days simply taking notes or creating presentations. It is evident that the ICJ really cares about the interns and wants them to get the best value out of their experience. In fact, the sentiment here is also very much against unpaid internships. However, budgetary constraints are the reality in the NGO world, so it’s difficult not to take into account such limitations. This is also why the ICJ tries its best to only take interns that either have other funding during the internship or get credit for it.

Another major difference between the ICJ and most other organizations is that it is very casual in its dress, but very professional in everything else. Of course, people joke and chat in the kitchen, but it is very obvious that people here take their work extremely seriously.

**Specific skills (including interpersonal) that are valued**

Research and writing skills are certainly highly valued at the ICJ because that is a large portion of the work. The intern has to be able to communicate well with people, not only in the office, but also at meetings and HRC sessions. Geneva is a small human rights bubble and everyone here knows each other. It is important to be able to put forward yourself and your organization in a favorable light.

Another skill that has great value is additional languages. I know Spanish, which was helpful when I had to follow a story from Bolivia and almost had to make a statement at the HRC in Spanish on the behalf of our Bolivian counterpart. Most people here speak French, but Spanish or languages that are not as prominent may be very useful when a certain legal development does not have as much international media coverage.

“You’d like to work here if you’re the kind of person who…”

A person would really enjoy working here if he or she is interested in international aspects of
law and wants to understand more about the basic core international standards and their national applications. The ICJ is not a flashy human rights NGO the way that Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International may be. It is predominantly concerned with concrete legal rules and how to use them to move forward the human rights progress in the world. The ICJ is particularly focused on protecting human rights defenders, so that they are able to better defend the variety of human rights in their respective countries. It is also aware of the politics that surround human rights, but very much attempts to distance itself from it. This isn’t an organization that tries to make a splash. It wants to make a material difference.

If you enjoy concrete legal research and writing, would like to understand the UN and the international legal system, but without the bureaucracy and politics that come with it, and if you want to better understand the inner workings of a highly regarded NGO in the field, the ICJ is a place for you.

**Budget**

In terms of transportation, everyone should get a monthly pass for the trams and buses (this also gets you to the airport). This drastically cuts the costs of transport, especially if you are under 25. The tram and buses are really efficient here and everything important is usually off of tram 15. If you plan to travel a lot in Switzerland by train, you should definitely get a demi-tarif, which gives you discounts on train prices within the country. If you have the demi-tarif and take a train outside of Switzerland, the Swiss part would still be discounted. Both of these passes can be bought at the train station. For flying to other parts of Europe, which you should definitely try to do while here, EasyJet is a wonderful budget airline.

Food is actually not as expensive as one might think as long as you don’t eat out. Buying frozen vegetables and pasta is a good way to go. There are budget stores like Denner or Lidl, which are fairly cheap. Coop and Migro aren’t too expensive either. Most stores are closed on Sundays, except Migro at the train station. Migro also does not sell alcohol. As a side note, there are no laws against walking around with alcohol.

In terms of communication, Wi-Fi is not as widespread as one would hope. Some bars and restaurants have them, but many places do not. I kept my phone from the US and added an international texting and very limited data plan for an additional $50 a month. Since AT&T would have charged me my usual monthly cost even if I put the plan on hold anyway, I felt that it would be helpful. I used the phone when there was Wi-Fi available. In addition, I bought a 10 franc phone at one of the many stores around with a texting/calling card, but I stopped using it halfway through the semester. It is still worth it to have the phone to get in touch with people.

**Information about housing**

Since I didn’t know anything about Geneva, I didn’t want to commit to stay at the same place for four months without first seeing the apartment and meeting my landlord. Therefore, I found a place on Airbnb for $1100 for the first month. The location was wonderful, but the experience not so much. I would certainly encourage anyone who is trying to book a place through Airbnb to book places with roommates that are of the same gender.

In my first month, I started looking for another accommodation and was extremely lucky in finding a room with a family that was a 20 minute walk from my office for only about $1000 a month in the Saint-Jean-Charmilles neighborhood. I found the place on a website called gloclals. In general, however, there is a lot of competition for all places and you will most
likely be paying at least $1000 a month, unless you live in a Foyer.

Geneva is a fairly small city, so no matter where you are everything is pretty close. I would definitely encourage people to live in Geneva rather than in France or on the outskirts. It is much more difficult to get around and I personally don’t think it’s worth the price cut.

**Organization chart**

Usually at the beginning of the internship, the intern has briefings with a staff member from each department in order to get a better sense of what work that department does. Trying to explain the structure of the organization otherwise might be more confusing than helpful. In general, the organization is divided into thematic and regional programs. The thematic programs include the Centre on Independence of Judges and Lawyers (CIJL), Business and Human Rights, the UN Programme, and others. The regional programs include Europe, Southeast Asia, Middle East and North Africa, and others. In addition, there are regional offices.

Depending on which program you are assigned to, the organizational framework may look very different. For the CIJL, there is one senior legal adviser and one junior legal adviser. Depending on the funding available and the needs of the organization, legal advisers sometimes divide their time between two different departments. A legal adviser might work on sexual orientation and gender identity issues half of the time and CIJL the other half. Once again, this is very varied throughout the organization and may be changing in the near future.
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (IISD)

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at the International Institute for Sustainable Development prior to 2015.)

Advice from 2013 Geneva International Fellow

I worked with the investment team in the Economic Law & Policy Program at the International Institute of Sustainable Development (IISD). My primary supervisor was Nathalie Bernasconi-Osterwalder and my secondary supervisor was Flavia Thome. Nathalie is the Group Director of ELP and is the Senior Operations Manager of ELP. Nathalie, Flavia, and most of the Investment team work remotely, so I shared the Geneva office with two team members, Joe Zhang and Carin Smaller.

The Geneva office of the International Institute of Sustainable Development is located in Vernier in the same building with other environmental NGOs like ICTSD and across from UNEP. IISD’s space covers half of a floor in the building. The office space is pretty communal. I shared an office with a couple of lawyers in my Investment Law team, now within the Economic Law and Policy program. One lawyer was there full time, whereas some of the other lawyers were part-time and came in a couple days a week. The other members of the Investment team work remotely from places like London, Tunisia, and Brazil. As a result, I ended up Skyping and emailing with the team quite a bit. We also did monthly videoconference calls to review projects everyone was working on and other updates. Initially, having to either Skype or email a question frustrated me, but after a while, I became more comfortable with using electronic communication. I also learned to direct questions to my office mates as a first step.

Fariba DiBenedetto-Achtari, the IISD Office Administrator, works in the front office of IISD. She helped me with logistical issues such as getting access to the UN, which I should warn you I found very difficult to navigate during Human Rights month. Plan well in advance if you would like to attend main events, but the side events are much easier to attend. The front office has a Nespresso machine, which was definitely a plus since I drink too much coffee. They have capsules you can buy for 1 chf, or you can bring your own. There is also a cafeteria in the UNEP building across the street and a Balexert with a Migros Cafeteria and other dining options a 5-10 walk from the office.

I found my colleagues at IISD to be really friendly and accessible. I often ate lunch with people from my team, the team across the hall, and the front staff. People were always willing to talk about the projects they were working on. We also had a couple of office wide teleconference meetings with the IISD headquarters in Winnipeg.

Typically people arrive at IISD around 9 am and leave between 5:30-6:00 pm, though sometimes earlier on Fridays. Throughout the week, there are often people out of the office traveling or working from home, so the hours are flexible. My office mate Joe kept a pretty regular schedule throughout the week, but he also traveled more towards the end of my externship.

When I first started with IISD, I received a large share of my projects from Nathalie and
Flavia, but as time went on, I worked on projects with Joe, Carin, and fellow team member Martin Brauch, who is in charge coordinating IISD’s quarterly Investment Treaty Newsletter. My largest and longest assignment was to compile research on the fair and equitable treatment (FET) and international minimum standard of treatment (MST) provisions found in International Investment Agreements (IIAs). Part of my research entailed finding and compiling all relevant material written by international investment law scholar Muthucumaraswamy Sornarajah, who authored the leading text on foreign investment law. I researched and summarized relevant cases from the last five years where investors claimed breaches of the FET and MST standards in international arbitrations. I also compiled model investment treaties and regional investment agreements from the past five years to chart the revision of the standards. As Nathalie progressed further into writing her chapter, I edited and provided feedback on her abstract drafts.

The next project I worked on was writing two recent arbitral awards’ summaries, *Hesham v. Indonesia* and *Bilcon v. Canada*, for the Investment Treaty Newsletter (ITN), which will be published in early May 2015. IISD publishes ITN quarterly, and it is composed of summaries of recent awards and more general articles on various international investment law trends and issues. This was a great legal exercise for several reasons. Most of the arbitral awards are 180+ pages but our ITN summaries are usually between 1200-1500 words, so I had to read and condense the information provided in the awards quite a bit. I had to decide what facts and reasoning were most salient to provide a proper review of the arbitral decision. I also worked closely with Martin on editing my summaries, and he gave me comprehensive and timely feedback on my writing. He was also a great support for my questions about general legal themes and IISD’s work in particular. I also helped edit other people’s research pieces for ITN.

I assisted my office mate Joe with several projects. I worked on compiling background legal research examining recent trends in investment disputes involving agricultural investments. I also worked with Carin on compiling public policy research regarding barriers to African women accessing the benefits of large-scale agricultural investments.

I also completed administrative tasks on a regular basis. Previously the investment team had stored all of their contacts on excel spreadsheets and now these contacts were to be transferred to a contact management software. Over the course of my externship, I uploaded contacts, solicited contacts from team members, and updated listservs. It was time consuming and tedious work, but it is integral to the team’s work to have a more reliable and accessible contact system.

The quality of supervision over the course of the externship ranged greatly. Initially, I had the most contact with Flavia, but she is in charge of project management within the group and not the substantive work. I realized early on I needed to send more email updates to Nathalie to keep her in the loop even if I’m not hearing anything back because she still likes to be kept updated even if she is too busy to respond. I usually don’t like flooding inboxes, but I think this is a case of the more, the better. I also contacted her often on Skype chat and made it appoint to schedule meetings well in advance.

In terms of direct assignment feedback, Nathalie gave me general comments and specific questions about my bibliography via email. The comments were mostly content based and didn’t address my writing style or the format of the assignment since it was mostly summaries of articles and books. I did receive substantive and detailed feedback from Martin for the ITN newsletter summaries as I described earlier.
The key differences between my externship with IISD and my classmate’s externships are: (i) my team is pretty organizationally flat, (ii) my team works remotely and utilizes electronic communication more than most organizations, (iii) the bulk of my work on the team was legal research and writing, (iv) my location in Geneva made meeting my classmates during the week for lunch or attending UN related events more difficult. Though I received the bulk of my work from Nathalie, I also worked with a large portion on the Investment team on projects either providing foundational research or helping to draft or edit written projects. At times I did feel isolated from the UN and other international organizations since they are mostly located in the Nations area, and it takes me at least a half hour by bus to get to that area. I would choose IISD if you want legal research and writing practice in an interesting and dynamic field of international law. You should be prepared to work independently and get feedback via email or Skype. You should also be prepared to do small, but routinely occurring administrative projects as well. I loved working with the Investment Law team, and I would highly recommend it as a placement to future students!
International Organization for Migration (IOM): International Migration Law Unit and Office of Legal Affairs

(Note: In 2008-2010 the IML Unit and the Office of Legal Affairs were one division (the Division of International Migration Law and Legal Affairs), so the UMLS Geneva International Fellow worked in the combined unit. In late 2010 these units were separated, and in 2011 we offered externship experiences in only the International Migration Law Unit. In 2012 we began offering externship experiences in both the IML Unit and the Office of Legal Affairs. Obviously, the work undertaken and the supervision will vary now that the organization has been restructured. Please keep this in mind when reading the advice below.)

Advice from 2008 Extern (in the former Division of International Migration Law and Legal Affairs)

You would like working at IOM if you are very self-motivated and interested in protection issues for anyone outside of their country. It is a good opportunity to explore ways to protect individuals who leave their countries for reasons that do not place them under the protection of UNHCR. You are given a lot of freedom to work on topics of interest to you, and to develop your own structure for work and research, so initiative and creativity are key. Migration is such relevant and current issue, which overlaps with so many other areas of international law, working at the IOM is a chance to be directly involved in the most recent developments and work on cutting edge issues.

Advice from 2009 Extern in the former Division of International Migration Law and Legal Affairs)

At IOM, I was largely responsible for setting my own pace. The assignments I was given were ongoing projects that were in a constant state of revision (compiling national laws, updating glossaries on migration terms, etc.) and so deadlines were very fluid. The office was very congenial, with opportunities for a lot of intern activities with interns from several other departments. The rest of the staff in the office of Migration Law and Legal Affairs were very approachable, however in large part it was up to the intern to take the initiative and ask to be included on projects or accompany the lawyers to meetings. A student who is well prepared to work independently and proactively seek out assignments would be a good fit for this organization.

IOM does not participate in UN meetings to the same extent as some of the other agencies, mostly because it is part of an international organization outside of the UN system with a separate mandate. There is no international legal convention that governs the rights of migrants, and so while IOM consults with the UN on migration issues, it is independent. Many of the other interns went to Human Rights Council and other UN meetings, and if this sort of human rights work is what a student is looking for then IOM may not be the best choice. What IOM does offer is an opportunity to work in an agency that is actively involved in implementation of migration policy in its member states, with a heavy emphasis on logistical ground support. IOM provides services and advise to its member states in various areas of the law related to migration, including labor law, health regulations, and virtually any area of law that would affect migrants. If a student is looking for more concrete work, rather than the diplomatic work of the UN system, then the IOM is a good choice.
Advice from 2010 Extern (in the former Division of International Migration Law and Legal Affairs)

At present, the International Migration Law and Legal Affairs Department is composed of two very distinct groups. One, International Migration Law (ILM), works on the legal frameworks protecting migrants' rights; the other, Legal, does in-house counsel work such as contract review and employment disputes. This is all expected to change, as the IOM is going to be restructured in the near future. IML is expected to move into a different division (although it is unclear how this will work in practice, as several folks work with both IML and Legal...). Consequently, I cannot say with any certainty what internships in the future will be like; the following are comments based on the current arrangement under which I worked with both sides.

One of IML's on-going projects is the EVIL Database, and you can expect to do a lot on it. This is an on-line collection of international, regional and national laws that affect migrants. Expect to be assigned a country, asked to find all relevant laws, and then fill out "categorization forms" with information such as the date of entry into force, titles in all available languages, etc. This work is primarily done on-line and can - from my point of view - be rather dry and also frustrating (most countries lack a Lexis-equivalent).

IML frequently creates training modules and presentations on migrants' rights, which are either delivered by the IML folks, by the field offices, or someone outside but working with the IOM. Final products typically include a PowerPoint presentation, a collection of notes on the presentation, and a concise list of suggested sources. With few exceptions, this sort of work requires consolidation/regurgitation of comments by the human rights treaty bodies, special rapporteurs, etc.

You can also expect to be asked to do a lot of editing work for IML. They generally want grammatical and not substantive edits. There is a guide to follow on IOM style, but the only consistency is how much it is disregarded. I wish I had resisted this sort of work more from the start, as it ultimately composed too much of my internship.

As for the office environment, IML and Legal together have only about seven to ten people, but they are spread over three floors. Expect to be alone in your office most of the time. You could spend a whole day without seeing anyone unless you make it a point to leave your office to check in with the others.

The office is comfortable, however. Hasmig, the administrative assistant and timekeeper, and the IT team will get you everything you need. And the legal folks are all lovely personalities who like to get together for cake at any excuse (birthday, engagement, someone's last day...). I treated the dress as business casual. You will never see anyone in a suit. Jeans are common, but they are nice ones - not the faded out, worn-out weekend-style ones. I chose to just wear them on Fridays, and no one ever said anything. Honestly, the dress seems to depend more on the person. Cynthia and Jillyanne dress more along the American business-casual line; Christine, Paola and Natalia dress more along the stylish European but barely-office-appropriate line.
Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow (in the International Migration Law Unit)

The day-to-day work at IOM is pretty consistently the same, which can be a good thing or a bad thing, depending on personal preference. From day one, I was assigned a long-term research project and given a list of tasks to complete for the International Migration Law Database (find this instrument, read it, fill out the pertinent form categorizing the contents of the instrument and providing relevant dates). At the end of my externship, I am still working on both of these projects, trying to finish before I leave. At first, it was a bit hard for me to get used to the monotony of working only on these two things, but things began to really pick up, particularly around the time the Human Rights Council began. I started to leave the office and go to the UN more, sit in on interesting meetings and side events, and take notes on things that were said relevant to international migration law. At the same time, both of my supervisors started participating in more conferences and panel discussions so there were more opportunities to work on things other than the two main projects and do some short-term research on really interesting topics that weren't even on my radar before. I would say that for me, the experience got gradually better and better and now, at the end of my time here, I am really enjoying it and sad to leave.

Supervision has been a bit tricky because I started with one supervisor who was acting as head of the Unit during a transition, and then about half-way through, the replacement head arrived, so I now have two supervisors and I actually really like it. They are both very engaging and always willing to answer questions or discuss an issue you find interesting, and also just really easy to get along with. I'm not sure if the structure of the Unit will be the same by the time the next Michigan extern arrives, but I would say that overall everyone at IOM has been really friendly.

Until the Human Rights Council, I was a bit jealous of some of the other externs who got to sit in on UPR sessions and sessions of the various treaty monitoring bodies. But once I got some exposure to covering meetings, I was actually really glad that my job is more balanced. I get to go these meetings but also do quite a bit of research, a lot of which has been really pertinent to current world events. I think the biggest thing I've had to adjust to is setting self-imposed deadlines for myself, which to be honest I haven't been wildly successful with. This position is definitely best suited for someone who can spend a lot of time working independently without deadlines. I would not consider myself such a person but I have managed to get by for the most part. It's definitely something you should consider though when deciding whether to apply. It would also be really helpful to know French. It's not crucial by any means, but I think it would be easier to engage with colleagues and to get by in general if I had stronger French skills.

Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow (in the International Migration Law Unit)

The International Migration Law (EVIL) Unit had recently become its own unit within the International Cooperation and Partnerships Department of IOM, and was still in the process of reorganizing and deciding what the Unit's role would be and what other possibilities were available. This process made the second half of the internship really exciting and interesting, but also happened to make the first month and a half or so a little slow. This pattern may be different by the next round of internships, but it's definitely important for the intern to be self-motivated and able to manage his or her time well.
In general, the supervisors were very flexible in terms of letting us work on things we found interesting, and someone coming in with definite interests within migration law would likely be allowed and encouraged to pursue those - though I didn't really have any, and it's certainly not necessary. One difficulty I faced was that in actually being treated as a full-fledged part of the team, it was hard to get up to speed on the important nuances of migration law, so any research or knowledge in that area before coming to Geneva will definitely be an asset. Requests to edit documents by non-native English speakers were not infrequent, but not so common as to make me feel like I didn't have a chance to work on projects of my own. I found it a good way to learn about interesting aspects of migration law or events unrelated to my own research.

Supervision also really depends on the intern's individual preference. The supervisors were always available (except when traveling to conferences/trainings/etc.) and willing to answer questions, but also weren't standing over our shoulders checking up on us. Also, while it's true that IOM doesn't participate in the UN Committee hearings process to the same extent as some of the other organizations, our supervisors (Kristina and Paola) were very happy to let us go to any of the sessions we were interested in, as well as other events around Geneva and would discuss them with us when we returned to the office. In general, it was a friendly working atmosphere: we shared our office with two other interns, and most of the IML staff were along the same hallway and would stop in and chat fairly frequently.

