In December 2010, Shareese Pryor, ’11, was named a Skadden Fellow, marking the third consecutive year in which a University of Chicago Law School student was selected for the distinguished award. Paired with the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, Pryor is currently engaged with a project that will require her to work closely with government offices and community organizations in transitioning foster youth to independence.

Like many graduates of the Law School, Pryor’s postgraduate public interest fellowship is both the culmination of a stellar student public service career and the beginning of her professional life as a public service lawyer. Pryor spent two summers as an Equal Justice America Legal Services Fellow, first at the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, then at the Office of the Cook County Public Guardian, where she was also a Bergstrom Child Welfare Law Fellow. Pryor worked closely with Law School staff in the Office of Career Services in her job search process, and these fellowships will stand her in excellent stead to begin a long-term career in public service.

While many Chicago graduates have begun their public service careers with similar summer and postgraduate fellowships, the demand for both kinds of public service fellowships has exploded with the revitalization of the Law School’s public interest law program. The Law School and its alumni have responded with an extraordinarily comprehensive and generous array of programs.

“The University of Chicago Law School is deeply committed to training and graduating leaders who make their careers serving the public—whether that is through working in nonprofit advocacy organizations or in government,” Dean Michael Schill recently said. “To make this feasible for our students and alumni we are making an extraordinary commitment to support them both through career advising, mentorship, and, perhaps most critically, financial support.”
**Postgraduate Fellowship Opportunities**

Long a hallmark of a career path pointing toward public service, postgraduate fellowships have taken on an expanding role in this weakened economy, as both young law graduates and their host agencies pursue their public service missions. With donations down and financial positions precarious, government agencies and nonprofits are unable to hire new graduates if they have to pay their salaries, and thus many of them rely on these fellowships as much as our students do. The fellowships are not highly paid, with yearly salary averages at a third or even a quarter of “big law” salaries, but these positions are highly coveted and have offered graduates the ability to work on legal issues the fellows care about, often by helping people and equitable distribution of affordable housing. Gross is a frequent visitor to the Law School, regularly speaking on panels about long-term careers in public service.

Marc Jolin, ’00, also launched his post–Law School career with a Skadden Fellowship, working with the Oregon Law Center in Portland. After his fellowship he joined Perkins Coie as a real estate and land use associate, where he continued to be active in public service, founding several service projects for the Young Lawyer Section of the Multnomah Bar Association. Since 2006, Jolin has been the Executive Director of JOIN, a housing/homelessness nonprofit in Portland.

There are as many different types of legal fellowships, it seems, as there are types of law students to pursue them. As for the kinds of legal advocacy required of fellows, anything goes. Advocacy may entail a wide range of approaches, including community legal education, training, community organizing, direct services, litigation, transactional work, and administrative or legislative efforts. Though the competition for these highly coveted fellowships can be fierce, selection committees nationwide invariably search for candidates with demonstrated commitment to public service, impeccable credentials, and often a certain entrepreneurial streak.

Indeed, The Echoing Green Fellowship program was created to provide social entrepreneurs who have original and compelling ideas for driving social change with the tools and resources to start new autonomous public service projects or organizations. As a recipient of the Echoing Green Fellowship, Susan Epstein ’95, founded the organization Our Schools, Our Media, helping students in low-income schools to design and produce media (print, video, and Internet) for their local community. Susan continues to be active in public service, serving as a strategic consultant to Nonprofit Organizations and Businesses in Santa Barbara and as president of her local school board.

The Koch Associates Program provides an extraordinary public interest opportunity for our students with a more conservative bent. Koch Associates work toward economic freedom to improve the well-being of people around the world. They spend one year working full-time at a Washington, D.C., nonprofit and one day per week immersed in a market-based management curriculum, through which they learn about the components of free-market society. This combination of hands-on public interest work and education was a perfect foundation to jump-start the career of Katelynn McBride, ’10. She served as a Koch Associate with the National Federation of Independent Business Small Business Legal Center, and

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communities who have nowhere else to turn. Also, legal fellowships allow recent graduates to assume much more responsibility, more quickly, than would be possible in some other types of legal work.

Once described by *The Los Angeles Times* as “a legal Peace Corps,” the Skadden Fellowship Foundation has been awarding fellowships since 1988, currently awarding approximately thirty two-year fellowships per year to graduating law students and outgoing judicial clerks. A number of Chicago Law graduates are among that alumni cohort, and many have stayed in public service for the long term. Adam Gross, ’95, was a Skadden Fellow from 1995 to 1997 working in Chicago at Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI). Gross stayed on after his fellowship and has been there ever since. Now the director of BPI’s Regional Affordable Housing Initiative, he focuses on housing and community development issues, leading BPI’s efforts to increase the supply and
The fellowship opportunities available to Chicago graduates are many and varied, and the careers they have launched are equally diverse.

She is now a staff attorney with the Minnesota Chapter of the Institute for Justice.

