



CLS students rely on faculty advice and support of their career pathways. This is especially important to students exploring public interest or public service careers, who are often combating financial and social pressure to forgo their interests. Imagine how significant your words are to law students who turn to us for career guidance. Thank you for your commitment to CLS’s social justice mission and public interest and public service careers. Here are some considerations for faculty advising students.

1.) Many 1Ls enter Columbia broadly interested in public interest work but without a particularized practice area (e.g., public defense, housing justice, antitrust) in mind. Speaking with faculty in and outside of class is their first opportunity to learn about and explore different areas of public interest and public service law.

- Encourage your advisees by learning their interests and concerns about public interest careers. Share your experience and perspective on how the field is developing and where the opportunities for public interest work lie. Then strategize options to help them gather more information.
- Periodically review information regarding CLS’s [PI/PS Office resources](#) and [summer funding](#), so you can direct students to resources. Additional great starting points include [Roadmapping PI/PS Careers](#) and [PI/PS Careers Job Toolkit](#).

2.) Consider sending an introduction email to the PI/PS Office on behalf of interested students.

- The PI/PS Office advises all interested students (not just Berger Fellows) in a variety of practice areas. Students can make an appointment with an [adviser in the PI/PS Office](#). Faculty can ease the way by sending a connecting email to PI/PS advisers on behalf of students.

3.) Tap into your network of colleagues inside and outside of the Law School that are familiar with PI/PS careers in advisees’ areas of interest.

4.) Students and faculty can connect with PI/PS alumni.

- The PI/PS Office facilitates referrals between students and alumni. The alum network includes first-generation lawyers and people of color who can share information on their career paths, unique challenges, and the value of their chosen careers. Again, faculty can help students by sending connecting emails to alumni or asking the PI/PS Office to introduce students.
- Alumni [advisers](#) are available to speak with students about their career pathways.
 - Note: the CLS PI/PS network includes alumni who transitioned from private to public interest or public service careers.
- The [PI/PS Council](#) is a group of alumni committed to supporting students seeking out social justice careers. PI/PS Office Dean Erica Smock can connect students and alumni to Council members. Faculty can also ease the way by sending a connecting email to alumni where appropriate.

Expanding Student Access to Public Interest / Public Service (“PI/PS”) Law

5.) Learn more about CLS’s Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP).

- The Office of Financial Aid runs LRAP and can answer loan repayment questions.
- The PI/PS Office can also talk with students about financial planning, loan payment and individual LRAP plans. More information is [here](#).

6.) Suggest students stay connected by signing up with the [Columbia Public Interest Community \(CPIC\)](#) on CLS Connect and reviewing the weekly PI/PS Office newsletter. Important news from the public interest community is also published in The Gavel.

7.) Encourage students to find and build community with their peers. Public interest and public service students and alumni often form tight-knit, life-long support networks. Faculty may suggest advisees interested in pursuing PI/PS careers build their network through the following CLS opportunities:

- Public interest student groups (Student Public Interest Network, Parole Advocacy Project, Rightslink, etc).
- Affinity organizations. An increasing number of affinity groups also have a public interest representative. Students can seek out representatives for support.
- Experiential education and practicums provide an opportunity to learn with peers through PI/PS practice.
- Spring break pro bono caravans are another way for students to find supportive community and gain exposure to social justice work.

8.) Consider exposing students to PI/PS careers and resources in your courses.

- PI/PS administrators, staff, alumni and practitioners have presented in CLS courses. The PI/PS Office can help in connecting faculty to practitioner guests. Introduction to different kinds of PI/PS advocacy is particularly valuable to our first-year students. Students have expressed appreciation for courses that incorporate public interest guests and conversations.