**Advice from 2012 Geneva International Fellow (in the International Migration Law Unit)**

The work in the IML unit involved a lot of research. A decent grasp of human rights instruments (i.e., the ICCPR, the ICESCR) is very useful. There were some editing assignments and other smaller tasks (which I personally enjoyed) but the larger projects all involved researching and writing up a note or memo on various policy issues, like human rights guarantees in readmission agreements.

The supervisors are friendly and there are several other interns on the floor. This year there were three (and later four) interns in the IML office and there was a pretty good amount of socializing with other IOM interns.

You are definitely encouraged to attend any presentations or Human Rights Council sessions you think are interesting. Don't be afraid to ask if you can attend something - enthusiasm is appreciated. If you attend any presentation involving migrants' rights, be prepared to take notes because sometimes you are asked to write up a summary of what the speaker said (and if you don't have notes that can get tricky).

Don't bother bringing a suit for work as that would probably make you overdressed. Work is definitely business casual, and a lot of people wore nice jeans with a sweater or blazer. There's a lot of boots-over-skinny-jeans in the winter (I saw people wearing this ensemble at a public meeting in the UN, too).

**Advice from 2012 Geneva International Fellow (in the International Migration Law Unit)**

Working at IOM in the International Migration Law Unit involved a lot of research and a lot of writing. This meant that just about every day was spent sitting in the office at my
computer, thinking about legal issues, and reading off of the computer screen. There are a lot of opportunities available to get out of the office and attend different meetings, speakers, panels, and seminars, but you have to make an effort to go to these. It is not like other placements where you will be going to Human Rights Council or CEDAW sessions for weeks on end. You can always go to some of these kinds of sessions if you say you are interested and ask your supervisors (they will say yes), but you have to take the initiative to do this.

The kinds of projects that come up in IML are very broad and I ended up working on a lot of interesting problems. Not all of it feels like the kind of legal work that you do in legal practice or at an internship at a firm, but I found that almost all of the work had a substantial legal component. I had the opportunity to research and write the first draft of a press release on migration legislation, write comments on a State party's report to the Committee on Migrant Workers, and write pieces for publication on the IML website and in the IML newsletter. I also attended a multi-day meeting at UNHCR and reported back on the discussion. There were a few times that I ended up proofreading and editing documents that other people had written, but these were all minor assignments. IML interns all have a legal education, so your legal skills are put to good use and I never felt like I was just a regular intern. Most of the projects were long-term, but overall it was a good mix of smaller projects with quick turnarounds and larger ones without real deadlines.

The supervision and other people in IML were all wonderful. Everyone is approachable, helpful, and interesting to talk to. Whenever I had any questions about a project or IOM in general, Kristina, Paola, and Daniel were fantastic and made sure to stop what they were doing and provide me with the help that I needed. I was also asked throughout my time there whether I was enjoying the work, what the supervisors could do to make my experience better, and if there was anything in particular I wanted to do before my time at IML ended. It also felt like they took all my feedback to heart and were very responsive. The other interns that we worked with were also great and I thought that we had a great environment. The office and unit are really small, so there is a lot of interaction with everyone else even though you are at your computer most of the time.

Foreign language skills are not required, but they are helpful. Everyone speaks English, but you do hear people speaking French, Italian, and Spanish to each other in the hallways, so it is nice to be able to feel like a part of that cosmopolitan environment. There were a few times that I had to read things in French and one project that involved a lot work with documents in Spanish (which I do not speak), but it was all manageable and were definitely not impossible tasks. If you do not speak any other languages, though, it would definitely not be a problem. You would like to work here if you are the kind of person who is interested in migration, human rights, and intergovernmental organizations, and who wants to see all of that in action. If you are interested in this field, in gaining experience, and if you show this to the supervisors, they will really appreciate it and give you interesting assignments. You should also be able to keep yourself motivated working on long term projects and especially when there is not a real deadline.

**Advice from 2012 Geneva International Fellow (in the Office of Legal Affairs)**

I really enjoyed working at IOM. My favorite thing about working there was that I always felt like a part of the team in my division. I was given work that was the same as what other attorneys were working on and was treated as an equal colleague always.
My work consisted mainly of contract revision. LEG must review and approve all contracts that IOM enters into with other entities. These include service agreements, deeds of donation, leases and project implementation agreements among others. My work consisted of reviewing them and communicating with the missions about what points they needed to change. Once the contract was ready for approval I would give it an approval code and send it to the mission for signing and then final the scanned copy of the signed one once they returned it to us.

I also worked on researching delegation of authority and how it works in international Organizations. My third large assignment was working on reviewing the Privileges and Immunities of IOM and creating a chart that maps out which ones it has with which countries. It was tedious at first but turned out to be quite fun.

The supervision is great, everyone is nice about being available whenever you have any questions. The style is a nice mix between professional and efficient and laid back. Dress is business casual but you can wear almost whatever you want. Most of the women in the office wear skirts or dresses or dress pants.

Advice from 2013 Geneva International Fellow (in the International Migration Law Unit

The IML Unit at IOM is a very friendly and supportive work environment. The staff is nice and helpful with any questions. They are quite flexible when it comes to work schedule as well. Generally, they really just care that the interns are putting in the proper time, but do not care if you prefer to come in earlier or later. I would frequently come in around 8am and leave earlier in the day, whereas some of my colleagues would come in closer to 10. The dress in the office is business casual.

Work at IML is largely self-motivated. Most of the interns are given a long-term project without a real deadline, and then shorter projects as they pop up. An intern who is very self-motivated and able to keep focused on the large long term projects would be a good fit. Most of the work is research, with some writing of reports and memos. While all of the attorneys are happy to assign projects, it is helpful to be persistent when asking for new assignments and to be vocal about any issues that you are particularly interested in working on.

While the supervisors and attorneys are very friendly and very helpful if there are any questions, interns largely work independently. It is up to you to go to them with any problems and difficulties, though they are always happy to help. Kristina is normally quite busy but still willing to answer questions, and will pop in from time to time to see how you are doing.

IML would be a good fit for you if you are a self-motivated, independent worker who enjoys research projects.

Advice from 2013 Geneva International Fellow (in the International Migration Law Unit

The International Migration Law (IML) unit is a small office. While we were there, the unit was composed of three attorneys including the head of the unit, and they were in the process of hiring for another attorney position. The unit also has interns who are mostly law school students from different parts of the world. We overlapped with two other interns during our...
internship. The workplace has a very collegial and inclusive atmosphere. Accordingly, interns have regular face time with attorneys and are often privy to the unit’s internal discussions and deliberations. I also appreciated the ability to get to know other staff members from other offices, particularly within the International Cooperation and Partnerships (ICP) Division of which the IML unit is a part. This access allowed me to acquire more insight into the operations and politics of an international organization, which was useful information for considering my own interest in pursuing a career with an international organization.

In relation to workflow, the IML unit is an ideal work environment for proactive self-starters. The reason for this is that there are basically two types of assignments: long-term and short-term. Many of the initial assignments given to interns tend to be longer term without deadlines. While these projects are important and interesting, they are less relevant to the immediate needs of the staff attorneys. In other words, the long-term assignments are important to building the institutional knowledge of the agency generally, but they can sometimes feel like busy work.

On the other hand, I found the short-term projects to be much more interesting and satisfying to work on. These assignments involve issues directly relevant to the staff attorneys’ ongoing work. As a result, the attorneys are more invested in the outcome of that particular short-term project and will be relying on your judgment and expertise to produce work-product that they can use. Consequently, if you demonstrate an interest in international law and work diligently to complete your assignments, the staff attorneys will trust your competency as a researcher and will look to you more often for other assignments.

In addition, being persistent and proactive can be very beneficial. The attorneys are very approachable and happy to be resources to you. However, they check-in on your progress from time-to-time and expect you to otherwise manage your time appropriately, ask if you have questions or need additional work. Their particular working styles can also vary greatly in terms of the type of guidance they offer upfront. I found it more productive to ask for examples and to show them outlines or complete drafts to get more concrete feedback. The internal IOM resources are not always easy to find either. You can save a lot time and energy if you directly ask the attorneys what IOM materials relevant to your assignment are available for your reference. Reviewing them can be helpful for understanding and echoing the organization’s position and view of international law concepts.

While the attorneys do not expect you to come with lot of international law background, having more foundational knowledge enabled me to get more out of the experience. A basic understanding of the UN mechanisms and how they operate beyond what you learn in transnational law or international human rights will allow you to contextualize some assignments and generally be more conversant with attorneys. Knowing the types of publications and reports the UN issues and how to find them will facilitate your research process. It is important to note that the IML unit’s work largely involves proving guidance to member States and to the organization itself. As a result, while the office encourages you to get exposure to happenings and sessions at the UN Palais, it is helpful to be familiar with how to find this information and stay informed so that you can ask to go and actually get this experience.

Following this approach, I was able to work with every attorney at the IML unit on a range of assignments. The externship met my overall expectations.
Advice from 2014 Geneva International Fellow (in the International Migration Law Unit)

I really enjoyed my experience working at IOM. The International Migration Law Unit (IML) is the section of the legal department that deals with all of the international law issues. There is another branch more similar to an in-house counsel position and interns in the past have been placed in the section working on contracts. However, the contracts section is moving to the administrative headquarters office in Manila. So if you are with the IOM, you are probably going to be in the IML unit.

Working in the IML unit was great. The unit is small, about 6 people, but it is a really fun, close-knit unit and you will also get to know some of the colleagues in the research department who sit next to the IML offices. I always felt like I was part of the team and treated as an equal. I also sat in the actual IML office as opposed to sitting where the majority of IOM interns are in the annex building. The benefit of doing the internship in the winter semester is that there will probably be you and maybe one other intern. So you have a good chance of there being a space for you in the main IML office. Although the annex is good for getting to know the other interns in other departments, I think the atmosphere and connections that you can make with your coworkers are just better in the main office.

In terms of the work that I did while interning, I felt like I was doing work that the full time staff members would do. Most of the work is research-based, focusing on international legal instruments and some comparative law research (looking to various countries’ immigration laws to see their approach to a particular topic), but I was also able to do some writing. While interning, I wrote two background papers that will be submitted to UN working groups. Both of these projects involved contacting different regional and field offices and then meeting people in different departments at IOM. It was a great chance to see the kind of writing that IML does as well as to learn a little bit more about what other departments and offices do. IOM is a highly decentralized organization with most of the staff and work done by field and regional offices. I had a longer term project that was assigned at the beginning of the semester, but ended up working on several other projects that came up along the way and it was not a problem that I had not done much work on the first project assigned.

IOM has a lot of different brown bag lunches and events that you can go to as an intern. There are email announcements about it. It is a good chance to go and meet more people as well as to learn about the kinds of projects that IOM does to which you might not have exposure in your capacity as an intern for only one department. The brown bag lunches for interns are a really great way to ask some high-level staff questions. You should take advantage of these opportunities. I was able to email the staff members that spoke at these kinds of events and was able to meet with the Director General (a former ambassador for the State Department and former head of the DRC peacekeeping mission, the largest in the UN’s history), the Deputy Director General, as well as some other department directors. Apparently interns have never done this before, but everyone I met was happy to speak with me, so it just takes initiative and flexibility on your part.

The thing I really appreciated about working with IML is that my supervisors were very understanding that this internship is a learning experience and were great about being flexible so that I can meet my goals with the program. Geneva is a great place to network and I was able to do so both within the organization (described above) as well as with all of the guest
I was also able to take advantage of going to almost whatever UN events that I wanted to attend. You have to look ahead of time to find out about events because there is no centralized list, but it is helpful if all the interns start an email chain where people post the information for events that they are going to in case other people are interested in attending. For the Human Rights Council, you need to check a website like OHCHR’s for information on daily events (this is the link for the 2014 Human Rights Council session, but the link for 2015 will be a similar website: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session25/Pages/OrderOfDay.aspx). If the UN security is busy at the Pregny gate, they might be checking badges a bit more closely, so ask around ahead of time to get accredited so that you can just bypass security every time.

Advice from 2015 Geneva International Fellow (in the International Migration Law Unit)

Day-to-Day Work
Early on in the externship, request a chart that details how each department is positioned within IOM. IOM is an international organization (IO), which as you will find out, is categorically different from a NGO, a private enterprise, or a UN body. The powers and constraints placed upon IOM, and in therefore IML extend from the unique position of IOM as an IO.

My day-to-day work consisted mainly of research to support the team’s efforts, be it a power point presentation for NGOs in Cairo or a case study for immigration officials in Myanmar, I supplied information to flesh out the requests made to the IML team. Various countries have requested that IOM present information to their government officials and NGO’s on what their duties as States are to irregular migrants. I had the opportunity to research fascinating topics, to collaborate on reports with the IML team and to even explore topics of personal interest within the IOM’s field of expertise.

Each day at IML I observed the team putting together presentations, fielding calls from NGOs in member states and meeting about how to best approach the issue at hand. Which at the beginning of my externship, I would not have classified as legal work at all, let alone the work of an international human rights lawyer. In the first few weeks of the externship, I was given the opportunity to accompany the director of IML into meetings with partner institutions, such as UNHCR, OHCHR and ILO, and the specific legal work of IML became clear. IOM-IML serves as a legal expert on any of the complications, rules, treaties, or issues that accompany law related to migration. IOM-IML’s sole purpose is to wade through the legal research and produce opinions and most important working standards that member states can apply to their laws and regulations. During my time at IOM-IML the most frequent requests from member states were as follows: a review of a state’s legislation or regulation on migrants, a request for in country training and presentation to a member state’s officials to explain a particular aspect of law related to migrants, request from the UN Human Rights Council to present a report on a topic as it related to migrants or migration, and finally request from UN bodies to weigh in on how various decisions have an impact for migrants around the world.

What I would have like to have known
I reached out to the Michigan Law student who previously held my position quite early after I received my placement notification. I think this was essential to being even slightly prepared for the work I was intended to perform and the pace at which was required. The extern before me offered helpful hints about what meetings to ask to attend, encouragement to track each assignment that is given to you to complete, and to frequently update your supervisor on the progress of each assignment. I would encourage the person interested in IOM-IML to contact the most recent extern to ask questions and understand nuances of the role of intern culture in IOM as a whole, and being an intern within the IML unit. Secondly, ask to attend the Human Rights Council and ask for your credentials to the HRC, early and often. It takes few weeks for it to be verified and you don’t want to miss any meetings because your pass isn’t secured.

Supervision/Office Atmosphere/Relationship with Colleagues
On the assignments I have received, frequent check in(s), setting of deadlines far in advance of the due date, and collaborative nature are the norm. I specifically requested feedback on two assignments after completion. In the beginning of the externship feedback was short, quick and succinct. However, as the externship progressed feedback was minimal if non-existent and limited as to its effectiveness in eliminating problems that have arisen in the project, or reinforcing the positive aspects of the project. Additionally, there is a lack of protocol on direct communication within IML in relation to feedback, positive or negative. It varies with the collaborator within IML whether the information you receive on a project is targeted to the good/bad on an assignment and an informal assessment of the work or non-existent verbal or written review of the assignment. This is the first time I have worked in an atmosphere where one supervisor’s priorities universally trump others. On two separate occasions I was unclear as to who was the lead on a project, so I completed the project in order that they were assigned. The supervisory tactic that can be tweaked at IOM-IML in the future is to make a clear indication of whose projects are considered an immediate priority and whose projects are tertiary. Whether a case-by-case basis, or an over-arching rule, this form of clarification would be beneficial to the intern and clarify the challenges in supervision.

You'd like to work here if you're the kind of person who...
In the case of an externship at IOM-IML I would recommend this position if the student is excited by research and the opportunity to synthesize copious amounts of information in areas they are less than familiar with into laymen’s terms. IOM-IML relies heavily on power point presentations, case studies and guide-sheets that turn complicated legal text and standards into readable takeaways for officials and representatives looking for quick answers to complex problems. If this is the student’s ideal understanding of the application of international law and the work of an international human rights attorney, then IOM-IML is the best externship placement. If you value cross-cultural exchange and cultivation of sincere friendships within the international humanitarian world is reason alone to recommend completing the Geneva Externship specifically with IOM. IOM as evidenced in the title is centered around all issues affecting and having an effect upon migration and migrants. If pinpointing the differing human rights frameworks that delves into the particular issues of migrants, internally displaced peoples refugees and vulnerable migrant persons is of interest to you this placement is ideal. I am interested in human rights broadly. I had no specific knowledge of treaties related to migrants or any legal instruments supporting migrant persons. While at IOM-IML I read and researched extensively on singular topics in relationship to various aspects of migration. I would recommend that the person also be...
interested in refugee issues broadly and specifically interested or excited to learn about migration issues in extreme detail.
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

Advice from 2009 Extern

I am extremely pleased with my experience at the International Service for Human Rights and I would recommend the internship program there to any law student looking to get experience with the UN human rights system. It is a unique work environment where interns are given great support, training, and supervision, and also made to feel important and part of the team. I don't know that I have ever worked with such a friendly and fascinating bunch of people and I was truly happy to go to work every day. I felt like I was given interesting projects and while not all the work was thrilling, I appreciated that the "boring" tasks were distributed amongst everyone, not just interns.

My work at ISHR consisted mainly of monitoring various sessions of Human Rights Treaty Bodies, the Universal Periodic Review and the Human Rights Council and writing reports on the sessions I monitored. It was a great way to become an expert on the UN Human Rights system and to get a sense of what the major strengths and weaknesses of the system are. I also got to have my reports published on the ISHR website which many people consult for their research. In addition to my monitoring and report-writing, I was given a special project to examine the recommendations made by States during the UPR thus far and to determine which States are making recommendations that fall outside the aims of the UPR. In terms of how I spent my time, I would say that I spent equal parts in the office writing and participating in trainings and at the UN monitoring and attending briefings.

I think that I was given excellent supervision at ISHR. I had a good rapport with my supervisor, Gareth Sweeney, the intern coordinator Lizzy Openshaw, and the other staff members I worked under, Katrine Thomasen and Michael Ineichen. Gareth, Katrine, and Michael all edited my reports regularly, conducted trainings with Lizzy, and gave me assignments. I never felt neglected or bored as I have in other internships and I feel that I was given exactly the right balance of guidance and responsibility. Lizzy also had regular job planning and progress meetings with me, and often Gareth as well, to check in on how I was doing and to make sure that I was getting what I hoped out of the internship. This, to me, showed ISHR's commitment to its internship program and made me really feel like I was valued.

Another thing I appreciated was that in spite of the fact that there is a constant flow of interns coming through ISHR, everyone is really friendly and it's easy to feel a part of things. There are a lot of opportunities to socialize with both the other interns and the other staff members and work days go by quickly because you end up being surrounded by friends. It's one of the most pleasant office atmospheres I have ever been in because it is so fun and laid- back. People work hard and take their jobs seriously but the work day is 9 to 5 and no one (especially interns) is meant to stay after that. Everyone seems to place a lot of importance on balancing work with personal life.

I think the amount of supervision and training ISHR gives interns really distinguished it from the other organizations my classmates were placed at. I was the only one of my classmates who had regular trainings and progress meetings. Another great thing ISHR does is hold regular "meet-the-interns" events where staff members at ISHR come to talk to the interns about their backgrounds, careers paths, work, and experience. I am also pretty sure that my office was the most social especially in terms of socializing with everyone on the staff and
not just interns. This was important to me because it not only made day to day life more enjoyable, but also because I hope to find a job in Geneva after I graduate and it was important to me to make good connections while I was there.

