

CO-OP STIPEND FUNDING MEMORANDUM

Ways to Apply

There are two ways for students to seek law school stipend support for their uncompensated or underfunded public interest co-ops. One is through the law school's new guaranteed \$2,500 stipend program; the second is available if you are engaged in a subsequent unfunded public interest co-op after you have received the minimum guaranteed co-op stipend for your first qualifying public interest co-op.

In both cases, qualifying public interest co-ops include ones with legal services, non-profit legal advocacy organizations, prosecutors and public defender offices, and other governmental entities, excluding judges. Neither judicial internships nor co-ops with private firms qualify for this level of funding support. In exceptional cases, for the non-guaranteed application process, private firms doing public interest work will be considered. See below for more details.

A) Guaranteed Co-op Stipend for Public Interest Co-ops.

Effective with the start of the 2010 Summer Quarter, all financially eligible students will be guaranteed to receive one \$2,500 stipend for one of their qualifying public interest/public service co-ops. The guarantee applies to one public interest co-op. However, being awarded a guaranteed \$2,500 stipend does not preclude you from applying for additional co-op stipend support for internships with other qualifying public interest employers in subsequent co-op quarters (see Section B Below).

Should you receive a co-op stipend greater than the \$2,500 guaranteed co-op stipend award amount, such as co-op work-study, a Social Justice Scholarship, PHRGE or another named stipend, that stipend will count as your guaranteed \$2,500 co-op stipend. If you meet the financial and other stipend eligibility criteria, the guaranteed \$2,500 stipend will be available to you no matter when you undertake your first qualifying first public interest co-op.

In order to obtain your \$2,500 guaranteed co-op stipend, you must complete and submit a FAFSA in the Spring and a Co-op Funding Request by the funding deadline for the quarter for which you are seeking the guaranteed stipend. Failure to undertake an approved public interest co-op during your second and third year of law school will result in forfeiting your right to this stipend guarantee.

Guaranteed Funding Application Process

The first step in applying for a guaranteed co-op stipend is to file a FAFSA form. You will be informed in May if you are eligible to receive the \$2,500 minimum guaranteed stipend award for the financial aid year for which you filed your FAFSA (Summer-Spring Quarters).

Before the quarter during which you will be engaging in a qualifying public interest co-op, you must also submit a funding request form by the co-op stipend funding request deadline, so your funding request can be reviewed. This is necessary because you may want to be considered for awards above the guaranteed minimum of \$2,500. Failure to submit the request by the deadline may result in your not being considered for an award above the guaranteed minimum. Funding request forms are available on the Co-op MyLaw page (See Co-op Stipend Funding and Co-op Work-Study page). **All funding applications/requests must be completed in full, and submitted to the Co-op Office on or before the quarterly funding application deadline in order to be considered.** If you anticipate a need for funding, but as of the application deadline have not obtained a job, you must still submit an application form by the co-op funding application deadline, stating that your employer is "unknown."

Co-op Stipend Eligibility and Federal Financial Aid Regulations

In order to seek guaranteed co-op funding, students must be in compliance with federal loan regulations.

Any co-op funding from the law school is counted as part of the student's financial aid package for the given academic year (the summer quarter through the spring quarter), and a student may not receive funds in excess of his/her total financial aid package for the year. Thus, for each quarter in which you are seeking for funding, the Financial Aid Office must determine whether you are eligible to receive a co-op stipend, including co-op work-study funding. **If you borrowed a supplemental loan up to the "cost of attendance" budget, and you receive a co-op stipend, the Financial Aid Office will refund or reduce your supplemental loan up to the amount of your co-op stipend.**

Funding Criteria

The following criteria are considered in making funding awards. Again, if you qualify for a guaranteed one-time minimum \$2,500 co-op stipend, you will receive one. However, in deciding who should be awarded stipends above the minimum and/or stipends in subsequent funding quarters, the Office of Financial Aid in collaboration with the Co-op Office will take the following criteria into account:

Applicant's institutional educational debt: If an applicant has no institutional educational debt (undergraduate, graduate and law school), it is unlikely that s/he will receive funding. However, a funding request may be considered if the applicant can explain (1) why s/he is unable or unwilling to borrow money, or (2) what other special circumstances impact on the applicant's financial situation;

Employer contribution (if any);

Additional sources and amounts of financial support (e.g., savings, spouse, parents and other family, trust fund, scholarships): If the amounts of such support would cover the applicant's living expenses for the quarter, it is unlikely the applicant will receive a funding award. However, the applicant may be considered for funding if s/he can explain why additional funding support is necessary;

Special or unusual expenses: In order to consider these unusual or special expenses, applicants must provide an accurate estimate of the expenses and a full explanation;

Request amount: and;

Nature of the co-op: Certain donors specify the types of co-ops they will support.

