



# CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

## HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY LEVERAGE THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL STUDIES PROGRAM

The International Legal Studies Program at Vanderbilt University Law School offers unique opportunities for students to gain concrete experience and build strong academic and practical foundations in the field of international law.



*Vel Lewis (VLS '21) in the Human Rights Council during her 3L Geneva internship*

### 1L YEAR

#### ACADEMICS

Introduce yourself to the International Legal Studies Faculty for mentorship and guidance.

Focus on your fall semester grades. Doing well in your 1L classes will open doors for your summer and post-graduation jobs.

Consider your interests: where do you want your career to take you and how can international law fit into these goals?

Use your spring 1L elective to take your first international law class.

Participate in the Vanderbilt in Venice program to immerse yourself in international law and obtain credits to make semester-long internships more feasible.

If you cannot participate in Vanderbilt in Venice, consider working as an RA over the summer for credit, or in other international law-related opportunities. This will enable you to obtain practical experience, take semester-long externships, and can balance with a second 1L summer job.

#### EXTRACURRICULARS

Become an active member of the International Law Society. Attend ILS and ILSP events throughout the semester. Talk with 2Ls and 3Ls about their summer jobs and career plans. Consider running for an executive board role in the spring.

Speak with your 2L mentor, or seek other informed advice, on how to engage with the International Legal Studies Program.

Vanderbilt University is an American Society of International Law (ASIL) Academic Partner. You can join ASIL as a student member (for free) and get involved with their programming or job boards. You can also attend the ASIL annual meeting.

After spring exams, participate in journal write-on and/or moot court try-outs if you are interested in Journal or the Jessup International Moor Court team.

Vanderbilt Law School has an array of journals that deal with international issues, including the fifth ranked student-run international law journal in the US.

#### PROFESSIONAL

Use winter break to consider what internship opportunities most appeal to you and your career plans.

Speak with International Legal Studies program faculty to learn about opportunities for summer internships.

If you are interested in a career as a Judge Advocate General (JAG), speak with Professor Mike Newton.

Apply for funding for public interest experiences through the Legal Aid Society and Vanderbilt Law Public Interest Stipends.

Apply for the Helen Curry Strong International Legal Studies Scholarship in the spring.

Beginning in mid-June, consider applying for judicial clerkships.

Do not worry if you are seeking a big law job but do not get one for your 1L summer. Use this opportunity to work in government offices, the nonprofit sector, or something else you are interested in relevant towards your career goals.

**Relax** - You will pass your exams, you will graduate, and you will get a job. Do not expect everything to come together during the first two semesters of law school.



## 2L YEAR

### ACADEMICS

Before the semester starts, strategize your course selection. If you would like to do a semester-long internship away from Nashville, be sure you have a plan for completing the graduation requirements. Consider how you will manage rent and other logistics.

If there are courses you know that you want to take before graduating, plan out when you can and when you will take them.

Take the [International Law Practice Lab](#) and other international law courses.

Consider what other courses will help bolster your area of interest. For example, if your focus is international environmental law, consider taking private environmental governance. If you hope to litigate in international law, litigation-focuses courses like trial advocacy, evidence, criminal procedure, and appellate procedure will help build appropriate skills.

### EXTRACURRICULARS

If you are on a journal, use your Note drafting process as an opportunity to explore an international law topic in greater depth, aiming for publication. Speak with the International Legal Studies Faculty about potential topics. Consider applying for an executive board position on your journal during 3L.

If you are not on a journal, consider preparing an article for Note-on or submit for external publication. A seminar paper may be a good publication candidate!

Take on leadership positions in the International Law Society.

Participate in reading groups as professors offer them.

Apply for, or continue participation with, Jessup International Moot Court.

Continue attending speaker events relating to international law— a speaker with a job you've never heard of may have the perfect career for you.

### PROFESSIONAL

Reflect on your 1L summer experience and consider where you want to head in the mid-to-long term. Discuss your goals with faculty mentors.

Take OCI for firms seriously— summering at a firm is a great way to build experience and your resume for public service or private careers.

Consider a semester-long internship, thinking critically about post-graduate employment.

Look for professors who may be willing to act as recommenders for you with future job/clerkship applications. Participation in Venice or as an RA allows faculty to draft more informed clerkship letters.

Apply for federal clerkships: district, circuit, Court of Federal Claims, or Court of International Trade are all great experiences and resume builders. For some jobs, having a clerkship on your resume could make the difference in getting an interview or a job offer.

Use your summer to do another internship or continue a semester internship.

Start looking at applications for post-grad employment. For example, the DOJ Honors Program application is due during the August of your 2L summer.

Check the ASIL job board for fellowships, internships, and full-time jobs in international law.

*Vanderbilt in Venice '23 cohort with Professors Mike Newton and Fabrizio Marrella*



***Keep focusing on your grades!***

*Particularly if you are interested in clerking!*



## 3L YEAR

### ACADEMICS

If you haven't already done so:

- Focus 3L classes on the faculty and courses you most desire (to include independent study).
- Plan your remaining semesters so you can take the International Law Practice Lab, any international law courses you're hoping to take, or so you can have the opportunity to extern.

Make sure you have taken all of the required courses and credits for graduation, take the MPRE, and register to be barred in your state of choice.

Consider working with an International Legal Studies Program professor on an independent study (possibly in lieu of a seminar) or research project.

Work towards publishing an article prior to graduation as many Vanderbilt University Law School students have won national writing awards.

If you have written strong papers, submit them for internal writing awards within the law school or external writing awards.

### EXTRACURRICULARS

If publishing a Note or article, aim to have your piece out by the end of 3L fall so that you can use your publication as a selling point in fellowship applications or interviews.

Take a leadership role in the school's Jessup International Moot Court team or on your journal's executive board.

If taking the New York bar exam, be sure to complete your volunteer hours and any additional experiential hours needed. Keep track of International Practice Lab hours and projects because they count for the New York bar.

Find and invest in hobbies, exercise courses, or other leisure activities. Building a healthy routine now will make it easier to keep these routines after entering the workforce. Self-care makes you a better lawyer and a far better person.

### PROFESSIONAL

Keep track of fellowship and job deadlines— public interest opportunities may become available on a rolling basis, and more formal programs often have earlier deadlines than you would expect. Specifically, look out for those August deadlines.

Sign up for international public interest employment listserv. Follow the ASIL job board.

During your fall semester, complete any government honors program applications or the Presidential Management Fellows program application.

Maintain relationships with your professors— they are valuable resources even after graduation.

#### **Examples of International Legal Studies Program Events:**

Jonathan I. Charney Distinguished Lecture in International Law

Short Courses on the United Nations, the European Union, International Arbitration, and Human Trafficking, and others

Events with former and current ambassadors, generals, UN officials, ICJ litigators, and others.



*Sarah Murphy (VLS '06) at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at her 2L internship.*