Anyone considering an externship at ISHR should have a keen interest in the UN Human Rights System. The work also requires a lot of writing under short deadlines following very specific style guidelines and flexibility in terms of the scheduling of monitoring duties. The work ISHR does is almost all in English but a lot of the staff speak French. It's not at all necessary to speak French but it helps out, especially for social activities. Written fluency in any other language would be a great asset as well because ISHR is always looking to publish editions of its reports in the languages of the countries under review in addition to English. The only warning I would give, is that the work is not strictly legal. While there are certainly opportunities to take on legal projects, many of the daily tasks are not the sort of "legal" work Michigan law students are used to.

I came to Geneva and to my internship at ISHR because I wanted to see what working in Geneva would be like, get a chance to do some work in French, increase my knowledge and practical understanding of UN treaty bodies and mechanisms, learn more about the work of different NGOs and IOs, get a better understanding on how different regional dynamics play out in the UN and key issues for different countries and regions, and build my professional network. I feel that during my semester in Geneva I was able to meet all my goals. I was able to learn a lot about the UN human rights system and I can now say that I have a really clear and solid understanding of the different mechanisms and procedures. I feel like my research updating the Simple Guide to Treaty Bodies, on the UPR for my special project, as well as all of the monitoring of the treaty bodies, the UPR, and the Human Rights Council, made the issues come to life in a way that they never could have in a classroom. I know that this experience and new expertise will be of great use to me in my future work. I don't know that I will ever work so closely with the UN again, but being at ISHR really helped me to see how important understanding the system is for effective advocacy.

**Advice from 2010 Extern**

The mission of ISHR is to build up the bridge between non-governmental organizations and the UN human rights system. Its basic work is to educate in-field NGOs of the use of UN human rights system and to express to the UN of the problems these NGOs have met during the use of the system. I have to say I am really lucky to be in the UN monitoring team at ISHR, which gives me what I want from this internship: broad exposures, big responsibility, good supervision, good training of team working, and the opportunity to analyze based upon first-hand statistics some of which are collected by myself. Our team usually has five to seven interns supervised by three regular stuffs. We are in charge of updating daily news of the Human Rights Council meetings; publishing country summary for the periodic review under treaty bodies; and publishing human rights monitor quarterly to analyze the situation and the trend of human rights worldwide.

And because it is a small NGO with around twelve regular staff, interns play a very important role in accomplishing its work including the training program and the UN monitoring program. As an intern, I feel I have a big presence at ISHR as I am solely in charge of some country reports, some long articles, part of daily news, and the legal project assigned to me. Most of them will be published in the ISHR website to general public. That said, my supervisors would edit my writings before published. I think I have had a good and
responsible supervision because I always get feedback of my writings within one or two days, have a group meeting at least once a week, have group emails, dropbox, and gmail online chats for consistently updates, and can walk in their offices while we are working in the office. And you can have a good training of organizational skills because if you are a main author (no worry; each intern will have a chance to be a main author), you have to tell other interns how to assist you and to take care of the team working.

Therefore, I strongly suggest the internship in the UN monitoring team at ISHR. Good luck!

Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow

Working for the UN monitoring team at ISHR was a unique learning experience unlike anything I could have received back home at Ann Arbor. As an intern, you have full access to most of the UN human rights meetings, including the Human Rights Council, Treaty Body sessions, and working groups in addition to side events and panels and this level of exposure is rare for an intern. While each intern is specifically assigned to monitor meetings, during unassigned times you are free to attend which ever meetings you like as long as you let your supervisors know where you are.

In terms of the work, while ISHR makes an effort to have the Michigan Law intern focus on any legal aspect of the monitoring, the work is not traditionally legal and you will not be writing memos or analyzing case law. However, as one of two people in the organization with a legal background, my point of view on articles or positions that ISHR held concerning treaty body recommendations was valued and I found that to be very rewarding. Additionally, I did work on a project analyzing the individual complaints that came before various Treaty Body Committees and this project was very much an analysis in applying international law. While work is assigned pretty evenly across all interns, you have some control over the kind of articles or thematic areas you would prefer to focus on but you need to be proactive in seeking out those kinds of projects. Additionally, while your supervisor edits your work and may have suggestions, the area you focus on is largely left up to you. I found that doing a little extra research to bolster the articles content and improve the analytical nature of the pieces rather than simply reporting on the statements that were made by States was welcomed but not necessary. I also really enjoyed the collaborative nature of the work. While there are certainly opportunities to author your own articles, you are generally monitoring meetings with other interns or staff members, discussing the important themes to highlight during ad hoc meetings or over coffee, and as a result you really get to know the individuals of the organization very well. It was an amazing experience to be working with individuals from all over the world and to learn from all of their differing points of view on the relevant issues and to truly feel a part of a community in Geneva. Finally, the work load definitely undulates greatly as the work you are doing is largely connected to the meetings at the UN. During times when the Council is in session or during the UPR reviews, you are busy and may be working longer hours. Since meetings pop up and schedules during the Council sessions change frequently, you are required to be pretty flexible with your schedule. However, in between session, the work time is much more flexible and it can even be a little slow. ISHR is also great for anyone who is interested in learning the true workings of an NGO focused on advocacy. As a relatively small organization where the number of interns and staff are essentially equal, you truly feel a part of the organization. As a result of the size of the organization you are exposed to many additional aspects of an NGO such as fundraising and networking that you may not be in another organization. These types of events are a great opportunity to meet other important players in the human rights field and get a better picture
of the different role various players such as NGOs, IOs, State delegations, and domestic human rights defenders play on the international human rights arena. Between the number of meetings I attended and the discussion I had with individuals from both ISHR and other organizations, I feel I learned more from my internship at ISHR than any other internship I have had. Overall, if you are both flexible and proactive, I believe an internship with ISHR can be very rewarding.

Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow

It is definitely worth your time to get to know the staff. Your immediate supervisors will be Heather, Michael and Phil. I think they are more inclined to give you interesting things if you show that you are willing to do ‘boring’ work without complaining. They are all really interesting and have pretty different experiences in the international human rights field.

I also found it great to get to know everyone on the staff. ISHR is so small that you can do this—I loved talking with the fundraising and communications, and of course Anne-Sophie, who is technically the secretary but does so, so, so much.

This is going to be very different from a typical legal internship, especially if you’re used to client-based advocacy. I think civil society is crucial, and ISHR is a good representation of a tiny but very flexible and effective NGO. When you’re at the Human Rights Council, pay attention to what Michael and Phil are doing, whom they’re speaking to, and when. You won’t get that kind of experience in any classroom!

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at ISHR in 2012.)

Advice from 2013 Geneva International Fellow

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Advice from 2014 Geneva International Fellow

I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience at the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR). In a short 14 weeks, I have worked on projects ranging from researching international mandates and resolutions on human rights defenders, publishing articles for ISHR’s monthly publication and country briefings, to participating in the UN Human Rights Council and Treaty Body Sessions. The staffs at ISHR have been wonderfully supportive of
my intellectual curiosity and have made me feel like an integral part of the team.

You’d like to work here if you’re the kind of person who enjoys a relaxed office environment with friendly coworkers, great kitchen, and view of the Swiss Alps. All the managers at ISHR are experts in their field and since it’s a small office, you will definitely get a chance to work with most people. ISHR is great because they want their interns to learn and depend on interns to contribute substantive work.

ISHR is different from my classmates’ placements in that:

1. They really appreciate interns and treat interns very well. ISHR reimburses bus passes (45 – 70 francs per month), covers accidental insurance, and reimburses lunch if the Human Rights Session is particularly busy in March. There is always free coffee, tea, milk, and cooking supplies in the kitchen (which is unheard of at any other organization).
2. ISHR listens to interns’ inputs. Although interns are technically under the supervision of one manager, you can definitely branch out if you express interest in learning from and working with anyone else in the office (finance manager and communications manager included). Similarly, the managers here understand that this is a learning experience for interns and will allow interns to attend UN treaty body or council meetings unrelated to ISHR (i.e. CRC).

I noticed from our roundtables that the quality of an externship experience is not shaped by the prestige of the organization, but by the people within the placement. I feel fortunate to have had such a friendly and supportive work environment. My supervisor was the best supervisor any extern could have hoped for. She gave me substantive work and provided the right balance of guidance and space. She listened to my needs and gave constructive criticism where appropriate. While there were internal communication issues at times within the office, a large part was due to heavy workload each manager was juggling. It is something that I voiced to my supervisor and then was immediately addressed. In fact, the director is currently restructuring meetings and communication forums to prevent future problems. I am amazed by the courage and tenacity of my colleagues who work ceaselessly to protect human rights defenders around the globe. Although ISHR’s role is primarily advocacy and training, instead of solely legal work, there are still opportunities to engage in legal work (i.e. contracts and mandate research and analysis). The managers here are supportive of extern’s studies and thus would be open to assigning more legal work if requested. I feel proud to have been part of the ISHR team and would highly recommend this outstanding NGO to future Michigan fellows.

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at ISHR in 2015.)
United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): Human Rights Treaties Division (Section I)

(Nota: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at the Human Rights Treaties Division (Section I) prior to 2014.)

Advice from 2014 Extern

Housing
I would definitely recommend going on glocals or Airbnb for your initial housing search in Geneva. If you are interested in living at a foyer, then you definitely should start your search as soon as possible because most of these places are full and you will have to be on a waitlist for a long time. Glocals is a good place to find reasonably priced housing, but a lot of it is located in France. Airbnb does have many options, however, you have to be careful because you really do not know what the place is like until you get there. Facebook has many groups that also help with housing: UN Housing Interns, HEID Homeless in Geneva, and Geneva Interns Association are all good forums for your housing search. Another possibility is trying to email the contact at your office and ask for the intern listserve at the office. That way you can email all the other interns in the office and one of them may know of housing available.

One thing I will say is that you should not be wary of coming to Geneva with a temporary option with the intention of moving. My first apartment did not work out for me, but looking for housing once you are actually in Geneva is much easier. A lot of apartments are listed on French websites – once you’re in Geneva you can easily contact any of these listings and visit places. If you don’t speak French, there will always be someone in your office willing to make the call for you and even go with you to check places out.

Groceries
The first weekend I came to Geneva, I did not believe that there would not be a store open on Sunday. But, it’s really true! The airport market is open everyday until around 9pm, but most Migros and Coops are completely closed on Sundays. One great option is to go to the open market in Plainpalais that happens every Sunday. I think it opens around 9am and goes all day until around 4pm, maybe a little later. It’s a really great place to look for local produce, meats, and cheeses. It is a bit more expensive than the grocery stores. Rather than buy groceries there, it’s nice to try the different pre-made foods that are available at the various venders! There are a lot of great options and the Plainpalais area also has a lot of cute cafes that you can sit at after walking around in the market. Another great thing about the market is that there is also a flea market right next to it where you can find many interesting items – used French books, records, clothing, jewelry, etc.
Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): Human Rights Treaties Division (Section I)

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Advice from 2015 Geneva International Fellow

On housing, I applied to the foyers that were close to the Palais des Nations, where I incorrectly thought I would be working (the office for OHCHR/ROLDS was actually at the “Motta” office located at Avenue Giuseppe Motta 48). I did this some time during the summer before fall semester, and heard back only from Centre John Knox to say that they have a limit of 90 days stay, two weeks short of the 14 weeks I needed. I talked to previous Michigan residents of CJK but ultimately had to discard their advice - while they complained that CJK was like a dorm, they refused to disrecommend it, so I went ahead and paid my 500 CHF deposit. I asked for a single with a shower, which I was given for about 1,400 CHF a month. While this was just about within the financial aid office’s budget, it didn’t include a kitchen (or access to any kitchen), so my food costs were correspondingly quite high and I mostly had to eat cereal for dinner. As for CJK being like a dorm, while there may have been units like this, my room was #1 in the “Petit Chalet,” which was at the edge of the compound with only one other unit above it, so it was quite peaceful (at least until a loudly amorous couple moved in during the last couple of weeks and gave me the French stink-eye while they smoked outside).

There were a couple of issues during my internship. The first arose before I arrived: I wanted to organize a break in the middle so that my wife could come and visit, so that the separation would be seven weeks and seven weeks instead of a fourteen week stretch. My supervisor, N, agreed “in principle” but wouldn’t agree on dates, so I had to scrap the plan and finish my internship a week early after already arriving and starting a week early (with the original plan of staying for 15 weeks to make up for the week break). For the rest of the internship I felt like I had to work against N’s presumption that I had only come to Switzerland for a holiday, despite the fact that there are much cheaper ways to have a holiday in Switzerland than by paying $50,000 in tuition fees plus living expenses.

The other issue was the lack of supervision. Though N was my designated supervisor, I barely talked to her outside of a meeting when I arrived and just before I left. I tried to get feedback from the officers I was working for instead, but this was also difficult to achieve since they are very busy. It was frustrating as I wanted to impress and improve, but as well as being busy I think they were also just happy for the help, and it turned out that there was no intern to replace me at the end of my spell because there were no qualified applicants.
Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): Women's Human Rights and Gender Section

Advice from 2010 Extern

To get the most out of this externship, you probably should have more than a passing interest in human rights and women's rights issues, and you must be comfortable working independently and taking initiative. The pace, nature, and subject-matter of your work may change quite frequently, and you should be able to adapt and work within such an environment easily. Day-to-day, your work will probably include many meetings (from small, project-focused meetings to larger, bureaucratic/organizational meetings), independent research projects, team writing sessions, networking events, and professional development exercises. Because WHRGS is such a small team, there is plenty of room for new ideas and approaches, which can be a great opportunity to take more ownership in the team's work and apply your own perspectives, insight, or creativity to your work. More broadly, this externship will offer you a close look at how OHCHR operates—both internally, and within the larger UN system. In addition, you will probably get the chance to become closely involved in the work of the Human Rights Council, which enables you to see firsthand how states, civil society, and the UN work together and against each other in advancing their political and human rights interests. Finally, another benefit of this externship is the opportunity to meet people from all over the world, at varying stages in their professional careers, and with very different backgrounds. Consequently, you will enjoy this externship much more if you are an open and social person, who is interested in meeting new people.

Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow

There are about six people in the WRGS, with a good deal of work in a variety of related thematic areas between them. They are, broadly, accountability (violence against women; women, peace and security; access to justice), discrimination (gender equality; women's economic, social and cultural rights), trafficking, gender mainstreaming and gender integration. Because everyone is a bit overstretched, you have to be proactive about asking for help or advice when you need it. But when you do, people are very friendly and want make sure you're having a good internship experience. Work comes from people throughout the section as needed, and you will likely have one larger, long-term project to keep you busy in the downtime.

OHCHR in general is good about giving interns substantive work and structuring things so interns are learning, being exposed to meetings and procedures of the UN, and meeting people who work in areas of interest to interns. There is also a full-day intern workshop during which you'll learn about opportunities to work at the UN, field work, etc. You will most likely work in a room of other interns, which is great because you have a ready-made group of people to walk to the Palais des Nations with during more interesting Human Rights Council sessions, and a group of peers to get to know outside your fellow Michigan interns. And because there are so many areas that fall under the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, you will have access to a number of really interesting people, it's just up to you to seek them out.

Advice from 2012 Geneva International Fellow
The Women's Rights and Gender Section at the UN OHCHR has very knowledgeable and friendly staff. I was specifically intern to the Trafficking Advisor to the High Commissioner, in the Trafficking Cluster (there are a few different clusters in the Section). My work consisted half of trafficking-specific work, and half of work for the section in general. As far as my experience was concerned, someone who is self-disciplined would like to work in the Section. I learned much in the internship about how the UN systems works (or doesn't) in general. Overall the internship was a very valuable experience that taught me a lot.

Advice from 2013 Geneva International Fellow

My placement at OHCHR in the Women’s Rights and Gender Section (WRGS) was engaging and professionally valuable. The 9-member team is dynamic, creative and commitment to changing the perception of gender in the human rights context. It is a worthwhile experience for someone interested in the utility of public international law and how a US legal education can translate into a career as an international practitioner. I worked with the Trafficking Advisor to the High Commissioner. She is an exceptional supervisor and highly respected in the trafficking and human rights field. She recognizes our desire as law students to work on human rights in a legal context and therefore, my long-term project focused on an emerging area of Human Trafficking law. I worked on several projects with the violence against women and gender clusters as well. The interns work in the middle of the floor and usually it is quite loud, so expect to work surrounded by chatter and bring headphones. The added benefit of the workspace is that you have a unique perspective on how the office functions and can learn a great deal about the issue and policy priorities of other sections.

The spring session of the Human Rights Council is a high stress period for the Branch as a whole and it as good opportunity to be proactive and seek out assignments that personally interest you. Overall, OHCHR is a welcoming environment; the staff in other Branches are approachable, so feel confident making introductions and inviting people to coffee. I would also recommend attending the Friday coffee lectures, the intern lunches and the other events hosted throughout the UN system.

Advice from 2014 Geneva International Fellow

My experience at the Women’s Rights and Gender Section (WRGS) was eye-opening and gave me an inside look at how the UN operates. I was assigned to work with the Trafficking Advisor, like the Fellows before me, but she was on sick-leave when I arrived. I was shuffled around between the different clusters in the section (violence against women, women, peace, and security, gender integration, social justice and non-discrimination, sexual orientation and gender identity) until my supervisor returned. While trafficking is my main interest area, it was nice to get a feel for the different work going on throughout the section. My day-to-day work included research and writing for a variety of women’s rights issues. I also performed more administrative tasks such as editing and providing feedback for a new online training course on gender integration, drafting topic summaries for the website, compiling data, and briefing the section on the main women’s rights issues in the news.

My section supervisors were great about ensuring that I worked on projects that were interesting to me. They also encouraged me to attend any UN meetings that I wanted to attend. My supervision was very laid back and I often set my own deadlines. I was not given
much instruction on format, time frame (or sometimes substance) when I was assigned projects. I was also not given a lot of feedback after turning in projects, although some of this is due to the bad timing of my main supervisor’s sick-leave. I would encourage students to be pro-active in asking questions and building relationships. Although each member of the section is nice and friendly, they did not go out of their way to talk to me or build any sort of relationship. My desk was in the middle of the office hallway, with staff members’ offices surrounding it. There is a lot of chatter that sometimes makes working difficult. However, it is a good opportunity to meet people outside of the section. I was the only intern on my floor for part of my externship, but there are other interns in the building who would often eat lunch together in the cafeteria. I would recommend this internship to students who have a passion for women’s rights, are interested in learning more about how the UN functions, and are able to work independently.

Advice from 2015 Geneva International Fellow

Working at the Women’s Right and Gender Section (WRGS) was a very enriching and rewarding experience. I thoroughly enjoyed the work and all the staff members were friendly, informed and helpful. Organizationally, WRGS falls under the Rule of Law and Non-Discrimination Branch Right which is part of the Research and Right to Development Division at the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The main goal of my section is to develop norms and standards for women’s rights and gender issues and play an advisory role for both the UN and other outside entities. They are also involved in developing tools and training materials.

There is a huge variety of work and falls broadly under the following categories: Women, Peace and Security/Violence against Women, Non-Discrimination and Social Justice, Trafficking, Gender Integration and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. In addition to reviewing reports for grammatical and substantive additions, I got to do research and compile reports for country visits, workshops and talks. Furthermore, the March human rights council session falls in between the internship and the staff is very encouraging and accommodating in letting you attend as many meetings that interest you. During the council session you get to support the staff by sending out daily list of side events that would be relevant to the section and also update the staff with information that you come across from the meetings. The whole section practices an open door policy and they are pretty hands off once they give you an assignment. But, they are also ready to answer questions when you ask them. Also, they do give deadlines and are strict with them, because all the reports you work on go through multiple levels of review and therefore require additional time to finalize after your input. It was very enlightening to see the finished report at the end of the chain. It helped me understand what information to include (or not) in the next report. My supervisor, Veronica Birga, was always eager to share the finished report and include me in events that utilized my research. Moreover, all the staff is very appreciative of the time and effort you put into each report. They always made a point of mentioning it in emails sent to higher ups when circulating the reports.