In weighing the equities, an applicant's co-op history and projected post-graduate employment, if any, may also be considered.

B) General Co-op Stipend Eligibility for Co-ops Subsequent to Your First Public Interest Co-op

If you have already received your guaranteed public interest stipend in a previous co-op quarter, you can still seek additional co-op stipend support for subsequent co-op quarters in which you are doing a qualified public interest co-op and if you remain financially eligible to receive a co-op stipend. Again, qualifying public interest co-ops include ones with legal services, non-profit legal advocacy organizations, prosecution and public defender offices, and governmental entities. Neither judicial internships nor co-ops with private firms generally qualify for this level of funding support, but please see below for the judicial internship funding exception from the Alice Alexander Judicial Internship Fund. Also, please see below for exceptional circumstances in which work for private firms focusing on public interest matters might be considered for funding.

Qualifying public interest co-ops must also be unpaid or minimally compensated by the employer. Students with outstanding thank you letters from previous awards are not be eligible to receive co-op funding.

Funding awards vary in amount depending upon the number of applicants each quarter and the relative financial need of the individual applicants and the type of co-op. The total pool of available funds is adjusted quarterly in order to ensure that monies are distributed fairly between the two rotations.

As a policy, judicial internships will not be funded with the exception of two judicial internship stipends from the Alice Alexander Judicial Internship Fund for \$3,000 each, one during the Winter Quarter and one during the Spring Quarter. If fundraising efforts prove successful, there may be additional stipend resources for judicial internship at lower levels of support.

There are several large awards for other public interest/public service jobs each quarter in the \$2,500 to \$5,000 range, along with co-op work-study funding which ranges between \$5,390 and \$6,160. The remaining public interest awards in the past have typically ranged from \$1,000 to \$1,500 with previous awards averaging \$1,000 to \$1,200.

Funding Application Process in Subsequent Co-op Quarters After You Have Already Received Your Guaranteed \$2,500 Stipend

If you will be engaging in a second, third or fourth qualifying public interest co-op, you must submit a funding request form by the co-op stipend funding request deadline for the pertinent quarter. Failure to submit the request by the deadline may result in your not receiving a co-op stipend. Funding request forms are available on the Co-op MyLaw page (See Co-op Stipend Funding and Co-op Work-Study page). **All funding applications must be completed in full, and submitted to the Co-op Office on or before the quarterly funding application deadline in order to be considered.** If you anticipate a need for funding, but as of the application deadline have not obtained a job, you must submit an application form by the co-op funding application deadline, stating that your employer is “unknown.”

Co-op Work-Study Stipend Funding

In order to apply for a co-op federal work-study position, you must verify that your employer is be able to pay its required share of work/study funding and has a valid contract on file with the University, and you must be deemed “work/study eligible” by the Office of Financial Aid at the law school. If you are not cleared and/or your employer cannot pay its required contribution or does not have a valid contract on file, you **may not be** eligible for work/study funding. Refer to the Full-Time Co-op Work-Study Procedures for Law Students Memorandum for details. **It is essential that you read that memorandum before seeking such funding. If your co-op employer cannot provide the employer portion of work-study, please see Jeff Smith to discuss co-op work-study funding options.**

Co-op Stipend Eligibility and Federal Financial Aid Regulations

In order to seek co-op funding, students must be in compliance with federal loan regulations.

Any co-op funding from the law school is counted as part of the student’s financial aid package for the given academic year (the summer quarter through the spring quarter), and a student may not receive funds in excess of his/her total financial aid package for the year. Thus, for each quarter in which you are seeking for funding, the Financial Aid Office must determine whether you are eligible to receive a co-op stipend, including co-op work-study funding. **If you borrowed a supplemental loan up to the “cost of attendance” budget, and you receive a co-op stipend, the Financial Aid Office will refund or reduce your supplemental loan up to the amount of your co-op stipend.**

If you are have already received your guaranteed public interest stipend in a previous co-op quarter, please remember that being eligible to receive a co-op stipend does not guarantee that you will receive co-op funding

in the amount you requested. It merely means that you are eligible to be considered for co-op funding up to the specified clearance amount.

Funding Criteria

The following criteria are considered in making funding awards. Again, if you qualify for a guaranteed one-time minimum \$2,500 co-op stipend, you will receive one. However, in deciding who should be awarded stipends above the minimum and/or stipends in subsequent funding quarters, the Office of Financial Aid in collaboration with the Co-op Office will take the following criteria into account.