Other nonprofit organizations—such as the Center for Reproductive Rights, Business and Professional People in the Public Interest, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, or Human Rights Watch—offer one or a few postgraduate fellowships each year. There are hundreds of organizational fellowships available each year. Additionally, graduates who are interested in developing clinical teaching careers or international human rights work may apply for a series of highly competitive fellowships designed for those specific purposes. Finally, there are a number of private law firms that hire new graduates as one- or two-year fellows. These fellows sometimes spend a portion of their time in the firm and a portion working at or for a designated nonprofit agency; other times the fellows handle a caseload of civil rights/civil liberties matters.

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With the recent revitalization of the Law School’s public service program, the Law School has begun providing its own postgraduate fellowships to students. According to Dean Schill, “Raising funds for our public service program in general and our post-graduate public service fellowships in particular will be a top priority of the upcoming comprehensive fundraising campaign. Indeed, three alumni, Steve Marenberg, ’80, Alison Whalen, ’82, and William Von Hoene, ’80, have already stepped up to fund fellowships beginning this year.” The inaugural class of these fellows is working in a wide variety of positions, including at Associated Counsel for the Accused (Seattle, WA), Equality Now (New York, NY), Cabrini Green Legal Aid (Chicago, IL), and National Resources Defense Council (Santa Monica, CA).

Summer Funding and Fellowships

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federal, state, and local governmental legal positions and international human rights organizations and other law-based NGOs. The Heerey Fellowships, which are specifically geared towards the first-year summer, support a sizeable portion of that class's need. Many additional grants to second-year students are, as they have been for decades, provided by the Chicago Law Foundation, a student group that raises money through its annual Public Interest Auction, T-shirt sales, and fundraising drives.

Alumni and law firm donors have also provided a variety of specialized funding opportunities for students. Kirkland & Ellis LLP, for example, sponsors five summer fellowships with Chicago-area legal aid providers for rising second-year students from the Law School. Under this program, operating for the third summer in 2012, each Kirkland & Ellis Fellow receives a stipend for a summer internship with one of the firm's pro bono clients/legal aid providers, such as the National Immigrant Justice Center, Equip for Equality, or Lawyers for the Creative Arts. Fellows both work with K&E attorneys on pro bono matters pertaining to the legal aid provider with which he or she is affiliated and receive assignments directly from the legal aid provider.

Many of our students are interested in working in public policy, and Herbert Caplan, ’57, created the Caplan Fellowships to support them in legal policy summer positions. Eight Caplan Fellows work in public policy jobs each year during the summer. Caplan dedicated his entire career to public service, spending the bulk of his career as First Assistant Illinois Attorney General and in the City of Chicago’s Law Department. Recent Caplan Fellows have spent their summers working for the Environmental Protection Agency and the United States Senate Judiciary Committee, and for such organizations as the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

Public service work has increasingly taken on an international component. Through our International Human Rights (IHR) Summer Program, the Law School coordinates with international human rights organizations in South and East Asia, Australia, Africa, and South America to host summer law student interns who have completed their first or second years of law school. IHR host organizations include legal organizations constituted as nonprofit public interest service providers, human rights commissions and NGOs, nonprofit legal aid and advocacy agencies, criminal tribunals, independent research and litigation centers, and law-school-based interdisciplinary research and teaching institutes. The Law School’s IHR Summer Fellows are chosen from a competitive Law School application and interview process that is conducted in February and March of each year. To ensure that students receiving these fellowships have the best possible training, they attend mandatory preparatory training sessions, including a one-day research session on country-specific legal research resources that is conducted by the staff of the Law Library. Summer funding for students working in international public interest, whether in IHR Fellowships or in other positions, is generously funded by the Charles M. Jacobs Fund for Human Rights and Social Engagement. For more information on this generous fund, created by Cerise Lim Jacobs in honor of Charles Jacobs, ’56, please see page 49.

A COMMITMENT TO LONG-TERM PUBLIC INTEREST SUPPORT

As has been previously discussed in these pages, last year the Law School announced a complete redesign of its Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP), making it the most generous of its kind. The purpose of the LRAP is to alleviate the debt burden of our graduates who work in public interest. Our LRAP is a straightforward and generous program, with an $80,000 salary cap which makes the program more inclusive than ever. In addition, all graduates who serve as judicial clerks are also eligible for the program. The new LRAP works in concert with the current federal debt relief programs (the Income-Based Repayment and Public Service Loan Forgiveness plans). Each year that a graduate works full-time in a qualifying public service position and earns an income less than the salary cap, the Law School will cover the full amount of the graduate’s payments. Moreover, if that graduate stays in qualifying public service for ten years, the new LRAP offers that graduate the opportunity to attend law school for free. This program is critical not only to meeting the Law School’s goal of supporting public service but in attracting prospective students who will become the next generation of public service attorneys.

The legal profession has always understood the importance of providing services to those in need. Through experience, we have learned that often a first experience working in public service, whether through a summer internship or a postgraduate fellowship, can blossom into a long-term passion for public interest work. At the Law School we are committed to providing assistance and support to our students who wish to participate in that tradition—whether for a summer or for a lifetime.