One of the differences in work experience that I gathered from many of the other Geneva Externs was the amount of meetings that they were required to transcribe. They usually had to attend meetings, take notes and send out transcripts of the notes or make reports on them. I had to do that on only two occasions when the regular staff had a family emergency. Also, at departmental meetings the secretary took notes. Overall, I felt like I was treated like one of the staff members in terms of responsibilities and the projects I was given to work on. You
would like to work here if you are motivated, focused, proactive, and enjoy interacting with different personalities. Keeping abreast new developments in the field and a real interest in women’s right issue is definitely appreciated.

Geneva is a great place to network with colleagues within your organization and other organizations. People are very approachable when you reach out to them. Meetings, talks and referrals from colleagues provide good opportunities. Also, the Geneva Interns Association is a great resource to meet interns from other organization. The one thing that can be pretty hard to find is housing. I didn’t want to start looking for a place after I got here or move in between my stay here. Since that was more important to me than a budget, I did end up paying higher than usual. However, it was very convenient in terms of connections to tram/bus stops and also very close to work – 7 minutes walking or two stops on the bus. Another incentive was that it was an airbnb so I didn’t have a security deposit and could make online payments. I lived in the Servette area.
South Centre

Advice from 2010 Extern

The main requirements for the South Centre are to do a lot of research. It is an intergovernmental organization and also a think tank. Therefore, I had to do research on the relationships between global climate change and WTO laws. Future externs at the South Centre should enjoy conducting a lot of legal research. They will have to read legislative proposals, SCOTUS, federal and state US cases, WTO decisions, and administrative documents (e.g. EPA reports).

In addition, they will have to attend many conferences that take place at the South Centre, UN, WTO, etc. Finally, some administrative work is involved but only during conferences. I would also recommend taking International Environmental law, WTO law, and Climate Change and energy law.

Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow

The focus of an internship at the South Centre, in accordance with the South Centre's mandate as a think tank supporting its member states, is research and analysis on issues relevant to both the South Centre's short and long-term initiatives. Such research might cover a number of different areas of international law, including climate change, South-South cooperation (policy, mechanisms, legal frameworks), human rights (e.g., duty to cooperate, right to development), and international trade (i.e., WTO negotiations and arbitration), and will generally center on issues relevant to development (broadly speaking).

The office at the South Centre is relatively small, with maybe one intern per program. All staff members are treated as such (no photocopying or stapling duties), and are required to operate with a high degree of independence. Interns at the South Centre generally receive little direct supervision, and are expected to complete projects and push for feedback when necessary.

In addition to long-term research projects, there might be opportunities to complete short-term assignments as required by the exigencies of the Centre's work. Interns will have the opportunity to attend meetings, conferences, and workshops at the UN, WTO, UNCTAD, and the Centre itself (some mandatory at the request of your supervisor, some voluntary if you have an interest in the issue) covering a range of topics.

I think the internship is relatively well-rounded when compared with other Geneva placements (considering the type of work and variety of opportunities for additional exposure to development issues). However, within the learning vs. skills-focused internship dichotomy, an internship at the South Centre is geared more toward those interested in learning about the issues most relevant to developing countries, the mechanisms by which developing countries engage with each other, international organizations, and developed countries, and the international development discourse more broadly. With regard to relevant classes at Michigan, a general knowledge of international law is necessary while exposure to international trade, environmental, and human rights law might be useful.

Advice from 2012 Geneva International Fellow

An internship at the South Centre is ideal for someone with an interest in both trade law and
climate change and who has lived, worked, or traveled to developing countries. As the organization exists as both an IGO and a think tank, the work is policy-oriented and revolves around development. Your time at the Centre will provide a unique perspective on development issues as you can expect to be one of the only Westerners—almost all of your colleagues are from Southern developing countries—and it will give you a very broad understanding of the kinds of projects an IGO takes on.

The internship is almost entirely research- and writing-based. During your time at the South Centre, you essentially serve as a contributing researcher rather than an intern. Due to the small size of the organization, you will be quickly immersed in substantive projects and assignments. While most of your projects may be long-term, you can easily ask for short-term assignments to supplement your long-term ones. In addition, you can travel to the UN or other agencies for meetings as you wish with the permission of your supervisor—the South Centre is quite accommodating and encourages interns to attend meetings regularly. You will enjoy working at the South Centre if you are a self-motivated and outgoing person. Generally, GGDP interns receive little direct supervision and are largely responsible for managing and juggling their assignments. That being said, the people at the South Centre are very friendly and if you put the effort in to get to know them, you can develop great professional relationships.

(Note: There was no UMLS International Fellow at South Centre in 2013 or 2014.)

Advice from 2015 Geneva International Fellow

While South Centre is officially an intergovernmental organization, it functions more as a think tank for ambassadors, delegates, and negotiators from member countries. The program coordinators and researchers mainly draft research papers for publication or memos for “clients,” as well as organize conferences and working lunches to assist delegates in formulating their negotiating positions at the UN, WIPO, the WTO, or in other multilateral fora. As an intern for South Centre, I was expected to be a contributing researcher and assist in foundational research for these memos or papers, instead of drafting the final output themselves. I was officially an intern for the Trade for Development Programme (TDP) although I had originally applied for a different section, and since I had no background in international trade law or policy, I spent the first few weeks familiarizing myself with trade issues from the perspective of developing countries. Since the organization is small, one of my colleagues in TDP also researches for other senior advisers at South Centre on issues such as corporate governance, development finance, and international investment, so I ended up researching on these issues as well (with most of my research output focused on corporate liability for human rights abuses). The research that TDP produces is mostly policy-oriented and more suitable for those with economics backgrounds (which I did not have), but I was able to use my legal research skills for the other areas. I had some administrative tasks whenever I attended meetings and conferences hosted by the South Centre or at the UN.

The level of supervision is minimal and hands-off, which suited me very well, but it was always easy to reach out to my supervisor or colleagues whenever I needed to talk about assignments. Future interns would need to be proactive about getting the work that interests them so that they can make the most out of their externship. The atmosphere of the office varies depending on the schedules of the senior advisers and coordinators (who are in and out of the office for meetings around Geneva or overseas conferences) or whenever South Centre is hosting events, but for the most part, the office was very low-key. The full-time staff are
friendly and approachable, and there were a few other interns while I was there, so there was always someone to socialize with if I wanted a break from my work. Everyone at South Centre comes from a developing country, and I enjoyed being in a truly diverse and multicultural environment. This also speaks to the key difference between my externship at South Centre and those of others in the program, because I learned to approach international issues from the very specific angle of development, which helped me think critically about the international policymaking process.
Advice from 2015 Geneva International Fellow

Any student who is interested in an immersive international human rights experience, with an emphasis on treaty body review sessions, should consider the externship at UNICEF. While the day-to-day work is not necessarily legal, externs are given the opportunity for some treaty interpretation, to do some quasi-legal research, and to observe and report on treaty body procedures and recommendations. A highlight is UNICEF’s involvement in the Human Rights Council, which takes place in March and in which UNICEF plays a significant role as a non-state observer. Expect to be busy during this month, as UNICEF potentially has an interest in the majority of the sessions and side events (almost any topic can be and will apply to children to some degree).

Given that you are one of only two or three people in the gender and rights section, externs are able to build a strong relationship with their supervisor and receive a high level of supervision. I worked with another intern the majority of my time at UNICEF, and our relationship was strong due to similar schedules and assignments that we could work together to complete. The office atmosphere is congenial, if not particularly engaging or exciting. Most of your time, however, is spent outside of the office at one of two designated buildings for treaty body sessions.

Flexibility is particularly valued at this organization; on any given day, you may begin by writing a report on a treaty body session, be subsequently asked to send reporting guidelines to a country office halfway across the world, and could find yourself researching an emerging issue within Human Rights Council concluding observations by the end. A distinct advantage of an externship at UNICEF is the in depth knowledge you gain regarding international treaty body procedure and reporting, and the intricacies of the UN system in general. I had a much better handle on the different treaties and how they functioned, as well as the ways in which NGOs interacted with the IO system, than most of my fellow externs.
United Nations Conference on Trade And Development (UNCTAD): Division on Investment and Enterprise (DIAE)

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at UNCTAD prior to 2011.)

Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow

This is a very research and writing oriented position. I would equate the UNCTAD position with that of a research assistant in the field of international investment agreements and related issues, e.g., dispute settlement, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable development. UNCTAD publishes research and provides technical assistance with the goal of promoting sustainable development through foreign direct investment. The division heavily researches the current state of international investment agreements and guides countries on best practices and trends. The division publishes materials of all types and disseminates this information to practitioners, States, academics, etc. The day-to-day work could be writing a memo on a recent arbitration, or reviewing and interpreting new international investment agreements between States. The research is very legal and no matter what field you want to end up in, you will have the ability to hone your research skills at UNCTAD. Along with research and writing there are also tasks that are not legal, such as data aggregation and compilation. While not necessarily interesting, these tasks help you get a general understanding of the lay of the land. It should be noted that your supervisor will make a concerted effort to give you as much legal work as possible.

Supervision is what you would expect in a professional environment. You are expected to take assignments and run with them, when you need help you should ask. Your supervisor is always available to work with you when you have questions, or teach you things when you are confused about a certain area. You must be proactive and seek out her help. I know that my experience here was so good because I was very proactive in seeking out the projects I wanted.

You will like this job if you want to learn about and extensively research issues related to international investment and the agreements and mechanisms that protect and foster them. You should have solid research skills, and you should be willing to learn what the group is doing and pursue those projects and colleagues that are working on things that you are interested in. Being proactive and going after the subjects you want to write about is how you will get the most out of your time at UNCTAD.

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at UNCTAD-DIAE in 2012.)

Advice from 2013 Geneva International Fellow

UNCTAD's Section on International Investment Agreements is an excellent position for someone who is deeply interested in the meeting point between international investment treaty making, things like Free Trade Agreements and Bilateral Investment Treaties, and sustainable development. The Section's mission is to help developing States create better international investment agreements capable of fostering sustainable development through foreign direct investment. The Section accomplishes this in a variety of way, including through technical assistance, research and publishing, and--to an ever increasing degree--
outreach. As a Geneva International Fellow the intern should expect to perform research tasks related to these agreements including reading and interpreting the treaties. Most tasks involve legal aspects as well as non-legal aspects and the ability to consider the law while performing facially non-legal research is a huge asset for an intern. There are also bound to be some purely non-legal tasks. For example, I spent much of my semester working on social media outreach. However, with the proper mindset this variety of tasks is perfect for exposing the intern to a broader range of work that is being done within the Section.

The Section runs as a bit of whirlwind always spinning around its head, your supervisor. As a result, when she is out of the office or away things are quite quiet but when things are busy it can be chaotic, and fun! There is rarely a shortage of work, but most projects are very short turn around, lasting only an afternoon. In addition, assignments are often not well defined. Often the assignor is not completely sure what they want so the intern should be prepared to improvise and work with the assignor to tailor the project to their needs throughout the process.

A very nice aspect of the internship is the opportunity to work with a variety of individuals within the group. The Section's head is the ultimate decision maker, but others in the Section often are the ones proposing and working with the intern on a project or set of projects. These people come from a variety of backgrounds and are a really talented, fun, and energetic group.

The Section does not have many interns and when they do they are very often eminently qualified individuals with tremendous expertise within the field. As a result, the typical Geneva International Fellow will be less qualified (I speak solely to experience in the relevant field of law) than a typical intern. Thus, I would highly recommend familiarizing yourself with the Section's work before you begin, because, unlike other Fellows in other positions, there are limited course available through Michigan. I would especially recommend becoming familiar with the Investment Policy Framework for Sustainable Development (IPFSD) (http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/webdiaepcb2012d6_en.pdf) and Chapter 3 of the most recent World Investment Report (WIR) (http://unctad.org/en/Pages/DIAE/World%20Investment%20Report/WIR2012_WebFlyer.aspx). That will enable to the intern to hit the ground running and earn the respect of the team and a reputation, not only for intelligence, but also knowledge.

Finally, setting achievable goals will ensure that the intern accomplishes what they want to in their time at UNCTAD. The supervisor and others in the Section are enthusiastic and eager to help the intern learn more about their areas of interest. The intern should not be at all afraid to propose research ideas or questions that may lead to substantive assignments. Ultimately, that level of proactivity will be richly rewarded.

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at UNCTAD-DIAE in 2014.)

Advice from 2015 Geneva International Fellow

The day-to-day work at UNCTAD includes a mix of short-term and long-term tasks. Short term tasks are often fairly administrative, and may include excel data-analysis, proofreading speeches and publications as a native English speaker, and gathering data from internal sources (i.e. counting references to UNCTAD publications). The long-term projects are also varied in substance. One that the future intern will likely be involved with is the “mapping”
of International Investment Treaties. This means going through bilateral investment agreements while reading an 80-page manual and tracking, in an excel document, which provisions are included and omitted from each treaty.

There are also some research assignments, where the intern will be asked to summarize recent arbitration cases or scour news sources for recent trends in a given subject matter within international investment law. Another major project involves assisting in the preparation for UNCTAD events. For me, this was the Expert Meeting on Transformation of the International Investment Agreement Regime. This preparation included drafting a few memoranda on possible discussion topics, as well as more administrative work related to delegates and other participants.

The supervision is minimal. Most tasks require little handholding besides the occasional request for clarification. The supervision is also very divided. For me, I rarely met with my head supervisor because she was typically swamped with other tasks. Instead, most of my interaction was with the individuals who actually assigned me each task.

While I was interning with UNCTAD, I was placed in an “intern room” with 3 other individuals who had earned their LLB and master’s degrees. This may change from year-to-year, but this definitely has an impact on the experience. On the one hand, being in the intern room does separate you from your superiors a bit. On the other hand, I became very close with these three professionals. If you are looking to do some serious networking with your supervisors, this could be a bit of a barrier. But if you would rather get to know some young professionals in a similar position to your own, then this can be a plus.

Judging from my experience, I think that the internship would be most enjoyable for an intern with a fair amount of background knowledge and confirmed interest in international investment law specifically. Since this is a very busy department with several events to plan, it is easy to get sucked into administrative work, excel work, and proofreading. These things always need to be done, and the department likes to use interns to do them. It would be much easier for an intern to grow from the placement if they where able to ask for projects related to a very specific area of interest. Similarly, the intern should be someone who wants to read and re-read comprehensive publications on international investment law. “Research projects” are often actually cut-and-paste assignments based on UNCTAD’s prior publications. This is because UNCTAD has to be so careful about what it says politically that they often prefer to simply repeat what they have already said. So if you enjoy the topic of international investment law enough that learning these publications (inside and out) will aid your professional development, then I would recommend this internship.
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD): Division on International Trade and Commodities (DITC)

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at UNCTAD prior to 2011.)

Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow

Regarding intern projects at the UNCTAD, about 60 - 70% was substantive (e.g., drafting reports, researching trade issues, etc.) and 30-40% was administrative (e.g., helping prepare for expert meetings, proofreading documents, etc.). Most of the substantive work was focused on trade in goods and services (particularly preferential trading programs like US and EU GSP, AGO A, DFQF, etc.). Although I did have to attend a few meetings, most were optional. There are usually one or two economic development-related meetings every week that are held in the same building as the UNCTAD and the supervisors seem supportive if you want to attend a few.

My experience at the UNCTAD has been quite positive and I really enjoyed the experience and the work. However, I do have a few caveats for future Geneva interns. First, other organizations seem to have a more organized system for utilizing interns. But if you're proactive, independent, and not afraid to figure out for yourself what's going on, I think it's a great placement. Second, most people at UNCTAD seem to be very busy, so it is sometimes hard (though not impossible) to find a time to sit down with them or to network. Of course, this is probably true with most organizations. In addition, it's well worth the effort. Most of the people are amazing - I worked with former diplomats and trade experts from around the world - and quite helpful.

Advice from 2012 Geneva International Fellow

UNCTAD (DITC) is best suited for an applicant who is highly self-motivated and has a strong substantive interest in international trade issues. The vast majority of assignments are substantively trade related and rarely touch on internal legal issues of the organization. Research assignments tend to be policy focused and don't often involve traditional legal writing and analysis. Generally, tasks include researching and writing reports on changes in trade schemes (60%), attending and reporting on expert meetings or negotiations (30%), and analyzing the text of agreements (10%).

This placement can provide great opportunities for exposure to issues in international trade and development. Interns have access to incredible resources in terms of fascinating colleagues and events held at both UNCTAD and the WTO. However, finding such opportunities can sometimes require a lot of effort and persistence. An intern who is very independent, self-motivated, and comfortable with a more solitary work environment would excel here. A willingness to explore external opportunities would be beneficial as well. Supervision is minimal, as are interactions with other colleagues unless you actively pursue it, but it is definitely worth the effort.

Advice from 2013 Geneva International Fellow

The externship experience at UNCTAD DITC can be a rewarding one, if you are interested in
topics related to trade and do not require a lot of human interaction. The nature of the supervision was very minimal. The majority of days, I did not see my supervisor. All of the colleagues I met there were very nice, but everyone keeps to themselves in terms of work. I had the chance to get to know them socially outside of work, and enjoyed that. I felt that the demands on my time were minimal, but my supervisor always felt that I was very busy. The office environment is business casual. I felt most comfortable in a suit, but was often over-dressed. The lunch hours are generous, and it's very nice to have a chance to get to attend the various activities going on at the UN.

The nature of the work was almost all related to trade topics, and how various trade issues affected developing countries. Though I had no background in trade law or economic research, this was not a problem. The most important thing at UNCTAD DITC is to demonstrate a can-do attitude, and be very responsive to emails and provide a quick turnaround on projects. Its important on the first day, when they introduce you, to make it clear to your colleagues that you want work, and to follow up quickly in the first few weeks, to ask for work. Talk to your colleagues about their personal lives - people love to chat about non-work related topics at UNCTAD DITC, and if they like you they will invite you to do social things on the weekends. Make friends with the administrative assistant the first day - she knows everyone and can introduce you to people with similar interests, especially other interns - who get together for lunches and social events.

Based on the nature of supervision, I'd recommend UNCTAD-DITC for someone who is: 1) very outgoing, 2) highly motivated and driven 3) can work alone for long periods of time without seeing or talking to other human beings, 4) good at responding quickly to email 5) not intimidated when asked to handle statistical databases - though I had no idea what several colleagues were asking me to do at first, I found it effective at UNCTAD to not show my uncertainty - nod and smile first and then ask questions after I'd given it the old college try - the questions I came back with tended to be more thought out, and made me look like less of an idiot with no knowledge of trade law or economics.

In terms of interpersonal relationships, I'd recommend UNCTAD to someone who is more interested in corporate law/trade issues than someone who is interested in human rights. Tai seemed to like working with someone pursuing corporate law, and the previous interns followed a similar course. Like many offices, people were nice when you engaged them on a personal level, and few people discussed work on social occasions. I was able to get to know several colleagues outside of the office, and enjoyed this.

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at UNCTAD-DITC in 2014.)

