

**Law 675 – Public Interest Externship: Illinois Innocence Project**

**Professor Lauren Myerscough-Mueller**

The mission of the Illinois Innocence Project (“IIP”) is to assist the wrongfully convicted by providing resources for investigation, research, and legal representation to those who are in prison but who are actually innocent of the crime(s) for which they were convicted; and to develop policy proposals to prevent the conviction of innocent persons in the future.

The IIP is an active participant in the National Innocence Network founded and developed out of the work of Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld of Cardozo Law School. Scheck and Neufeld established The Innocence Project in 1992, and have through the use of DNA testing exposed national widespread wrongful convictions of the innocent. There have been 2,018 official exonerations since 1989. The Illinois Innocence Project reviews cases that involve DNA testing and non-DNA cases that involve other factors common in wrongful convictions, such as eyewitness misidentification, false confessions, ineffective counsel, unreliable forensic evidence, and/or prosecutorial or police misconduct.

The Project receives requests for assistance from inmates and referrals from the legal community. Upon a request or referral, the Project requests that the individual seeking assistance complete a Questionnaire. Upon receipt of the Questionnaire, the Project begins an evaluation process, which may include gathering of unpublished court opinions and appellate briefs and any documents the referrer may have. The case is then presented to the staff in a case evaluation meeting. At that time, the staff decides if further investigation may be needed and/or the case may be assigned to law students or UIS students. UIS students are primarily involved in the initial case screening and evaluation. UIS Students will assist with Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, gathering of documents and investigation.

Law students have the unique opportunity to engage in legal research, case evaluation, drafting of motions and petitions for post-conviction relief, interviews of witnesses and potential clients at prisons, and court appearances with lawyers working on a case. As part of the experience, law students will learn how to access, review, and interpret information critical to determining whether the individuals are actually innocent. The work is performed under strict guidelines of confidentiality and the Rules of Professional Conduct.

**SIU SCHOOL OF LAW APPLICATION**  
**FOR PERMISSION TO ENROLL**

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

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DAWG Tag#:** \_\_\_\_\_

Check number of credit hours you are seeking:  1  2  3

Undergraduate School: \_\_\_\_\_

Undergraduate Major: \_\_\_\_\_

**GPA (must be a minimum of 2.6 for enrollment in externships):** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Identify any courses/educational experiences that have prepared you for work with the IIP. Have you taken Evidence, Criminal Procedure, or Ethics/Professional Responsibility? If not, when do you plan to take each of those courses?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Identify any employment or internship experiences that have prepared you for work with the IIP.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How would you rank the following skills?  
Please check one and explain your answer below.

Interviewing skills:             High             medium             low  
Explain:

Listening skills:  
Explain:

High

medium

low

Writing skills:  
Explain:

High

medium

low

Legal Research Skills:  
Explain:

High

medium

low

Critical Analysis Skills:  
Explain:

High

medium

low

4. Are you available to work on case investigation during the weekdays and/or weekends? Please explain any limitations on your time.
  
5. Do you have a *conflict of interest* that may prevent you from assisting in specific criminal cases? E.g.: Do you work for a State's Attorney's office or Public Defender's office? Do you have access to confidential information that involves a specific case? Explain.
  
6. Have you, or anyone close to you, ever been a witness to a crime or a victim of a crime? If so, has that experience affected you in anyway? Do you have any impressions of the criminal justice system as a result of that experience?

7. How would you handle contact with criminal defendants, possible witnesses to a crime, travel into low-income or high crime areas? Explain.
8. Why do you want to work on innocence case(s)?
9. Would you be able to research and investigate a case involving sexual assault, child victims, violence, and graphic photographs? Please explain.
10. Please indicate your interest in working in the following areas: legal research, case evaluation, policy work.
11. Include the name and contact information for at least one reference that is familiar with the skills discussed in number 3 above.

**SUBMIT THE COMPLETED APPLICATION AND CURRENT RESUME IN ELECTRONIC FORM TO PROF. LAUREN MYERSCOUGH-MUELLER VIA E-MAIL: [Lmyersc2@uis.edu](mailto:Lmyersc2@uis.edu)**

**Please indicate in your email how many credit hours you wish to enroll in and provide your Dawg Tag #.**

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, CONTACT PROF. MYERSCOUGH-MUELLER OR DEAN BEHAN at [cbehan@siu.edu](mailto:cbehan@siu.edu).**