

**VILLANOVA UNIVERISTY CHARLES WIDGER SCHOOL OF LAW**  
**WALTER A. LUCAS PUBLIC INTEREST FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM (PIFP)**  
**2021 FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION**

**FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION RULES & PROCEDURES**

**I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The Walter A. Lucas Public Interest Fellowship Program (PIFP) is pleased to announce the availability of summer 2021 public interest fellowships for first- and second-year Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law students. Note: students who previously received a PIFP fellowship are *not* eligible for another PIFP fellowship.

A. The History of the Public Interest Fellowship Program

In 1998, a group of students, faculty, and staff at the Villanova University School of Law created a committee to develop a Public Interest Fellowship Program (PIFP). The goal of this committee was to develop a lasting program through which the Villanova Law School Community could provide financial support to students who commit their summers to providing legal assistance to low-income individuals.

Many students are committed to helping the less fortunate but are stifled by financial constraints. Few, if any, public interest organizations can afford to pay students during the summer. The committee recognized the burden Villanova Law students face when balancing the cost of their education with the benefits of unpaid public interest service, and it sought to develop a program that would provide summer interns with funding to pursue public interest legal experiences.

The committee's effort debuted in 1998 and was a huge success. With the money raised at the first PIFP Auction on April 8, 1998, the committee awarded six fellowships for the summer of 1998. The Auction's success led to the official establishment of the Villanova Law School Public Interest Fellowship Program, which is run by the PIFP Board. The Public Interest Fellowship Program remains a student-run organization. PIFP is committed to fostering increased student support and participation in public interest law.

In 2009, PIFP was renamed in honor of Walter A. Lucas, a 1988 VLS graduate who passed away in 2004. Mr. Lucas was an employment discrimination attorney who dedicated his legal career to fighting for individuals whose jobs were terminated on the basis of age, race, and religion. Mr. Lucas is described as a "man dedicated to helping people who couldn't help themselves" and someone who was "enriched by justice." The Public Interest Fellowship Program has since become a part of Walter Lucas' legacy, as we continue our support of students who spend their summers dedicated to public interest organizations across the country.

## B. Public Interest Fellowship

PIFP will award summer fellowships in the amount of \$5,000 each to successful applicants for **10 weeks of full-time work (40 hours/week – a total of 375 to 400 hours)**, with public interest or government employers.

PIFP may, in limited and compelling circumstances, award partial fellowships to students who spend a portion of their summer working for a public interest organization and a portion of their summer engaged in academic coursework, whether through one of VLS' summer programs or through a program at another ABA accredited law school. The awarding of partial fellowships will be determined on a case-by-case basis. If an applicant is concurrently applying to a summer study program, the applicant should provide this information in the sixth question.

All applicants must have volunteered for 8 volunteer events with PIFP in the 2020-2021 school year, must attend the auction on Friday, March 26, and must donate an item to the auction to be eligible for a fellowship. Exceptions to this requirement will only be granted by the PIFP Board upon a showing of good cause made in a timely manner.

Fellowships provide students committed to public interest or government work with an opportunity to further their goals through summer internships. The Committee employs a broad definition of public interest. In the past, PIFP has awarded fellowships for placements with:

- (1) Non-profit public interest organizations providing direct legal services;
- (2) Non-profit organizations engaged in political lobbying;
- (3) Administrative agencies;
- (4) District Attorney and Public Defender offices; and
- (5) Legislative offices (but not political campaigns).

This list is not exhaustive. However, applicants should note that ***judicial clerkships are not eligible placements***. If an applicant has questions about eligibility of a public interest position, the applicant should contact the Fellowship Coordinator, Meghan Rafter at [mrafter@law.villanova.edu](mailto:mrafter@law.villanova.edu). Eligibility issues will be decided by the PIFP board and/or the Fellowship Selection Committee.

*PIFP is obligated to notify applicants of an additional restriction on the type of employment that PIFP may fund. **The Law School prohibits PIFP from funding women's reproductive rights advocacy.** If a fellow desires to work at any agency that engages in women's reproductive rights advocacy, the fellow may accept a PIFP fellowship provided that the fellow agrees not to participate in women's reproductive rights advocacy. The Law School's position is premised on its interpretation of the school's mission and its belief that such work conflicts with the Catholic identity of the school. **Although PIFP in no way endorses this restriction, it is obligated to notify applicants of its existence.***