Advice from 2015 Geneva International Fellow

Overall, the externship was positive. UNCTAD, firstly, is an intergovernmental organization that is actually an agency of the UN. This division and branch deals mostly with infrastructure regulations domestically and looking at how trade policies of developing countries can be set up in ways that encourage further development. The work is not strictly speaking legal – if that’s what you would like, you have to go out there and get it.

For a successful and rewarding time here, I think it’s absolutely crucial to keep a few things in mind:
Don’t expect to be working on and receiving technical legal work as we are used to seeing in law school, or in the US for that matter. This is the realm of international law, and UNCTAD is more of a policy think tank, at best. As such, even the international law that you will get exposure to will be a lot less “law”-like than even the class, Transnational Law.

That being said, it’s up to you to change your expectations and goals early on. Recognize that you’ll still do a lot of research and writing. Keep in mind that a lot of your tasks will be focused on trade regulation, details of different infrastructure sectors (energy, telecommunications, etc.), navigating a workable policy line where trade and domestic regulation bolster each other. Thus, I think it’s important to shift to a mentality where you seek to learn as much as you can about these substantive areas while in the program, because you will most certainly get into the nitty gritty of these topics.

The office atmosphere is not all that social. If that’s something you like, great. If you want people to interact more, the onus is kind of on you. That being said, though people don’t take the initiative a lot of the time to be as welcoming or social as you may like, if you want to meet either at or outside of work to hang out casually, many people are totally open to that.

The level of supervision from Tai Ito, specifically, is a little more off-hand than I would like. He was very flexible, and entertained ideas of pushing back deadlines so that I would be able to sit in on Human Rights Council meetings or other events going on at the UN. That being said, I felt like a lot of the time I was working, I felt little urgency, which may have led to less productive times in the office than I would have hoped.

Network, network, network. Inside UNCTAD, with speakers you will meet as a part of the seminar, people you happen to meet at bar events or wherever. Geneva is an incredibly dense center of high intellectual and human capital, so take full advantage of the people here to learn from them and get yourself familiar with what international work looks like.

As for life in Geneva, generally:

Apply for foyers (in particular) early. Like June/July the year before you leave. They will almost categorically put you on a waitlist, but ultimately, 10 days before I flew to Geneva, I got a notice saying that a room opened up. So that may be your saving grace. Also, it’s probably the most promising avenue to finding housing under $1,000/month.

My recommendations for budgeting for the time in Geneva (especially because weekend travel took up a lot of money) are 1) eat as few meals out as possible (because it’s very expensive); 2) attend receptions/bar events, because they’re great ways to meet either professionals or other interns, who you can identify with and build relationships with; and 3) try to grocery shop in France, even though it’s farther away, because the cost savings are pretty significant.

Day to day work at UNCTAD is very cyclical. There will rarely be a time when you feel like day in and day out for weeks on end, you’ll be overwhelmed. Though Tai or other staff members may feel that way, I never felt that way. There were weeks were 2-3 days I would stay until 7 or 7:30 pm (which is considered really late here) to try to meet a deadline that my supervisor was relying on. UNCTAD hosts lots of events/conferences, and usually when those happen, you will find your workload growing and intensifying.
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): Human Rights Liaison Unit

Advice from 2009 Extern

My work at UNHCR mainly involved monitoring all of the relevant UN treaty-body and Human Rights Council meetings, and writing feedback reports on them. My direct supervisor was a liaison officer for the field offices on the issue of Human Rights, so my feedback reports focused on human rights meetings that had particular relevance to the mandate of UNHCR. These were sent out to colleagues in the field offices after my supervisor’s approval. The other important part of my work consisted of writing a research memo. Topics for this research assignment are assigned after a discussion with the team of interns and officers, as the need arises.

As for the level of supervision, the interns had a weekly meeting with the supervisor to share the work each person has been doing and to coordinate overall workload. The legal team as a whole met once a week to discuss the work that is going on and to assign the work to appropriate members of the team. Everyone is extremely busy, so it is important to reach out to your supervisor to learn exactly what it is you need to do and to get helpful feedback on your work product.

The office atmosphere is generally casual, but the meetings I had to monitor were very formal. The interns usually sit together but there is a serious space crunch, so even the officers sometimes had to move around to find desks for themselves.

The key difference at UNHCR from many other externship organizations is that it places a heavy emphasis on field operations. The Headquarters Office in Geneva focuses on support and coordination role for the field offices abroad and most of the real action goes on in the field. However, the advantage is that one can see the big picture of the organization's work around the world by being in the Headquarters Office. You can also meet people from all over the world working on almost all of the issues related to refugees, so it is a great place to expose and familiarize yourself to various opportunities if you are interested in pursuing a career in this field.

You might want to work at UNHCR if you have a genuine interest in the field of humanitarian assistance, refugees and field operations that take place at the forefront of global crises. You can work much more effectively after you come here if you have some background knowledge on refugee-related issues.

Advice from 2010 Extern

The day to day work at UNHCR is intense and rewarding. UNHCR is much more focused on direct service delivery than any of the other organizations. All UNHCR employees have spent time in the field (and by field I don't necessarily mean Chad, it could have been Damak or Quito) so headquarters (unlike other headquarters I have been in) is not a far removed out of touch place-people know the working conditions in the field, and they know actual refugees. I think this is a critical thing to keep in mind, UNHCR is not a closed door organization, they have real live refugees coming into their offices (not in Geneva of course).
and everyone has to know how to treat other human beings. I don't think this is the case at all
UN agencies, so if you want to end up in the field, or have spent time in the field; UNHCR is
a great place to be. The focus of the work is about protecting persons of concern (refugees,
asylum seekers, IDPs, stateless persons, and returnees) and that is really felt every day.

**What is the level of supervision and involvement with colleagues?** I have never been
happier with the level of supervision at UNHCR, and all the interns on my team agreed. I had
two supervisors, and both were simply amazing. They were nurturing, patient, and very good
at their jobs. They gave clear directions, they were willing to answer questions, and they gave
both positive and negative feedback immediately. One telling story of my time at UNHCR is
that we all spent an intensive month of March covering the Human Rights Council and in
celebration of sending out the final (huge) report on the Council my bosses took the human
rights intern team (five of us) out for a very fancy afternoon-we all enjoyed posh deserts and
coffees and relaxed together, and that stuff happened often. For example, the Chief of the
Division took the human rights interns out for lunch one day, my bosses each had coffee with
me one-on-one a few times, it was great! My boss actually spent two hours with me over
coffee on my last day discussing my work and future plans. I am so grateful to her. My
involvement with UNHCR colleagues was equally positive. I was treated like an equal (or at
least an employee, maybe not an equal to senior staff!) even though I was an intern, I was
appreciated, and people gave me what I needed, brought me in on projects, and helped with
future career steps. UNHCR is a great place to work.

**What are the key differences between an externship at UNHCR or any of the others you
can apply to?** Since I did not work at the other agencies I am not going to speak to key
differences but like I said above, UNHCR is a direct service agency, it is not three hundred
steps removed from the recipients of whatever benefit the agency is supposed to provide, and
that makes UNHCR dynamic. I also had a ton of very diverse assignments rather than one
four month assignment. I had room to be creative and to take on things I was interested in and
I really appreciate that.

**What are the specific skills that would bode well for someone working at
UNHCR?** Patience, attention to detail, ability to multi-task, flexibility and commitment to
persons of concern.

**You'd like to work here if you are the kind of person who** likes a fast paced, service
oriented (yet intellectual) environment and who wants to really see what it means to work for
refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, stateless persons, and IDPs.

**Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow**

As an intern within the Human Rights Liaison Unit at UNHCR, most of the internship was
spent on two primary activities - reviewing confidential comments from the field offices for
submission to human rights treaty bodies and attending and reporting on human rights treaty
body meetings. Over the course of the internship, we prepared comments and attended and
reported on the Committee reviews of countries for the Convention on the Rights of the
Child, Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against women, the Universal
Periodic Review, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination,
and the month long Human Rights Council. Through the preparation of comments and
reports and attending the meetings, you gain a thorough understanding of basic human rights
law and its intersection with refugee law, as well as substantive knowledge about the
situations of persons of concern (refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, internally displaced persons, and returnees) in the countries that are being reviewed.

Over the course of the internship, there are periods where several committees are meeting at once, times when you won't be attending sessions at all, and the month of March, which is the Human Rights Council, and so the day to day work varies accordingly, depending on the session attendance obligations. There are usually 4 interns within the Human Rights Liaison Unit, and the core intern responsibilities are divided up between us - an intern does the scheduling of who will attend what sessions, and one of our supervisors usually emails confidential comments to review either directly to an intern, or to the group to ask who can take on the assignment. Other work is discussed and assigned at a weekly team meeting, and there is usually the opportunity to volunteer for items of particular interest. I have spent some time researching for the head of another section outside the HRLU because I expressed interest in doing more substantive research.

In general, the supervisor of the unit seems overtasked, but not with items she can pass off to the intern team. This is not to say she is not wonderful to work with - she is always happy to explain things, whether it is the situation in a country you have covered or the inner workings of the Human Rights Council, and will spend time she doesn't seem to have talking to you if you go to her office. There may be days where you don't hear from her, however. A lot has been said by the previous interns, and nothing I see that doesn't continue to hold true this year!

**Advice from 2013 Geneva International Fellow**

The Human Rights Liaison Unit is a great place to see the intersection of a specific organization’s mandate and how it corresponds with the various treaty bodies. The main tasks are editing submissions from the field offices, attending sessions, and writing feedback reports on those sessions. This does involve quite a bit of note-taking; while there are opportunities for research or analysis, most of the day-to-day work is recording information on UNHCR’s persons of concern and then reporting that information to the field. That said, if there is a specific issue you are particularly interested in, there is definitely the possibility of getting a side project, even if it’s with another unit – you may just have to be proactive about asking for one! Similarly, research problems do crop up in HRLU at times, so there are chances to supplement your normal work.

The HRLU team works together very closely, with the assignments split between the interns (normally 4). You will alternate going to sessions for the different treaty bodies and making substantive and grammatical edits to the submissions that have been drafted by the field offices. My supervisors were always willing to answer questions or clarify things, even when they were really busy (which was much of the time!). Because the workload is often so heavy, especially during the Human Rights Council and when there are several treaty bodies meeting at once, this is not an internship where your boss is constantly looking over your shoulder; while you will obviously be in touch via email when she reviews your submissions or reports going out, sometimes you will have to actively find a supervisor for questions. As I mentioned, though, even when things get crazy they always were willing to talk.

Generally speaking, this is not a placement where you will have one overarching project; rather, the work is many short-term things at once. You have the opportunity to get a snapshot of the refugee or asylum situation in a variety of countries, depending on which
submissions or sessions you cover. Also, besides a few short memos for meetings with various groups, there is very little research of a purely legal nature involved in the day-to-day projects. You will be getting out of the office quite a bit to attend sessions, so you don’t have to stare at a computer screen all day.

Overall, while the assignments are similar throughout the internship, the even minor differences between the language used in submissions to the different treaty bodies give a glimpse at how UNHCR’s mandate can be supported by a variety of instruments. You really do gain a good understanding of how refugee law and humanitarian law in general overlap or complement each other. The work can seem far removed from the actual situation of refugees on the ground; since so many colleagues rotate from field offices to headquarters, however, talking to them can help you see how the work you do with the treaty bodies is interpreted or implemented practically.

Advice from the 2014 Geneva International Fellow

What is the day-to-day work like? Everyday working at UNHCR is quite different. There is no set “day-to-day.” The events you will cover and feedback reports you write will vary based on what events are on the UN calendar and the state of human rights situations throughout the various UNHCR bureaus. While there is no set “day-to-day” schedule you can definitely expect to be working from 9:00 am until at least 6:00 pm and some days a little later. You will always be busy writing papers, conducting research, or editing drafts for reports colleagues have written. The work is not particularly difficult, but the work is constant.

What is the level of supervision and involvement with your colleagues? Sometimes I spoke with my supervisors daily & multiple times a day. Other times I did not speak to them for days. There are weekly unit meetings where you will be asked the status of all your pending reports and whether or not you will be able to meet deadlines. Deadlines are very important at UNHCR because colleagues in the field need to act quickly and advocate on behalf of persons of concern ASAP.

What is the office atmosphere like? Everyone at UNCHR is truly passionate about refugee and asylum issues. HQ houses close to (or over) 900 staff. People at UNHCR work very hard and put in long hours because they are truly devoted to the people UNHCR serves. Almost all of the people working at UNHCR HQ have field experience. The stories they share are great!

What are the key differences between an Externship at this organization and any of the others that your classmates were placed? The work level. The work at UNHCR is not difficult, but it can be demanding. There will be times when you will stay late.

What are the specific skills (including interpersonal) that are valued by this organization? You have to have a true passion for migration and refugee and asylum issues. People of concern to UNHCR include not only refugees, but also other groups such as asylum seekers, refugees returning home, stateless people and people who are displaced due to armed conflict within their own countries, (known as internally displaced persons IDPs). You should also be able to multitask and prioritize. You should be able to meet deadlines and not need constant supervision. You should also have a sense of “humour” and an easy-going nature.
"You'd like to work here if you're the kind of person who ..." …understands and appreciates the fact that one of the major challenges facing the world today is protecting refugees who have been forced to leave their homes by armed conflict and human rights abuses. UNHCR interns should be truly passionate and committed to refugee and asylum issues.

**Advice from the 2015 Geneva International Fellow**

- **What is the day-to-day work like?**
The day to day work involves editing confidential comments that UNHCR submits to the various treaty body mechanisms, going over submissions to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process and attending and writing feedback reports on sessions of treaty body committees and the UPR. During March, the Human Rights Council takes place and the majority of the day to day work involves attending sessions, taking notes, and composing feedback reports to be sent out to colleagues that deal with the specific issues that were discussed. The day to day work is varied and interns get a lot of different assignments so it is unlikely that one would be doing the same task over and over every day, but there may be some repetition over time.

- **What is the level of supervision and involvement with your colleagues?**
The level of supervision worked really well for me. My supervisors tried to give me feedback on every project that I worked on. However, they did not micro-manage and once assignments are distributed at the weekly meetings, we are pretty much on our own and don’t really get a lot of input into how we do the assignment. My supervisors were really wonderful and had an open door policy, so I always felt I could approach them with questions—however silly or repetitive.

- **What is the office atmosphere like?**
The office atmosphere is the best part of working in the Human Rights Liaison Unit. Everyone is super friendly and welcoming and it is really pleasant to be around co-workers. My supervisors genuinely care about the work and the interns and that we are having a good experience. Also, other interns are really friendly and are really important resources for getting work done because they often know where things are and how to do things. Also, you end up sitting with the interns so it is easier to ask them questions because they are more geographically proximate within the building. The atmosphere is probably more laid back but still professional. It’s not uncommon to find individuals with suits walking around, but for the most part I would characterize it as business casual and jeans are perfectly fine.

- **What are the key differences between an Externship at this organization and any of the others that your classmates were placed?**
I can’t speak to the experiences of other interns but I feel like there was always a steady stream of work and that may have been different from other interns who may have struggled to get assignments. Interns are a really pivotal part of the team and are relied on heavily. I never had moments where I didn’t have assignments or projects and if I wanted more work it was always easy to find it. However, the work is always within our unit and after some time it can be repetitive. I would say there is not as much flexibility in terms of getting projects from different supervisors.

- **What are the specific skills (including interpersonal) that are valued by this organization?**
Attention to detail, flexibility, familiarity with UN human rights mechanisms and refugee law. I think there aren’t really a lot of pre-requisites for this position but it helps if you are interested and have some background in human rights and refugee/migration law. Also, being able to work with a team – because you will be working closely with other interns to set and manage the workload.

• "You'd like to work here if you're the kind of person who ..."
Loves a fast-paced work environment, enjoys having lots of different projects, and don’t need to be doing stereotypically legal work. The only thing to know is that most of the projects are short term projects, there is no long term research project. So if you would like to have something more along those lines it might be difficult. Though I believe if you like that kind of work you could probably ask to do more treaty-body analysis and that could be fulfilling. If you like having events to go to so you’re not in the office all the time, and if you care about human rights/refugee/migration issues, and you pay attention to detail, you will like this internship.
United States Diplomatic Mission to the United Nations in Geneva

Advice from 2008 Extern

What is the day-to-day work at your agency like?
The work focuses predominately on humans rights and weapons issues and is largely treaty focused. You will spend roughly half your time completing discrete research projects and half your time attending meetings; many of these meeting take place at the United Nations. After some training, I was permitted attend treaty negotiation sessions by myself.

What is the level of supervision and involvement with your colleagues?
If you enjoy working with minimal supervision but great support, you will enjoy this externship.

What is the office atmosphere like? What are the key differences between an externship at this organization or any of the others which your classmates were placed at?
The office atmosphere at the United States Mission was more formal than many of the other externship locations. Due to security concerns and the fact that your behavior reflects directly on the United States, you are expected to comport yourself in a professional manner at all times. As you will frequently be in proximity with representatives from other countries, dress is a bit more formal as well. While a suit is not strictly required, I felt more comfortable when dressed more formally.

What are the specific skills (including interpersonal skills) that would bode well for someone working here?
I think that the extern position at the Mission is a good choice for a self-starter with strong research skills and the ability to interact easily with others. Treaty negotiations can be long and tedious so applicants should also have the ability to stay focused for day long sessions. In addition, some public speaking may be required.

Advice from 2009 Extern

The legal department of the US Mission is made up of two attorneys from the State Department’s Office of Legal Advisers. You work closely with the two attorneys, depending on their schedules. The day to day work depends a lot on the UN Human Rights Council. Because the US is now a member of the HRC, the February session will likely be very busy. This is the time when countries run resolutions, negotiate language, etc. There should be a lot of work in attending meetings and perhaps research on the substantive portions of resolutions.

Much of the intern work is reporting on various meetings and events at the UN. I also helped out with a delegation from the US participating in negotiations on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (meaning attended meetings with them and making sure they made it to their car). Over the course of the internship, I had one or two small research projects related to the Human Rights Council. I am not sure how my work compares with that of other internship placements in the Geneva program, but overall I would not say that this internship utilized a lot of legal expertise. If you are interested in working for the State Department at some point, this is a great place to make contacts and get your foot in the door. Both my
supervisors constantly impress with their intelligence and experience in international law matters. Further, if you are interested in multilateral diplomacy, the Mission provides a good vantage point to watch the goings-on.

There are other interns at the US Mission in different departments, but this is the only legal intern position so you are generally on your own.

Advice from 2010 Extern

The day to day work at the Legal Affairs office involves attending plenary sessions of UN meetings such as the Human Rights Council and HRC Advisory Committee, taking notes, and reporting on the highlights, as well as researching mandate language, previous UN resolutions, or whatever other information the two lawyers in the office may want. The intern should also be up for writing a note or memo of their own choosing on a related topic of international law. The office environment is great, very bright very friendly lawyers, there is not a lot of supervision or feedback and it is a role that an active engaged self starter is more likely to get the most out of the internship. Overall the experience was a great look at some of the inner workings behind how international law gets made, including not only the law but the diplomacy, politics that go into the equation.

Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow

Personal Qualities Helpful at the US Mission: I would agree with previous interns, an engaged and personable self-starter who can feel comfortable in a number of social and professional situations and is willing to do different kinds of work will definitely get more out of this placement than someone who prefers a more stable office environment, steady supervisor-interaction, and feels more comfortable waiting for tasks to be assigned. My advice: These attorneys are super busy. So, figure out the lay of the land (if you have questions, ASK!) and then either ask if they need anything or suggest something that might be helpful for what is going on. Example: You're in a negotiation, an NGO is pointing out what's wrong with your position, it might be helpful for you to analyze these points against the treaty and current progress to assess what is an old talking point and can be countered, what is in a state of evolution, and what issues remain challenges. Try to think of resources that you would need to be most effective if this were your negotiation, and you had infinite time to create them. Additionally, creative research skills (you're not using Lexis) are important.

