

VERMONT LAW SCHOOL

FAQs on the Vermont Law School Environmental Justice Young Fellows Exchange Application DEADLINE for Application: November 13, 2009

Application information in Chinese and English available at this link:

http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1421&fuseaction=topics.item&news_id=555586

and

http://www.vermontlaw.edu/Admissions/Tuition_and_Financial_Aid/Fellowships/Environmental_Justice_Young_Fellows_Exchange.htm

VLS and its partners have been receiving some questions regarding the VLS environmental justice exchange application and we are posting some of them with answers. We will continue to update this document as we receive questions that are potentially relevant for all applicants.

APPLICATION:

-Do you expect that your US applicants will mostly be working on China-related issues? Or do you intend for the US applicants to be working on local issues?

We envision the pairs will work on a subject that identifies shared interests (e.g., encourage public participation of certain environmentally disadvantaged communities), but the American and Chinese in each pair should develop his/her own project that will be implemented in their home country. We hope that the exchange will enable the participants to incorporate an international/comparative approach to their local work—in the spirit of the “think globally, act locally” approach. It is possible that in working with the VLS mentors that the pairs may wish to merge their projects, but this is not required and project proposals should focus on initiatives individuals will do in their home country.

-The application says that the exchange will be for individuals with experience in environmental law and would like to expand their work into environmental justice. In the description of current work and the personal essay, applicants are asked to describe their experience working on EJ issues. Can you clarify how much EJ experience you are looking for applicants to have?

If the applicant is not yet working on environmental justice issues, the essay should describe how they plan or wish to work in this area. We were assuming people would have at least 2 years work experience in environmental justice area or in an environmental or law area that lays the foundation for them to work on environmental justice issues.



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-Can you clarify what you consider EJ work in China (In the application, it mentions “Chinese citizens” seeking solutions “through laws, regulations and community projects” but does not seem to specify minority or low-income groups per se)?

For Chinese applicants, we apply a broad definition of the EJ term. We welcome applications from lawyers, scholars and NGO and community activists working to protect communities from pollution/environmental degradation. We are hoping these applicants are either currently or hoping to expand their environmental work to serve minority or low-income groups.

-In the explanation of the fellowship's affect on an applicant's future career, how forward thinking do you expect this to be? Do you expect applicants to explain beyond their work with their current organization?

There is no wrong answer on what people may write about their careers goals. People new to a field may focus on how this exchange could help them strengthen their current work and enable them to stay at their current organization for a long time. Others who have maybe recently moved into the environmental justice field from another career may be able to envision more broadly their next step to be (e.g., becoming a trainer of trainers in their area of work, using their current position to create a larger network of similar groups, etc.).

-Do you have any guidance for the letters of reference? Can they be from within my organization?

It would probably be helpful to have the two letters come from different organizations just to get some diversity in view on your work.

EXCHANGE PROGRAM:

-What are some examples of EJ organizations in China in which fellows would hold internships?

We are hoping that some of the internships will be at organizations of the Chinese fellowship awardees. We envision lawyers as well as NGO and community activists so that will hopefully give you some guidance. Some could be placed at the partner organizations in China (Sun Yat-sen University Law School and the Center for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims). CEF and VLS have extensive contacts in the law school, legal aid clinic and NGO networks in China, so there are many possibilities.



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-Are the internships in the US likely to be with organizations that work on China issues?

It is possible that some U.S. NGOs who will be targeted for internships could also have a program in China, but we were envisioning the U.S. partner to be focused on doing environmental justice work in the United States.

-How will the Chinese/American pairs be decided? Do applicants have a say in this decision? How would previous working relationships be taken into consideration?

We will do our best to pair people based on similarities in either the work they each do or the type of project they each have proposed. For example, if there were two who both wanted to make a documentary film on a community in their area, we could see that being good for a match. We would also have people do joint Skype or phone conversations as we work to figure out pairs. Regarding the second question, previous working relationships could be a factor that could encourage a pairing if the relationship is relatively new and there appears to be a lot for the two still could learn from each other. Key to this exchange is to promote new experiences, so people who have worked together for a long time may not actually be ideal partners for this project. We'd have to judge this on a case-by-case basis.

-What do you anticipate the exchange program dates to be?

We expect the 6-week exchange to occur over next summer. We have not finalized the specific dates yet, but the exchange would likely start in late May or mid-June with three weeks in the U.S. followed by a 2-3 week break. We'll start the 3-week visit in China after the break, and the China part of the exchange visit will end around late July or mid-August.

END PROJECT:

-How concrete do you expect project proposals to be? For example, knowing who our project partner organizations will be?

Each individual will be responsible for his/her own project and the pairing is simply meant to help promote peer-to-peer learning. However, if there is some kind of comparative project that the pairs develop this would be something that we would be open to discussing with the pairs. We are not expecting people to apply in pairs of course.

If you have any additional questions please contact Jingjing Liu at Aliu@vermontlaw.edu.

*Please Email completed application materials **in English** to Ms. Joanna Gillin at Jgillin@vermontlaw.edu by November 13, 2009.*