Applicant's institutional educational debt: If an applicant has no institutional educational debt (undergraduate, graduate and law school), it is unlikely that s/he will receive funding. However, a funding request may be considered if the applicant can explain (1) why s/he is unable or unwilling to borrow money, or (2) what other special circumstances impact on the applicant's financial situation;

Employer contribution (if any);

Additional sources and amounts of financial support (e.g., savings, spouse, parents and other family, trust fund, scholarships): If the amounts of such support would cover the applicant's living expenses for the quarter, it is unlikely the applicant will receive a funding award. However, the applicant may be considered for funding if s/he can explain why additional funding support is necessary;

Special or unusual expenses: In order to consider these unusual or special expenses, applicants must provide an accurate estimate of the expenses and a full explanation;

Request amount: and;

Nature of the co-op: Certain donors specify the types of co-ops they will support.

In weighing the equities, an applicant's co-op history and projected post-graduate employment, if any, may also be considered.

Recipient's Obligation: Writing Substantive Thank You Letters

Recipients of co-op funding awards (except Work-Study or the Financial Aid Co-op Stipend Fund) are required to submit a formal and substantive thank you letter to the Co-op Office. These letters become part of annual reports submitted to the various donors to encourage their continued support, and are extremely important to our funding efforts. Acceptable letters must be typed and must include sufficiently detailed information relating to your reasons for wanting to work with the employer, and a thoughtful description of your substantive work experience. The letters, therefore, are best written after your eighth week on co-op, and are due before the end of your work quarter. **Students with outstanding thank you letters from previous awards are not eligible to receive co-op funding.**

Tax Implications

University counsel has concluded that co-op stipend awards (with the exception of co-op work-study) are not considered "compensation for services" and will treat them as scholarships; thus the university will not issue IRS 1099 forms. Work-study stipends are taxable income. As long as these grant monies are used to defray your educational expenses (i.e., tuition and fees), they should not be taxable. However, if you are the recipient of a full or partial scholarship, you should consult with your tax advisor regarding appropriate tax treatment of your co-op stipend award.

How Stipends Will be Issued

Effective immediately, students who receive a coop stipend will need to request their coop stipend checks through the MYNEU portal. Once the funds deposit on the student's tuition account, the student can request the check by clicking on the "self-service" link in the MYNEU portal and click on the "Student Refund Request."

The coop stipend will deposit in the student's account during the first week of the quarter. Students will be able to see their account activity, balances and deposit of the fund on the MYNEU portal.

Students who are blocked or have outstanding balances will not be able to receive the coop funding checks until the outstanding charges are satisfied. If you do not pay your outstanding balance, your stipend will be used to offset that balance.

Full-time co-op Work-Study Funding Awards are not subject to this requirement. Students getting full-time co-op work-study funding will be issued regular pay checks through the University's Student Employment Office.

Social Justice Scholarships

If you have been designated by the school to receive a Social Justice Scholarship (SJS) for a public interest co-op, you will be eligible to receive a one-time \$3,000 co-op stipend award when you undertake a co-op with a legal services organization, a public defender, a non-profit advocacy group, or a government agency/office (excluding judicial internships). Please note, however, that should you qualify for a co-op stipend award greater than \$3,000 for your first public interest co-op, such as co-op work-study or another named stipend, that stipend will count as your SJS grant. **Should you receive a co-op stipend greater than the \$2,500 guaranteed co-op stipend award amount, such as co-op work-study, a Social Justice Scholarship or another named stipend, that stipend will also count as your guaranteed \$2,500 co-op stipend.**

If you were selected by the school to receive a \$3K SJS, you will be able to obtain your SJS at the start of your first public interest co-op no matter what quarter you undertake that first public interest co-op. Obtaining the SJS requires that you complete a Co-op Funding application. Failure to undertake an approved public interest co-op during your second and third year of law school will result in forfeiting your right to this scholarship.

Co-op Funding Decisions

Co-op stipend award policies are made by the Office of Financial Aid in collaboration with the Co-op Office. Once the awards are issued, the financial aid office will coordinate the distribution in collaboration with the Co-op Office.

The Cooperative Income Sharing Program ("CISP")

CISP is an entirely student-run, student-funded program that makes grants to students doing unpaid or low-paid public interest legal work as part of their co-op experience. Through these grants, CISP seeks to make public interest co-ops more affordable for students with limited resources. While there are no established funding criteria, CISP has consistently supported co-ops in which students serve low-income clients or advocate for individuals and groups who have been traditionally underrepresented in the legal system. Applicants submit their proposals directly to CISP. The CISP funding process allows all CISP contributors to vote on their funding preferences; the CISP Funding Committee then reviews applicants' financial information and awards grants. Contact the CISP Office for application deadlines and additional information.

NOTE: CISP requires that applicants apply concurrently to the Co-op Office and to CISP directly. In order to apply to CISP, you must complete the **CISP Funding Application**, available in the CISP Office or in the Co-op Office.