Work: My work varied quite a bit during my time at the Mission. I wrote memos; constructed resource binders; attended and reported on side events; observed and participated in bi-/multi-laterals; helped draft remarks; and, assisted with event preparation and execution. I don't know if things changed between 2009 and 2011, but technically, interns are not allowed to speak from behind the placard. But, while I didn't speak for the US during formal meetings, I did have the opportunity to participate actively in informal negotiations - helping to work out compromise language or interfacing with other delegations to discuss expectations and strategy. The team (consisting of officers from the legal and the political offices) is super busy doing a million things at once, so I suggest being open to helping anyone with any project early on. This will help make you part of the team and allow you to become more engaged as things progress. If you are going to receive or want to do your own long-term or large-scale project, I suggest starting it early. Things can be very slow for the first three weeks, but negotiations will likely be back-to-back starting in mid-February, and
you'll have other commitments on the side. No one in the office seems to have a typical day and you should prepare for some late nights and early mornings. I learned a lot here about what international lawyers do, how treaty negotiations actually work, and how states interact in diplomacy. But compared to my peers, I did not do too a large amount of work in one area. So if you want breadth of experience, the mission is a great place to be. If you want time to really engage one issue, you might be better off elsewhere.

**Doing the Externship as a 2L/3L:** You may be wondering whether to pursue this externship as a 2L or as a 3L. Different people may tell you different things. Doing the program as a 2L, can be a good thing. It can help you make contacts and have experiences that can help you secure a job after 3L year, because you would have completed the program prior to applying for post-3L jobs and therefore able to secure references etc... In the program you will also make friends with other UMLS'ers, forming relationships you can then enjoy after returning to Ann Arbor. And finally, it can give you the opportunity to secure a summer job. However, for me, it worked out being a 3L. I was able to fulfill the US Mission's stated preference for 3Ls, and ended up being able to work at my top choice placement. I also was able to enjoy essentially ending law school a whole semester early. For someone who went straight-through from undergrad to law school, this was especially nice. It also left me more time to with family upon returning home and prior to bar study. Additionally, I didn't have to miss 2L EIW. And finally, I was able to use the time to talk with people there about my career path with fewer hypotheticals.

In general, I suggest weighing factors such as: how important EIW will be for you, whether the job you hope to have post 3L is something for which you would need the externship reference letters, whether you are interested in staying in Geneva over summer, and what skills or research time you are hoping to get out of the externship experience. Talk to past participants as well, to see how happy they were with the timing of their experience. As an aside: I too felt more at home in more formal work attire - however, the traditional black/grey of DC or NYC is not necessary.

**Advice from 2012 Geneva International Fellow**

I'd echo the comments of previous externs. The Mission is suited to someone who doesn't mind working independently with minimal supervision. Your supervisors are committed to ensuring that you get what you want out of the internship. But, they will be very busy (so will the rest of the team), so you'll need to be able to speak up for yourself if you want to do something (or if you don't want to). The work is varied, but much of it is related to the Human Rights Council, which meets for four weeks in March. Legal deals with other issues, too, such as treaty bodies and arms control. You'll complete short research assignments and likely one long-term research project. You'll also attend many meetings and negotiations, mostly at the UN. Some of these meetings you'll attend by yourself and be expected to report back. Like the 2011 intern, I don't think you can make official statements ("behind the placard") on behalf of the US. If you're interested in other issues (such as disarmament or trade), I imagine you'd be able to do some work for those departments, although I never asked. Your colleagues are sharp, competent, and interesting. But if you don't make an effort to get to know your fellow interns and colleagues, it can be a bit isolating. The atmosphere is more formal than other placements. Definitely consider the Mission if you're interested in working for the State Department, particularly the Foreign Service. It's also a great window into multilateral diplomacy and political strategy. As for the 2L/3L choice, it's my understanding that there's a strong preference for 3Ls. It might be helpful to talk with
someone at UMLS if you're agonizing over the choice.

**Advice from 2013 Geneva International Fellow**

Working at the Mission is a sure chance to get a wide variety of work, ranging from what I think of as “substantive legal” work to simply taking notes at meetings, and everything in between. Previous interns have it right regarding the need to be self-starting. Because the Mission staff—and especially the lawyers—are so busy, one of the most difficult aspects of the job is making sure that you continue to have work that extends beyond the immediate future. That being said, the busier they are, the more help they can use, so the key is to get the lay of the land as quickly as possible so that you are able to be entrepreneurial in coming up with work to do that will keep you busy and be useful to your supervisors. But bearing that in mind, the work can still be irregular, so I still had unavoidable downtimes. When there was absolutely no other work to do, this provided a perfect opportunity to work on my biweekly reports and reading assignments. So while it can be frustrating not to have an assignment, I rarely found that there was literally nothing to keep me busy. And when there was work to be done (for instance, while the Human Rights Council was in session), there was plenty to go around. So the key is to find the rhythm, pace yourself, persistently look for ways to be useful, and don’t be discouraged by the lulls.

In terms of the substantive work, the legal office spends a significant amount of its time focused primarily on the work of the Human Rights Council, which is in session in March. In preparation for that, we worked on an expansive gamut of issues. For instance, I attended the meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Peace, which required research into the Advisory Committee’s Draft Declaration on the Right to Peace. I attended the Working Group on Business and Human Rights, which is concerned with implementing and disseminating standards for transnational firms and their responsibilities with respect to human rights, and how this is done is quite an important issue to the US. I was also exposed to the diplomatic maneuvering related to resolutions on human rights situations in states like Syria, Sri Lanka, Iran, DPRK, and Burma (among others). And I did research and writing related to indicators for the Millennium Development Goals. I also worked on a number of discrete questions relating to how the ad hoc international criminal tribunals have characterized crimes of sexual violence, what the US has said in the past about strategies for achieving individual MDGs, and the percentage of HRC action that has been aimed at Israel. Most of these assignments involve (like most legal work) a discrete question, research, and follow up. I’ve also had the chance to sit in on a number of lunches/meetings with our staff and the diplomatic staff from other missions to discuss goals and strategies in the run-up to the session. Even in my first week I was exposed to interesting issues when I attended the US treaty defense of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Because it was my first week, I was really only there for my own edification, but I got to meet interesting people like Harold Koh, and it was a pleasure getting exposure to a process and issue on which the US works very hard. This isn’t an exhaustive list of the work I’ve done, but it is a representative sampling.

To me, one of the most interesting aspects of the job is seeing the behind-the-scenes workings of the diplomatic process. Although a lot of the other interns have a chance to see “informals” (which are multilateral negotiations) and the output of the process in the Council, being at the Mission gives you the opportunity to see the bilateral talks that are antecedent to the informals, as well as the internal deliberations of a state before it goes into these negotiations. For a student of international relations, this is the theory in practice, and it is
enormously educational.

My daily routine is pretty variable. I'm normally either at my desk, in meetings, or at the Palais (where the UN is here). Desk work at the Mission is not so different from work at a firm; it involves trying to find and articulate answers to legal questions by deadlines. Most of the rest of the work is a breed of its own and mostly has to be experienced to be appreciated.

In terms of what kinds of personal qualities are well suited to work in the Mission, the first is initiative. If you aren’t comfortable asserting yourself to get more work or different experiences, then I think this could be a difficult position for you. I also think it helps to be comfortable with a job where the primary value to you is intrinsic. This is not the kind of place where people have a lot of time to stop and tell you how well they think you’re doing. If you need regular positive feedback in order to be happy in a position, I think that you might find this position wanting. Finally, I advise approaching this internship with clear eyes about what you’re doing and who your client is. At the Mission, you represent the policy of the United States, for better or worse, and if you have deep reservations about those policies, it would be a mistake to expect that working for the State Department is not going to impinge on those reservations. Even if you have such reservations but you’re comfortable with separating yourself from your principal’s policies, then you should find working at the Mission interesting and enlightening.

**Advice from 2014 Geneva International Fellow**

I had a fantastic experience externing at the US Mission and generally echo the above comments. From negotiating with foreign diplomats, to interacting with officials from across the federal government, to directly advising the top State Department Lawyer on how to interpret a Supreme Court decision, this was certainly the highlight of my time at Michigan. I would note that starting in 2015 one of the two Mission lawyers will be changing, so the 2015 Extern’s direct supervisor will be new and this information might be slightly outdated, though the head legal adviser will remain the same through at least 2015.

*What are the specific skills (including interpersonal skills) that would bode well for someone working here?*

Prior comments are spot on; the Mission’s two lawyers have a million things going on at the same time and sometimes they do not have the time to assign specific projects. That said, someone that is OK with downtime and a serious self-starter would excel here. Often times I would approach the political section of the Mission (non-lawyers) directly to see if I could help them with anything, and this was greatly appreciated.

I would also stress that you need to be comfortable speaking in public and talking with new people, in a wide variety of settings. You will interact with all sorts of people from Ambassadors to other interns. If you are shy or nervous, this might not be ideal for you.

Finally, you need a long attention span. You will often attend meetings that run beyond three hours. At first every meeting is fascinating, but after a while it becomes difficult to take great notes. With this in mind, you need to be an exceptionally concise writer. Reports you write will be read by people that only have time to read a few sentences; summarizing a six hour meeting in a paragraph can be challenging, but this was a skill that I picked up and was important.
What is the office atmosphere like? What are the key differences between an externship at this organization or any of the others that your classmates were placed at?

Others have this right as well. I never saw a man in the Mission not wearing a suit and tie, although I do not think this was a formal rule. Because the Mission has four Ambassadors and many top officials cycle through, you never know whom you will run into, so people are quite formal. At the same time, there is an “in the trench” mentality during the HRC’s March session, in that all people at the Mission are working towards achieving outcomes favorable to the US, and this breeds camaraderie. At the same time, the two lawyers are often in meetings, so the office was often quite empty. This gives you a good chance to get to other floors and meet people from other departments. I would advise future externs to introduce themselves to the USTR team and spend a day shadowing them—this was a great experience to see the WTO in action.

It is also important to understand that you are working for lawyers, but they are really acting like political diplomats. This means that for long stretches you will not be working directly on legal issues. I particularly enjoyed this, as it gave me a chance to see great how the multilateral world works. You really get a chance to see diplomacy and international politics in action. As the 2013 Extern noted, everyone sees the ‘informal’ negotiations (which are actually quite formal), but you have the chance to see the real behind the sees work that starts in DC, spans the world and goes on for months before the HRC session.

What is the level of supervision and involvement with your colleagues?
Might change with next year’s new lawyer, but generally quite minimal. I worked quite closely with one of the two lawyers, since the other was on paternity leave for a long stretch of time. Sometimes I had great freedom to act on my own, at other times I was tethered to other diplomats in meetings. Generally, I would say you have less responsibility that externs in other organizations. The State Department is a huge bureaucracy, and individual diplomats, let alone interns, are not allowed to make policy on the fly. This felt constraining at times.

What was my daily routine like?
Varied incredibly. During the March session (while the US is a member) you will have daily 8 am team meetings and will be assigned a task (or two for the day). After covering whatever meetings, you will head back to the office to write up a report.

During other times, it depends on what is happening. I was able to attend every day of a two week long negotiation session on the Intergovernmental Working Group for People of African Descent. This meant I had daily meetings from 10-1 and 3-6. At other times, I had a lot of free time.

What substantive work did I do?
I performed discrete legal research on issues ranging from the Arab-Israeli negotiations to housing law; I worked with the inter-agency delegation that defended our ICCPR report (helped Justice Department officials answer the Committee’s questions); helped prepare DC for the US CERD defense by attending numerous meetings and reporting out; etc. I spent a lot of my time in meetings—which I then reported back to DC what happened. I worked on issues ranging from: attending treaty body meetings; human rights (environment, business and HR, and housing in particular); the CCW (Convention on Conventional Weapons); the Durban declaration; specific ‘hot spot’ countries; corporate criminality; IHL.
**Things I wish I had known before starting the externship.**

I wish I had known how the HRC and the UPR process work; along with a little bit about the Durban conference in 2001. If I had the chance to do this again, I would have been more proactive in reaching out to the two lawyers to ask for a specific portfolio of work. Other ‘L’ externs in DC have portfolios (i.e. HRC resolutions) and I wish I had taken the chance to get to know one area of human rights law very well. As I noted, DC keeps its diplomats on short leashes, so you sometimes have to push to get substantive work, but it is possible if you make it clear what you want to do.

**Advice from 2015 Geneva International Fellow**

I’ve loved working at the U.S. Mission. The work is fascinating and diverse, and my supervisors and other colleagues are brilliant and kind and care deeply about what they do. (To be clear, the current Deputy Legal Advisor will still be at the Mission next year, and the Legal Advisor most likely will as well. Both have been a joy to work for.) I recommend this externship to students seeking a real and professional experience in Geneva.

My work has varied throughout the semester in terms of substance, character, and volume. During the March Human Rights Council (HRC) session, for example, I spent many days taking notes and reporting on meetings—but was also tasked with approaching delegates from other countries to help persuade them of U.S. views. Throughout the semester, I wrote legal memos on the language and potential impact of proposed HRC resolutions, HRC joint statements, and treaty-related international declarations. I was even asked to take an initial stab at drafting an HRC resolution—a heavily edited version of which eventually instead became an HRC joint statement supported by a cross-regional group of 78 states. (Workplace note: drafts of official documents are scrutinized and torn apart by attorneys in both Geneva and D.C.)

Over the course of this externship, I’ve never found myself at a loss for new and interesting legal doctrines to explore. Early on, I attended conferences on the rights of “peasants” and on juvenile justice and children’s rights; in March, the HRC session was all-consuming; and in April, I attended conferences on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), and the “right to peace.”

I echo past externs’ comments on the type of person likely to succeed and enjoy this work. The most important qualities include the following—in varying order of importance, depending on the day or week:

- **Proactiveness:** The Legal Advisors have full schedules and are quite capable of handling most legal questions on their own. This means you will have some slow days—and for the first month or so, before things get hectic, perhaps many of them. You’ll need to take this in stride and just ask for work. If the two attorneys at first don’t have enough to go around, you should feel comfortable also asking the political team (that is, the Foreign Service Officers and political attachés). You’ll be working daily with the political team throughout the March HRC session, anyway, so it doesn’t hurt to introduce yourself early and to ask for assignments during slow times in January and February. Doing so can be a great way to gain interesting and substantive experience while you still have some free time to dig deeply into research. It also develops your ability to explain legal doctrine to
folks who aren’t lawyers—and introduces you to a group of remarkable people, who later on will seek you out if you’ve already proven yourself to them.

- **Intrinsic motivation and intellectual curiosity:** Because the attorneys shoulder many heavy responsibilities, you’ll need to be able to stay on task with minimal supervision and without frequent feedback. This will require you to assert yourself—diplomatically, of course—when you have substantive questions or know that you’ll need feedback in order to improve. In addition, you’ll need to be fine working in an office by yourself when not at the UN: although a few other (mostly undergraduate) interns are scattered throughout the Mission, there’s only one legal intern.

- **Confidence, good judgment, and ability to adapt to varied communication styles:** During the HRC session in particular, you’ll be given D.C.-cleared talking points and will be expected to discuss them meaningfully and faithfully, on your own, in informal contexts with other states’ delegations and with NGOs. In other words, you’ll need to be able to speak authoritatively as a U.S. delegate (and to know when not to). Because of this representative role, I caution students against taking on this externship absent past professional experience that’s strengthened their judgment, public speaking, one-on-one communication skills, and ability to internalize key points and underlying reasoning. In addition, a shy person will dislike this significant aspect of the externship, and an immature one will perform it poorly. An aside: past externs are correct in noting that students may not speak *formally* on behalf of states—that is, from behind the podium.

- **Professionalism:** In addition to the interpersonal aspects of professionalism noted above, you’ll be expected to adhere to logistical professionalism as well. You’ll attend many meetings and must arrive prepared and on time (read: early) to every one. During the HRC session, for example, team meetings are held daily at 8 a.m. sharp. You’ll also wear a suit every day.

- **Ability to multitask:** The busy times—particularly during the HRC session and CCW meetings—are busy. You’ll inevitably be asked to be in multiple places at once. It’s your responsibility to stay organized, plan ahead, seek guidance to help prioritize what’s most urgent and important, and occasionally ask a less encumbered colleague to help cover you. Another reason to build relationships.

- **Stamina and attention to detail:** For many days in a row you will be expected to take detailed notes, sometimes for six or seven hours of meetings per day, and then in the evenings to condense those notes into digestible readouts. You’ll need to be able to listen actively for long periods of time—and to maintain that focus while crafting publication-quality work that will be sent to dozens of diplomats and lawyers in Geneva, D.C., and New York. You’ll also need to pace yourself, as you will sometimes go weeks at a time without a “down” day.

- **Fascination with international events and reasonable understanding of world history:** As a practical matter, you need to be genuinely interested in order to stay focused during daily lengthy meetings on little sleep. In addition, a strong working knowledge of global events and history can make a big difference when speaking with delegates from other countries. Because you’re representing the United States at all times, you are expected to stay engaged and to know what you’re talking about.

- **Flexibility and humor:** As described above, this externship varies dramatically throughout the semester. Rolling with the punches, keeping your sense of humor, and staying grateful for every experience will help you succeed in this position.
World Health Organization (WHO): Office of the Legal Counsel

Advice from 2008 Extern

When I first learned of my acceptance for a WHO externship, I was elated but held back by a slew of negative emotions. I felt apprehensive on leaving the comfort of Ann Arbor behind for the unfamiliarity of Geneva. I felt insecure about my abilities to successfully complete the work at such a prominent international organization. These emotions were laid to rest once I was finally settled in Geneva.

While the housing situation definitely provided some high anxiety, I think that everything magically fell into place and worked out in the end. I usually prefer to live alone, but having a fellow Michigan summer starter as a roommate helped make Geneva life more enjoyable. We commiserated about our dramatic relationship with the cat that came with our one-bedroom apartment, a bipolar ball of terror who gave us our share of sleepless nights. We fell in love with our Nespresso machine in the kitchen and became addicted to the caffeine highs of our little morning cups of espresso. Our charming neighbourhood of Carouge was perfect for spending Sunday afternoons at the local "Le Cheval Blanc," where we enjoyed the free wireless internet and attempted to work on our independent research papers with tea, and later wine, as the sun set.

Even my morning commute to WHO was a pleasant affair that involved a tram ride to the main station, Gare Cornavin, and transfer to the number 8 bus that dropped me off right in front of my building. I would pick up the free city newspaper, "Le Matin Bleu" during my commute and practice my reading comprehension of French culture. At WHO, I had the benefit of working in a multicultural environment where the only Americans in the department were the principal legal officer and myself. I loved my sweet Italian supervisor, who found time to write her doctoral thesis while working a full day, and still managed to always be welcoming and available for questions.