## II. PIFP Fellowship Selection Timeline

1. Finalists must have attended the virtual Auction on **Friday, March 26**, and have completed their 8 PIFP volunteer events *by the day that the applications are due*.
2. Applicants must submit their completed applications to Sharon Buckingham in the Career Services Offices by **Monday, March 29, 2021, at 4:00 p.m.** Applications will not be accepted after this deadline.
3. The Committee will make fellowship selection decisions on or before **Friday, April 9, 2021**. Applicants will be notified via email by this date.
4. Applicants who are offered fellowships must accept or reject their fellowship offers by the date specified in the email offering them their fellowships. If a recipient has not secured a position by this date, he or she must immediately speak with the Fellowship Coordinator, Meghan Rafter (mrafter@law.villanova.edu). The Committee reserves the right to withdraw the offer of a fellowship if the applicant has not secured a position by the specified date.
5. Additional applicants may be offered fellowships on a rolling basis to the extent that any fellowship offers are forfeited by other candidates who fail to secure a qualifying placement.

## III. PIFP Criteria for Selection

The Committee consists of students, faculty, and administration who read each application carefully and anonymously. After reading all of the applications, each Committee member assigns a rank to each application. Fellowships will be chosen based both on the ranking and on the collective decision of the Committee.

### A. Volunteer Hours

To be considered for PIFP fellowship, an applicant must have completed 8 volunteer events with PIFP. **Applicants have until the date that the applications are due, March 29, 2021, to fulfill this requirement.** Applicants may inquire about their total number of volunteer hours to date by emailing the PIFP Volunteer Coordinator, Meghan Rafter at [mrafter@law.villanova.edu](mailto:mrafter@law.villanova.edu) or [pifp@law.villanova.edu](mailto:pifp@law.villanova.edu).

### B. Public Interest Commitment

A principal criterion for selection is the applicant's demonstrated commitment to a career in public interest or public service. This commitment may be demonstrated by a number of factors, including participation in public interest activities during college, after college, and especially while in law school. Consideration will be given to applicants who may not have amassed a substantial record in public service but who have demonstrated their commitment in other ways. The Committee encourages those applicants who have not previously been involved in public interest or public service to explain the circumstances that have precluded them from such activity and the reasons that have led them to their current interest in public service.

### C. Future Commitment to Public Interest

PIFP hopes summer fellowships introduce students to the rewards of a public service career. Accordingly, the Committee considers an applicant's interest in pursuing a public interest or public service career relevant. *Acceptance of a fellowship does not obligate a student to pursue a public service career*; however, the Committee is particularly interested in funding students who are seriously considering a public interest career.

### D. Applicant's Expectations for Public Interest Fellowship

Each student has different expectations about spending a summer working for a public interest organization. The Committee is interested in learning about each applicant's expectations—what the applicant hopes to learn from the experience, what the applicant believes he or she can offer a public interest organization, and how the applicant expects the experience to impact his or her future commitment to working within the area of public interest law.

### E. Involvement With PIFP

Each applicant should describe their current and desired future involvement with PIFP. PIFP hopes that its fellows show a devotion to the longevity of the program for its future fellows.

### F. Supplemental Information

The Committee reserves the right to request supplemental information.

## IV. **DURATION OF FELLOWSHIP**

Fellowships are awarded for a single, full-time position (40 hours/week) lasting for a minimum of ten (10) weeks, for a total of 375 to 400 work hours. While a full-time position (40 hours/week) for 10 weeks should amount to a total of 400 hours, the PIFP board recognizes that holidays (Memorial Day, Fourth of July) and/or sickness may make the 400 hours difficult to reach in 10 weeks. For this reason, fellows have 25 hours of leeway for these holidays and/or sick days.

Due to the fellowship's short duration, applicants are encouraged to work for a single organization for their entire summer. However, an applicant may request the Committee's permission to split the summer between two public interest jobs if the applicant demonstrates that the work experience will be a useful one despite the shortened work periods.

Fellowships are awarded on a need-blind basis.

The Committee is keenly aware that funds for public interest work are limited, that fellowships are essential in order for some students to be able to work in public interest positions,

and that, in some cases, fellowship funds may be insufficient to cover a student's costs. Consequently, as long as the hour requirement is fulfilled at a qualifying public interest organization, an applicant may complete other, paid employment.