I began my externship with no expectations but ended with only great experiences. Besides the substantive nature of the assignments, I had regular communication with my supervisor during projects so that I was always on the right track and received follow-ups and feedback on most of my work submissions. I always learned something new from my assignments, like the constitutional procedure for amendments, as a result of doing the actual work and also being taught along the way. I think that my overall satisfaction with my externship was enhanced by the fact that everyone appreciated my work and made sure that I knew so, and treated me as an equal in terms of trusting and using my work in an official capacity. Overall, I think that the work done at the Office of Legal Counsel was very similar to what in-house counsel would do for a large corporation. An international organization like WHO consists of Member States that may be compared to partners in a corporation, making contributions and receiving benefits as a result. However, I learned from this externship that one must always ask "who" when referring to WHO, e.g. as in what is WHO's role. The "who" can refer to a myriad of entities within the organization - the Member States, the Secretariat, one of the technical units, and of course the Office of Legal Counsel. Even within the Office of Legal Counsel, the attorneys were divided into three main practice groups. The majority of attorneys worked on either contracts with other entities or internal staff matters. I interned with the Governing Bodies and Public International (GBI) group and
worked closely with Gian Luca Burci (head of legal counsel), Steven Solomon (principal legal officer), and Egle Granziera (associate legal officer and my supervisor). My assignments covered some topics concerning the international law of organizations, such as voting procedures, amendments, and other constitutional issues. Other work involved legal assessment of WHO publications like technical guidelines and convention progress reports. Overall, I believe that my assignments were substantive in nature and content. I learned how to think like a lawyer, using analytical skills to pick at details that disturbed me and writing out explanations of why a certain phrase did not agree with me. I had the most difficulty expressing myself because I had never been put in a position of assertion before. I did not know how to be confident with my answers because what right did I have as a law student to be telling these lawyers what to do? Nevertheless, I enjoyed the respect and contributed my opinions like an equal, my work often being directly conveyed to the source of request after review with Egle or Steve.

Geneva is a great community of international folks which includes expatriates and student interns. Especially at a larger organization like WHO, the intern network is vast and there are weekly social activities that help interns feel more at home in this city. Claire also kept us informed of interesting lectures, film festivals, and other events that might pique our international curiosity. When we were not in Geneva, we were taking advantage of weekend trips to Amsterdam and Paris, or snow-shoeing in the German part of Switzerland. I do not regret a single step of this journey and highly recommend the Geneva externship program to anyone with the inclination for a truly unique experience. You only live once and unlike Vegas, what happens in Geneva does not stay in Geneva. Why? The stories make for good conversation, whether you're on an interview or a date, and you will tell them over and over again.

**Advice from 2010 Extern**

Working for the WHO Office of Legal Counsel can be a wild ride. There always seems to be something going on which demands your attention. You will get the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of projects and truly get an understanding of what the Organization is trying to accomplish. At the same time, there is some much happening in so many technical units, you can not possibly know all that is occurring, however, the intern network at WHO is great for both social opportunities and a chance to explore what else is occurring at WHO. During my experience, I was able to attend four governing body meetings, the Executive Board meeting, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (4th meeting) for a Protocol on the Illicit Trade of Tobacco Products, the International Health Regulations Review Committee meeting on H1N1 and the functioning of the WHO during the pandemic, and an Open-Ended Working Group on Pandemic Influenza Preparedness. I worked on a variety of projects including in-depth research, memo writing, cite-checking and proofreading reports, drafting reports, checking maps, meetings with a variety of parties, collaborating with different departments, different offices, and different organizations. The working hours can vary tremendously. While there usually is plenty of work to keep you at work until at least 6:30 pm, during non-preparatory or governing body meeting weeks, it is easier to go home earlier than that if you would like. I was always able to receive guidance from my supervisors, and everyone in the office is so kind that even if your supervisor is not around you could ask any other legal officer regarding basic advice and questions. My main supervisor was from Italy, but supervisor to your main supervisor working the State Department for many years and was stationed at the U.S. Mission in Geneva for five years before coming to WHO. He is an excellent resource and understands what it is like to be a US
law student.

Personally, I have found this to be a fantastic experience, but I am a dual degree student and very interested in international health issues and the macro-scale of health policy. I thought there were many projects which featured "substantive legal work" but at the same time, there is a lot of political maneuvering that occurs, and sometimes the final answer doesn't necessarily depend on the law but, instead, depends on the politics. It is very hard to write about everything I worked on during my semester, especially because the issues were so diverse. Overall, it is a fantastic opportunity, and one that individuals, especially those that are interested in health law, specifically global health law, should very strongly consider. However, even if you do not have an interest in health, I think this is a fantastic and rewarding internship where you truly get to understand what it is like to work at an international organization.

**Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow**

WHO provides a great learning experience and opportunity for anyone interested in working in international health law, international institutional law, international law, and/or corporate legal counsel. The Office of the Legal Counsel at WHO (LEG) works similar to a general counsel of a large corporation so it works on various subject matters, which will expose the intern to various legal areas.

Working in the Office of the Legal Counsel (LEG) at WHO was a wonderful experience and I would sign up to do it again. I worked primarily with the team focused on the governing bodies, but I had the opportunity to work on projects in the other teams of LEG. My immediate supervisor was very kind and always willing to take the time out to provide clarity to my assignments. However, I had to be responsible to complete my tasks in a timely fashion, as there were not many hard-fixed deadlines. Much of the work given to me was legal research and writing oriented. I spent most of my days researching the legal questions of WHO's technical units and providing feedback that would be comprehensible to non-legal persons. Although such tasks were the majority of my daily work, I had the opportunity to work on a variety of issues. I was able to edit and review contractual agreements, prepare documents for upcoming Governing Body meetings and edit a mapping manual, amongst other assignments. A great aspect of this internship is the ability to see the background functions of WHO's governing bodies, the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board. Coming in January, I was able to dive right into the Executive Board meetings. From there, I was able to follow working groups that tackle issues established by the governing bodies' agenda in effort to propose resolutions to the governing bodies. My only regret was not working long enough to take part in the World Health Assembly. The duration of the internship allows you to observe the process of resolution creation and possible adoption. The office atmosphere is very collegial. Colleagues are very engaging with one another; you can usually find a small group in the main office chatting and partaking in the snack stash. The office is very willing to incorporate you into life at LEG and WHO. For example, one of the administrative assistants invited me on her daily jog and eventually I became a part of the daily running club. Another colleague took me souvenir shopping as my internship came to a close, showing me the best spots to purchase authentic Swiss trinkets.

Interns who are self-motivated and assertive would be best in this environment. To gain further exposure to opportunities in other departments and units one must take the initiative to ask. Otherwise, you will wind up with your complete workload involving GBI matters,
which is certainly not a bad thing. Also interns who are familiar with French may be more at ease in day to office interaction, as some of the office conversations and jokes are in French.

Advice from 2012 Geneva International Fellow

First, it may be helpful to be aware of what this internship is not. It is not an internship on health law. It is also not an internship where you will be fighting for human rights or spending your time at meetings in the Palais des Nations. Instead, working for the Office of the Legal Counsel at the World Health Organization is in many ways quite similar to working in-house at a corporation. While the office works on certain issues particular to public health or international organizations, it must also address matters of business common to any company or organization: how to handle contracts with outside parties, how to protect its intellectual property, and how to handle disputes with employees.

The WHO Office of Legal Counsel is divided into three groups: (1) governing bodies and public international law, (2) administrative matters, and (3) commercial and contractual matters. While I had the chance to work on a few small projects with the commercial and contractual group (e.g. advising on the use of the WHO logo, researching international contract law, and reviewing whether changes in rules of arbitration affected WHO's privileges and immunities), I spent the majority of my time completing projects for the other two groups. As an intern for the entire office, you will get a wide variety of work projects and obtain a very good idea of what it is like to work full time as a legal advisor at an international organization.

For the administrative group, you will assist primarily with employment matters. Instead of filing in domestic court, employees must bring claims against the organization internally, and may then appeal to the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT). The work you do for this group will probably remind you of the assignments you did for your legal practice class. Projects involve researching ILOAT jurisprudence, applying previous judgments to the cases at hand, and composing memoranda and draft decisions.

The governing bodies and public international law group provides a wider variety of projects. I worked a lot with the internal law of the organization, i.e. applying the WHO Constitution, Rules of Procedure, decisions, resolutions, etc. to questions about how the WHO governing bodies are run. Examples of questions include which Member States may propose agenda items to the governing bodies, and when and how this may be done; when special sessions of the governing bodies may be held; which entities may be granted observer status; and how the Director-General is elected. For these projects, I often needed to refer not only to the WHO basic documents, but also to our past practice and to the practice of other UN agencies. I worked on a number of other projects for the governing bodies and public international law group as well, including evaluating WHO maps to determine correct international borders, proofreading WHO publications for legal issues, reviewing appropriate terminology for geographical areas, and comparing WHO regulations against potentially conflicting regional, domestic, or international legislation. I also had the chance to participate in two intergovernmental negotiating sessions: an intergovernmental negotiating body session for a draft protocol on the illicit trade of tobacco products and a working group on the nomination of the Director-General. The work I did for the governing bodies group was always very political. Even in the other two groups, diplomacy and politics are always at the back of everyone's mind.

Finally, the staff in the legal office are wonderful. Everyone is helpful, the supervisors are
supportive, and the atmosphere is very collegial.

(Note: There was no UMLS Geneva International Fellow at WHO in 2013.)

Advice from 2014 Geneva International Fellow

Working at WHO has been a fantastic experience from start to finish; I had a wonderful semester and would recommend the internship to any law student. At WHO, you will be working in the Office of the Legal Counsel (LEG), and thus the job is somewhat akin to working as in-house counsel at a company. LEG is divided into three units – Governing Bodies and Public International Law (GBI), International Administrative Law (IAL), and Commercial and Contractual Matters (CCM). Historically, CCM doesn’t give much work to interns, so you will likely spend the bulk of your time working on GBI and IAL issues.

GBI work is mainly public international law and involves handling issues related to or questions from WHO Member States. Typical projects included researching procedural and constitutional issues, drafting or editing agreements with Member States, doing research and preparation work in advance of meetings with Member States, and investigating various queries from Member States. You should also have the opportunity to attend various GBI meetings throughout the semester; for example, the Executive Board meets in January, and my supervisor brought me to a lot of those sessions.

IAL primarily handles employment disputes and acts as the WHO’s lawyer when these disputes go before the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization (ILOAT). As such, IAL work feels a lot like standard “litigation” work – researching case law from the ILO database and then drafting responses. IAL also handles questions about WHO’s privileges and immunities, so you may have an opportunity to research and learn about P&I issues.

Whether doing work for GBI or IAL, I found that I received interesting, substantive work (i.e. no “busy work”) and that my input was always valued and respected. My supervisor told me that she never thinks of interns as interns, but rather as regular Legal Officers, and you are definitely treated that way. For example, my supervisor would often ask me to “advise her on this matter” – that is, I was never just researching an issue, I was doing research and then making recommendations about the best course of action to take. It was nice to see that my recommendations were taken seriously, and I felt I was actually doing work that was put to use every day.

Your supervisor at WHO (Egle) is wonderful and a pleasure to work with. She was always friendly and supportive, not just about work issues but also about travel, life in Geneva, etc. She is also very open to feedback, and we had coffee several times during the semester to discuss how my internship was going and what I would like to see changed (which honestly was never much, as the internship was fantastic). In addition to Egle, others in the office are also welcoming and friendly; people were always willing to chat with me or take me out to coffee/lunch. The office is just a friendly, positive atmosphere to work in.

I think any law student would enjoy working at WHO, but there are a few qualities in particular that would make a person a good fit. First, anyone who interns at WHO should go in with the understanding that you won’t do much (or anything, really) related to health law; you’re basically working as in-house counsel, so it’s important to have that expectation up
People who are self-motivated would also do well here. Everyone in the office is fairly casual about deadlines, so you need to ask for deadlines and make sure you stick to them yourself, as there won’t be anyone monitoring that closely. Finally, I went into my internship speaking zero French and while I did not need it, it would have been helpful to understand at least a bit; some old WHO documentation is in French, and it can be a pain to have to ask for help or slowly Google Translate things. Overall, though, I would definitely NOT let this hold you back from applying to WHO if you don’t speak French, because it isn’t a huge issue – just something to be aware of.

All in all, I cannot say enough good things about working at WHO, my colleagues there, or my experience this semester – it has been an incredible experience, and I left the office thinking I would be happy to come back again full-time one day.

**Advice from 2015 Geneva International Fellow**

At WHO, you will be working in the legal counsel office to the Director-General. The office has the function of an in house counsel support to the DG, so it’s all strictly legal work as opposed to policy work. Of course, all legal work in international law has a policy slant. You have the opportunity to work with the three different departments and all 24 lawyers in the office. The direct supervisor I worked with was in Governing Bodies and Public International Law, so I did a lot of work with that. This included, for me, reviewing Memorandums of Understanding between WHO and various counties and organizations, conducting research on treaty provisions and application, researching the rules of procedure of the WHA and Executive Board, compiling documents on WHO governance reform, making recommendations on observer status of various NGOs and other entities, and researching the inviolability of the WHO archives. Another division dealt with internal employment matters. For this division, I mostly conducted research regarding employment dispute appeals made to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) using their research database. The third department works with contracts, grants, and procurement, and for them, I reviewed and commented on contracts, conducted research regarding WHO’s procurement policies, and researched the lobbying activities of potential grantors.

You will sit in an office with lots of natural light with 3-5 other interns facing the Jura mountain range. The office is actually quite nice, and you have your own space to spread out in a bit. About 80% of my work was researching and writing on a computer, with the other 20% spent in meetings and hearings. I think this proportion depends on the type of work you have expressed interest in, though, so you could go to more meetings if you wanted. The office is very collegial, and people are willing to take time to answer your questions or chat over coffee if you ask. If you are more of an independent worker, you can do your own thing, as well. Really, the office environment is what you make of it. It is a nice balance of doing work because they need the help and doing work because they want to give you the learning experience. You will have no part in the Human Rights Council in March, and I was never asked to attend a meeting to summarize the discussion in a report. All of my work was strictly legal, even if varied in substance. I never did administrative work, and only a handful of times did I review documents for English conformity. And all of the grammatical review was done on a voluntary, collegial basis as a favour rather than as a formal assignment. I received more feedback than others in different placements, and it was usually in the format of seeing changes made to the documents that I had worked on.

You can have as much work as you can handle, but Egle will not give you so much that you
are floundering. Most of the work I did was acquired through knocking on doors or sending emails asking for it, so I controlled my own work flow through those means. The office hours are roughly nine to six, with an hour lunch break and typically a 20-30 minute coffee break built in. I stayed past seven only a handful of times, and I typically got into the office between nine and nine-thirty. I never worked on a weekend. I took 2.5 vacation days and 2 sick days. There is a gym and a (nicely subsidized for interns) cafeteria in the building.
World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO): Office of the Legal Counsel

Advice from 2010 Extern

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is an enormous organization with functions that span from intellectual property (IP) educational courses to dispute resolution functions. The Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) serves as an in-house legal department, serving the organization's constitutional, administrative, and contract law needs. Most of the OLC attorneys have little to no knowledge of IP. Instead, they are paid to represent the organization against employees and external parties.

Constitutional law issues require analysis of the WIPO Convention as well as the Staff Rules and Regulations. Meanwhile, answers to administrative law issues also derive from the Staff Rules and Regulations; however, final internal decisions may be appealed to the International Labor Organization Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT), which interprets WIPO documents according to international administrative law. OLC members frequently research ILOAT case law on its intuitive and multilingual website Triblex. Finally, contract issues, while plentiful, tend to require French language skills. The OLC is also responsible for creating and maintaining a database—WIPO Lex—of legal texts (laws, regulations, jurisprudence, etc.) that form the legal frameworks for IP in all of WIPO's 184 member states. WIPO Lex, which is still in development, is part of a collaborative arrangement between WIPO (record keeper) and the World Trade Organization (record collector) required under the TRIPs Agreement. The OLC is composed of the Legal Counsel Edward Kwakwa, who reports directly to the Director General, seven attorneys, five other staff members, and various interns. The attorneys and other staff members tend to specialize in one of the above areas; however, weekly OLC meetings give the attorneys the opportunity to share their experiences and then give/receive feedback. As a "senior law intern," I was also expected to attend and contribute at these meetings. Generally, the day-to-day work is not too demanding—the pace is definitely not the same as a law firm—and only exceptional circumstances would require staying past 6:00 PM. Members of the OLC can seem pretty serious, but they also like to kick back and have fun. This includes catered lunches "to celebrate life" once every other month. The key difference between WIPO and other organizations is funding. WIPO receives most of its budget from registration systems like that under the Patent Cooperation Treaty. Thus, it relies less on member states for funding and arguably maintains slightly more autonomy. WIPO will definitely appear to be one of the wealthier organizations in Geneva. Currently, several new buildings are under construction even though the existing complex seems quite impressive. Interns are treated relatively better in terms of sick leave and other benefits, and any internship of six months or more must be paid. The OLC is particularly well-positioned to obtain the resources it needs because Edward has the ear of the Director General; however, far from every request is granted.

Edward is the primary supervisor for interns from Michigan. As the only OLC lawyer who has studied and practiced in the United States, he is not only extremely appreciative to have J.D. student interns, but also the most informed as to the level of skill and experience that Michigan students bring (relative to European undergraduate law students). In addition, Edward is known throughout WIPO and Geneva for his kindness and generosity; however, that does not mean he is a pushover in any way, shape, or form. While granting a lot of flexibility, he still expects high quality output.
Attorney Jessamyn (Jasmine) Honculada is also likely to be involved with any OLC interns. In addition to being the supervisor of WIPO Lex and practicing administrative law, Jasmine is a terrific mentor with a passion for young people. She will want to hear about your goals and career plans and do what she can to help you achieve them. If you have interests outside the OLC, or even outside WIPO, both Jasmine and Edward will be very accommodating. For instance, I missed several days of work to attend the annual meeting of the Standing Committee on the Law of Patents and an unrelated WIPO symposium regarding the protection of test data.

I also had the opportunity to work with the other attorneys and staff members. My assignments included the following:

- Reported at weekly OLC meetings and gave feedback on the reports of others.
- Coordinated with the Yearbook of International Organizations (YIO) contact person and prepared edits for the WIPO entry in the 2009 YIO under Edward's direct supervision.
- Attended the February announcement of decisions by ILOAT following an internal discussion of the three WIPO cases to be decided.
- Prepared summaries of ILOAT Decisions 2901 and 2903 for internal use.
- Researched and composed a memorandum regarding internal (primarily using WIPO Staff Rules and Regulations) and external (using the ILOAT Statute, ILOAT cases on Triblex, and practices of other organizations) time limits for making final decisions pertaining to administrative appeals under Edward's supervision.
- Researched the availability of an estoppel defense in administrative appeals cases involving procedural flaws during selection processes (primarily using Triblex).
- Composed a legal opinion regarding the Organization's rights under a contract with an external service provider.
- Researched and provided feedback concerning the availability and desirability of proposed names for WIPO's soon-to-be-launched web portal.
- Reported at weekly WIPO Lex meetings and kept records to archive the development of the database and related procedures. Entered the bibliographic information for and uploaded the texts on WIPO Lex that constitute the legal frameworks for IP (including copyrights and neighboring rights, patents, marks, plant variety protection, trade secrets, genetic resources, and traditional knowledge/cultural expressions) in the United States and Denmark.
- Researched and wrote a hyperlinked overview of the U.S. IP legal framework to be posted on the WIPO Lex page for the United States.
- Entered the bibliographic information for and uploaded the texts that implement the Hague System for the International Registration of Industrial Designs to the WIPO Lex pages of Hague System member states.
- Advised IT personnel on WIPO Lex inter-document relations and the automatic archival of texts that have been amended and consolidated, repealed, revoked, or otherwise superseded.
- Developed a uniform short-hand for easier identification of texts on WIPO Lex, procedures for locating relevant texts to upload, and model bibliographic entries for explaining texts with ambiguous relativity.
- Provided specific legal and technical advice to staff members and interns performing data entry on WIPO Lex.

You would like to work at the OLC if you are the kind of person who can take initiative and feel comfortable asking for assignments. Confidence is key—especially when contributing to
weekly meetings—but stubbornness—especially in relation to law as practiced in the United States—will receive limited appreciation. Your supervisors will be most impressed by good writing skills, especially the ability to organize your writing. It's true that French is not necessary, but I would have liked to have at least been conversant. Knowing French would be a huge asset in regards to doing contract work, reading some ILOAT documents, ordering in the cafeteria (let alone getting around the rest of Geneva), and bonding with many staff members who are simply more comfortable with their native tongue.

WIPO offers free language courses that begin in the winter; however, you will need to commit to whole semester. Raluca Maxim, who is in charge of the intern program from the human resources perspective, can direct you to this information on the Intranet. I suggest familiarizing yourself with all the Intranet links. I found it useful for programming my phone, translating the lunch menu before I got to the cafeteria, and ordering office supplies. Because WIPO is so large, many interns work for the Organization; however, it is not always easy to find them. Raluca can give you a list of the other interns at WIPO, but you must be persistent with her. Even if the other interns aren't working for the OLC, it is nice to have companions for the long Geneva lunches.

Also, make sure that Raluca sends you the medical certificate in time to make an appointment with University Health Services. Most insurance providers will not (or at least not fully) cover the tests (e.g. chest x-ray) necessary for your physician to sign that you are of adequate health to travel to and work at WIPO. However, everything should be covered at UHS by your student health fee.

Advice from 2011 Geneva International Fellow

Working at WIPO is a great experience, especially if you're looking for a more traditional legal job. The position is in the Office of Legal Counsel, supervised by the WIPO Legal Counsel, Edward Kwakwa. There are four departments that might assign you work depending on the need of the office. The Administrative Law section, which deals primarily with HR and other staff relations issues. A lot of the work consists of researching legal arguments for either internal appeal cases against DG decisions or appeals to the ILO's Administrative Tribunal. The cases cover, among other issues, appointment, promotion, assessments, transfers, harassment, etc. The second group, Constitutional Law deals with the ratifications, etc. of WIPO's treaties and plays a role, where a lawyer is required at the governance body meetings throughout the year. The third is Contracts, which is more or less self-explanatory. The fourth group I did not end up working with, but certainly employs many interns, is WIPOLex. WIPOLex is WIPO's online IP law database, designed to provide a data clearinghouse for IP laws of different nations.

Unlike some of the other positions, the WIPO internship does not focus on policy development. However, that is not to say it's like being an in-house counsel anywhere. During the internship you're exposed to the internal processes of the UN common system. You learn a lot about being a traditional lawyer for international organizations, not to mention providing legal advice for different groups around WIPO. My internship did not focus much on Intellectual Property, however the supervisor, Edward is very approachable and did offer me help to find a small assignment, if I wanted it, with another one WIPO's groups. I didn't take him up on it because I was having a great time doing what I was doing. Overall I would say this is a great internship for anyone who wants hands-on experience with the UN system's legal frameworks, and the management of Intergovernmental Organizations.
If you are looking for expensive IP experience you would need to work with Edward to arrange that.

**Advice from 2012 Geneva International Fellow**

At WIPO, you act basically like an in-house counsel for a big, lumbering bureaucracy. There are three primary areas that you will work on at WIPO: administrative law, contract law, and what I like to call international actions law. Note of course that there is no "intellectual property law" section at WIPO - though from time to time you deal with some issue relating to IP, it is certainly not a focus of your time.

In administrative law, a lot of your time will likely be focused on defending the organization from employment grievances that staff file before the International Labor Organization Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT). You'll be asked to write memos, briefs, replies, rejoinders, and surrejoinders as part of the administrative appeal process. You will do a lot of legal research on Triblex, an on-line search database, and otherwise act as though you were in a law firm: you write legal documents to help your supervisors deal with the torrent of litigation that comes through. For example, when WIPO in 2012 reduced some salary allowances for some workers, the staff council filed an appeal that was vigorously submitted and defended over a period of months.

If in administrative law you are putting out fires, in contract law you are stopping them before they begin. You will carefully analyze the structure, verbiage, typeface, and formatting of various internal documents made by WIPO, and scrutinize them in light of other pre-existing documents to prevent conflict in the internal rules. You also will analyze contracts made with other contractors or third-party corporations, and deal with any disputes that arise. For example, when WIPO in 2012 hired a contractor to construct a new building who used the wrong kind of adhesive in fixing enormous glass slabs to the building that then loomed forebodingly, ready to fall at any moment, WIPO examined the contract and entered into negotiations to try and remedy the situation.

In the international actions section, you will deal with the actual international activities of WIPO. You may be asked to write an article in the UN Juridical Yearbook about WIPO's activities over the past year, or perhaps write legal opinions on the origin of international intellectual property law, or deal with cross-IO relations or Member State politics as WIPO tries to go about its goals. For example, when WIPO in 2012 set up an invention office in North Korea, a legal analysis had to be prepared in order to ensure that the transfer of $50,000 worth of computer equipment to North Korea did not violate any UN sanctions. The matters are interesting and the more responsibility you ask for, the more responsibility you get. The whole OLC team is incredibly friendly and they certainly take care of you. Be friendly and social - it really goes a long way here.

**Advice from 2013 Geneva International Fellow**

Previous interns have well described working at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), so I will try not to duplicate. WIPO supports the vast majority of the international intellectual property (IP) system. The Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) serves both as the in-house legal department as well as the advisor to Member States/Contracting Parties on behalf of the Organization. Instead, they are paid to represent the organization against employees and external parties.
OLC is not generally involved in substantive IP work. Most of its staff and work concern employment issues at WIPO, which is dealt with by the Administrative Law Section. The skills you will learn doing this work will be transferable to any other Organization if that is your goal. However, if you are interested in substantive IP law, it is possible to find work and easy to find experiential opportunities. Like a previous intern, Edward offered to help me find substantive IP work with another division at WIPO. I never needed to take him up on the offer because I enjoyed the work I was doing, and I was able to get substantive IP work in OLC. In my case, it was drafting internal policies for the organization regarding copyright and trademark management. Regarding experience, some of the standing committees will meet while you are here and you can attend their sessions.

The following list is a quick description of all the projects I worked on. Although it may seem like a lot, OLC feels like a proper 9:00 to 18:00 job (except Tuesdays, where the meeting starts at 8:45). I had only had two exceptional working days. The first was a Friday where I stayed until 9:00 and the second was a Saturday where I came in at 14:00 and until 23:00. For both cases, it was work with the Preparatory Committee, where the Member States have control, which kept me late.

- Draft reply brief for internal appeal board concerning an administrative decision for an employee concerning the classification of his post.
- Memo regarding the formation of employment contracts in international administrative law.
- Academic book chapter on the Uniform Domain-Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP).
- Speaking notes on the unique aspects of IGO privileges and immunities as applied to WIPO.
- Legal research on “lesser-included offenses” and developing an argument for incorporation of the doctrine into international administrative law.
- Writing guidelines for cloud computing use and developing a policy for cloud computing contracts
- Drafting internal trademark, copyright, and library policies, including cover memos for the director-general. In addition to research and writing, these internal policies required meetings with several other Divisions at WIPO.
- Reviewing IGO and NGO requests for permanent observer status or observer status for the Diplomatic Conference this summer in Marrakech. After review, I drafted all the English letters and the French letters that had a useful template.
- Observing and following the Standing Committee on Copyrights and Related Rights (SCCR) negotiations on a treaty for access to copyrighted works for visually impaired persons (VIPs).
- Preparing the report of the Preparatory Committee for the VIP treaty (2 days). For both SCCR and the Preparatory Committee, I attended meetings with the regional coordinators of Member States. I thus got to meet several of the delegates who ranged in title from expert to ambassador.
- Researching the U.S. treatment of tax immunities for IGOs.
- Drafting the WIPO submission for the UN Juridical Yearbook and cover letter to the UN. You can expect to get this assignment as it is Edward’s favorite way of getting Michigan interns familiar with the structure of WIPO.
- Writing the U.S. overview of legal structure and IP laws for WIPO Lex.
Draft speaking notes on the nature of international law as shown in the non-traditional law of the UDRP.
The following were all short projects: drafting a memo to the Director-General on the recommended action following an internal appeal proceeding (this was mostly a form memo), evaluating a draft news-item for its description of U.S. law, and assist with the preparation of letters to UN sanctions committees regarding WIPO technical assistance.
I also attended several other committees and meetings: judgments of the International Labor Organization Administrative Tribunal, Standing Committee on the Law of Patents, Committee on WIPO Standards, Intergovernmental Committee on the Protection of Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge, and Traditional Cultural Expressions, meeting with committee chairs, and meeting with publications regarding protection of.

Although I worked substantially with all the units, the Constitutional and Legal Affairs unit seems to be the least covered by previous interns, so I will only describe that part of my experience in more detail. The unit is headed by Ms. Christine Castro-Hublin. At the moment, I am the only other person in the unit. It handles all the interaction with the Committees and most of the other interaction with Member States, Contracting Parties, and IOs. Thus, she represents the legal counsel at regional coordinators meetings. It also handles much of the residual work of OLC, for example, I worked with Christine on the internal IP policies. We also attended a meeting to consult on the proper strategy for a collaborative publication. For all those topics that you learned about in transnational law, such as the depositary function of an IO, this unit does the work. My contribution was to review observer applications for compliance with the rules. This is purely ministerial work for IGOs and international NGOs, but national NGOs require judgment about the nature of the organization.

Regarding supervision and mentoring, Mr. Edward Kwakwa and the rest of the lawyers in OLC are wonderful. In addition to your assignments, Edward will encourage you to learn more about WIPO and other IOs, such as going to the meetings of the standing committees. Once you receive an assignment, they will leave you to do your work, but are approachable when you have any questions. When you receive assignments from others, Edward keeps track of the work so that you are not overwhelmed and that the assigning attorney is provided meaningful guidance. Also, as is shown by my work and the work of previous interns, you will get the level and amount of work that you ask for. If you want high responsibility work, show that you are capable and ask for it. They will be more than happy to give it to you.

Like any legal job, you should bring good research and writing skills to this job. In particular, being able to learn new research tools is advantageous. Strong social-professional skills are also important because you will meet many people once or twice who you may want to keep in touch with. You would like to work here if you are the type of person who is interested in international law academically. Even on the employment issues, you will spend a lot of time thinking about the proper sources of international law and their potential effect.

French is not necessary to work in OLC at WIPO, but it certainly helps. The social language of the office is French, and it is therefore difficult to socialize if you are not conversant. It is easy to learn enough French to order at the cafeteria, but they are also used to the “point at it system.” You will be provided English only assignments if needed, but certain assignments may require good reading ability in French. Because French is so prevalent, do not feel bad
if you need to hand back an assignment because someone assumes your French is sufficient. This happened to me twice, but it was not even the slightest problem to decline the assignment.

As with any organization, people and structure change over time. Thus, in addition to my comments above, here are some brief updates relative to previous interns’ comments. Ms. Honculada has moved from OLC to HRMD (Human Resources). If you end up doing substantial administrative law work, you will still likely interact with her. However, she is functionally on the other side of the “lawyer-client” relationship. The catered monthly lunch also no longer occurs. WIPO may be in a better position compared to other IOs by virtue of its funding structure, but that doesn’t mean it could continue through the recession without cutting back. As WIPO usually pays interns (but not you due to ABA rules), that also means fewer interns. In OLC, I was the only intern not in WIPO Lex, and WIPO Lex is in a building far away from the main complex. Language classes are also no longer available to interns.

**Advice from 2014 Geneva International Fellow**

As other interns have stated, working at WIPO is a great experience. Even reaching back to the submissions from five years ago, the information is generally the same, and I will try not to be repetitive. I will emphasize that, as others said, this is like working at an in-house office of a large company, and if you wish to do any IP work you need to ask for it (and likely seek it outside of the Office of the Legal Counsel). The attorneys in OLC are not IP attorneys. I will also emphasize that this is the type of office where you will receive an assignment and be left to yourself. However, do not be afraid to ask questions as the attorneys in the office are more than happy to help.

Edward Kwakwa is the Legal Counselor and oversees the three departments at WIPO: Contracts, Administrative Law, and Constitutional Law. Edward is your main contact person, though I only received assignments directly from him once or twice. He does, however, seem to have a good grasp of what you are working on from the other department heads. He is very well-regarded in the community, and is happy to make introductions for you. He is also very receptive if you wish to be involved in something specific, attend a certain event, or work on specific projects, so feel free to reach out to him. He allowed me to attend many of the events surrounding the election of the Director General that took place during my internship. He even allowed me to have a role in the actual election because I had mentioned to him I was interested in the process.

I worked mostly with the Contracts Division, which seems to be a bit different from previous interns. This may be because in my application I had mentioned my interest in that department. While other interns mentioned French being advantageous for this division, I was still able to work on many projects without any knowledge of French. Sometimes you may need to remind people that you do not speak French, but otherwise you should be okay. The OLC receives drafts of contracts from the various departments in WIPO, makes suggestions, and then provides clearance. Denis Cohen is the head of the Contracts division currently, and he is very open to making use of interns if you are interested. He knew I was interested in corporate work, and I worked on many different contracts and related issues with him. He is a native French speaker, but will work with you in English on the English-written contracts. He is very open to providing advice and spending time with interns, and I would recommend getting to know him and working on at least a few projects with him in
your time at WIPO.

The Administrative Law Division would be good for anyone interested in litigation or employment issues. It’s also good to explore if you are interested in working as in-house counsel. It generally consists of drafting pleadings and performing case law research from the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal. I worked with this department less, as my interest is mostly corporate, but the projects I was assigned were longer. I was glad to be exposed to this as the cases are fairly interesting and this is the biggest division in OLC, so it is good to get to know this group of attorneys. During my time here, there were three attorneys and a law clerk in this division.

The Constitutional Law Division deals the most with actual public international law and understanding how an international organization operates. This is your opportunity to work on Member State issues and understand how WIPO interacts with its Member States. There is a General Assembly, with all the Member States, and a Coordination Committee, that consists of about 80 Member States. I was able to attend multiple meetings of the Coordination Committee regarding preparation for the election of the Director General. This allowed me to see how meetings are run and how issues are decided. The OLC has a large role in these meetings, and the Coordination Committee President often has Edward (as Legal Counselor) answer the questions at the meetings. I was also able to attend the election of the Director General where all Member States attended. Working with this division was one of the most interesting parts of working at an IO and was the most different from a regular law firm job. The division is still currently run by Christine Hublin (who is the only person in this department). Edward works closely with her on these issues. Aside from the election (which took up most of our time early January – early March), I only worked on a few projects with Christine. Again, this was likely due to my corporate law interest. However, this division provides the most unique experience, and if you are interested in IOs you should ask to work with this department more.

I did not work at all with the WIPO Lex Department as they have their own team of interns and work in a separate building. My only interaction was with the head of that division at our weekly meetings (which are still at 8.45am once a week). Other than the WIPO Lex interns in the separate building, you will likely be the only intern in OLC. This might mean you don’t have as many social opportunities, but for this reason you are treated more like a regular member of OLC.

I generally worked from 8.30 to 5.30pm, but you can set your own hours as long as you are in by 9.15am. I only had three or four days where I had to stay past 6.30pm. Dress here is business casual, though men usually wear full suits and ties. Women sometimes wear jeans on Friday. People are very friendly and social with each other, and while French is the dominant social language at WIPO, OLC tends to speak in English with each other (with a few exceptions).

Of course, this internship is good if you wish to work at an IO or an NGO, as you can get good exposure and meet a lot of good contacts here. But I think more so than some of the other Geneva opportunities, I found this internship good for someone who wishes to work at a law firm (or is planning on doing so). It is also good for those who wish to go in-house.

Advice from 2015 Geneva International Fellow
Working at WIPO is a fantastic experience for anyone who is interested in experiencing an in-house environment for a semester. As an intern, you will work in the Office of the Legal Counsel with the Legal Counsel – think General Counsel of a business – as your direct supervisor. You’ll only do a few projects for the Legal Counsel as he/she is often very busy with high level issues.

Most of your work will come from the department heads under the Legal Counsel. If you’re interested in litigation, spend some time with Arien, Sandra, Fanny, and Alexandra in the Administrative Law department. They deal mainly with employment litigation representing WIPO against challenges from employees. If you’re interested in corporate work, spend some time with Denis in the Contracts department. Denis does work that spans negotiation with banks, negotiation with contractors, and conducting research to advise WIPO on strategies related to efficiently running the organization. If you’re interested in international legal work, spend some time with Christine Hublin and Anna Mansfield. Christine is the head of the Constitutional and Legal Affairs department and will likely have you working on processing applications for permanent observer status before the WIPO General Assembly. Anna is the head of the NGO and Industry Relations Section and deals with more outward-facing projects such as forming partnerships between an NGO/corporation and WIPO.

Below I’ve listed a small sampling of the work I completed during my semester at WIPO:

- Drafted a Surrejoinder for case before WIPO Appeals Board.
- Reviewed applications for permanent observer status of IGOs and NGOs.
- Proofed and revised an internal memo related to host country negotiations regarding establishment of external offices.
- Drafted WIPO’s year-end report for submission to the UN Juridical Yearbook.
- Performed summary analysis for 19 claims in one employment dispute case awaiting decision by Director General.
- Researched and drafted memo detailing current state of law with respect to burden of proof, burden shifting, harassment, and prejudice in the ILOAT justice system.
- Prepare documents for submission before the ILOAT.
- Proofed and revised memo to large bank regarding potential internal WIPO banking concerns.
- Perform research and draft memos regarding the establishment of nonprofit charities in the UK, Singapore, and Australia to solicit tax-advantaged donations for a specific upcoming WIPO program.

The hours are very predictable at WIPO. I was generally in between 8:30 and 9:00am and left around 5:15pm most days. There was only one day I needed to stay until 6:00pm due to a deadline with the Admin Law department related to a filing before a tribunal. The dress is business casual – women have much more freedom and many of them wear nice jeans some days, but most days wear something a little more professional. Men can get away with anything from slacks to a suit (e.g., OCI dress) as long as you still wear a jacket. The office is really relaxed and everyone is very welcoming and fun. I had a fantastic time at work and loved spending time with my coworkers. The dominant language at WIPO is French. You don’t need to know French to work there, but it definitely helps.

Unlike other organizations with extremely large and active intern associations (e.g., WHO), WIPO’s interns are not very active or social. You will be the only intern in the legal department and won’t really meet any other interns unless you go out of your way to find people. This isn’t actually a big deal because you will have a strong friend group from
Michigan and will meet people at GIA (Geneva Intern Association) drinks or GIA lunches. You can spend some time going to the Human Rights Council in March or attending any standing committees within WIPO. Edward Kwakwa, the current and outgoing Legal Counsel, encouraged me to spend as much time as I wanted experiencing different aspects of WIPO and the UN in general. I was given a very healthy diet of substantive work, but also had ample downtime to go and experience other things I found interesting.

I think that this internship would be ideal for anyone who is going to a law firm or in-house at a corporation. You will be given a fair amount of responsibility if you demonstrate that you can handle it. Another benefit of working at WIPO is the ability to grow as a writer through pumping out memos and research. There is very little substantive IP experience, but it is available if you are really looking for it. My recommendation would be to keep an open mind and say “yes” to any project that you have time for.