## V. RESPONSIBILITIES OF FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS & EMPLOYERS

### A. Fellowship Recipients

1. If at any time after submitting an application an applicant knows that he or she will not accept a fellowship, he or she must promptly withdraw his or her application by contacting the Fellowship Coordinator, Meghan Rafter (mrafter@law.villanova.edu).
2. Fellows must be eligible to work in the United States and are required to fill out a Federal Employment Eligibility Form (I-9), with copies of documents establishing both identity and employment eligibility, and a W-4 Form. These forms will be distributed to fellows and must be returned, by **Tuesday, April 20, 2021**. All stipend checks will have FICA plus application taxes withheld according to the information provided on the W-4 Forms. The Committee reserves the right to revoke a fellowship if these requirements are not met.
3. Over the summer, questions about payment of the fellowship award should be directed to Kristina Wilhelm-Nelson, Director of Financial Aid, at Kristina.wilhelm-nelson@law.villanova.edu, *not* the Fellowship Coordinator.
4. Additionally, over the summer, fellows must submit weekly timesheets to the 2021-2022 Fellowship Coordinator.
5. If at any point before or during the summer, a fellow accepts a paid job, the fellow must contact the Fellowship Coordinator immediately. Failure to contact the Fellowship Coordinator could lead to possible charges brought by the Villanova University School of Law Honor Board.
6. At the conclusion of the fellowship period, and before the first day of Fall 2021 classes, each fellow is required to submit a completion of hours form and a final report to the 2021-2022 Fellowship Coordinator. The final report should be a full description of the work that they performed, the supervision that they received, and an overall evaluation of the placement. Additionally, each fellow must submit a headshot and a paragraph summarizing their fellowship to be used on the Fellows' bulletin board.
7. **Fellows are required to volunteer with PIFP for a minimum of fifteen hours during the 2021-2022 school year.** These volunteer hours include mandatory participation in at least one solicitation day. Attendance at the 2022 PIFP Auction is also mandatory. The five hours at the Auction are *not* included in the required fifteen hours – they are in addition to the required fifteen hours. Alternatively, if the fellow is a member of the PIFP Board, the fellow must participate as an active member of the Board in accordance with the PIFP Bylaws.

Other volunteer opportunities will be communicated by the 2021-2022 Fellowship Coordinator.

B. Employer's Responsibilities

1. Upon accepting a PIFP fellowship, a fellow must have their employer provide a written description detailing the nature of the work that they will perform, the identity of the fellow's supervisor, the plan for supervision, and any financial compensation—other than fellowship funds—the fellow will receive. The employer must submit this written description by **Tuesday, April 20, 2021**, to the Fellowship Coordinator, Meghan Rafter (mrafter@law.villanova.edu).
2. A fellow must have his or her employer submit a letter to the 2021-2022 PIFP Fellowship Coordinator at the end of the internship indicating that the fellow successfully completed the internship. The Fellowship Coordinator must receive this letter by the first day of fall semester.

If you have any questions regarding the application process, please email Meghan Rafter, PIFP Fellowship Coordinator, at mrafter@law.villanova.edu.

## FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Please type or print neatly.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Year of Graduation: \_\_\_\_\_ Id. No. (last three digits of Villanova Student ID No.): \_\_\_\_\_

Local Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Summer Address (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions:

This application must be submitted to Meghan Rafter, PIFP Fellowship Coordinator, via email (mrafter@law.villanova.edu) by **4:00 p.m. on Monday, March 29, 2021**. Applications will not be accepted after this deadline.

Please submit:

- One (1) copy of this application form
- One (1) copy of the application (pages 8 through 13 of this packet)
- One (1) page that lists either – A) the organization where you have already secured a qualifying position, or B) the organizations where you have applied

The PIFP Selection Committee (“Committee”) reviews applications **anonymously**. *Therefore, this completed Application Form is the only page on which your name should appear, and it should be attached only to the original application packet.* Please include your Id. No. (last three digits of your Villanova Student ID No.) on the top of each page of *all* of your statements and your organization list. Your Villanova Student ID No. can be found on your Novasis homepage.

***Please do not include resumes, cover letters, recommendations, or other supplementary materials.***

*By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understand the Application Rules & Procedures that follow this application and that you agree to comply with those provisions.*

Applicant’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please direct any questions to Meghan Rafter, PIFP Fellowship Coordinator, at  
mrafter@law.villanova.edu.

ID No. \_\_\_\_\_

### **FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION**

1. What public interest (including government) organizations and volunteer opportunities have you been involved with in the past (including prior to law school)? Describe what you learned about public interest work, about the issues to which you were assigned, and/or about yourself through that work.

ID No. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What do your experience, background, and knowledge allow you to bring to the public service sector? Has anything in your background inspired you to pursue public interest work?

ID No. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What skills or experiences do you hope to gain while working at a public interest organization this summer?

ID No. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Describe how you hope to be involved in the public interest field in the future. Do you see yourself involved on a policy, direct service, or grassroots level?

ID No. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Describe your current involvement with PIFP and how you hope to be involved with PIFP next school year (including any desired board positions) and throughout the rest of your law school career.

ID No. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Is there anything else that the Fellowship Selection should know as it considers your application?