



INTERNSHIPS

SPRING 2021

BIOMIMETIC LAW & SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS

NON-PROFIT INTERNSHIPS

Virtual-Internships, beginning Spring January 2021, are currently extended to J.D. and LL.M. students to assist in projects focused on the biomimicry design process as it applies to law and policy. Together, with non-profit organizations, law students will join collaborative design teams to assess the living and non-living contexts of specific projects related to transportation, energy, agriculture, and environmental law. Selected interns will join a 10-week cohort that will progressively assess the legal implications of interdisciplinary projects' objectives as they exist under current law and those projects' potential to enhance established ecosystem services through regenerative processes inspired by nature.

Using a legal lens, cohort members will conduct independent and collaborative research specific to a specified project's regional biome. Research will draw upon legal precedent, public policy, and ecological science to create deliverable reports outlining legal constraints of generous design proposals as they are implemented. Analysis of issues presented will conclude whether implicated laws require attention – challenge, or improvement – to achieve their social/legislative purpose while also facilitating innovation that creates conditions conducive to ecological prosperity.

In order to achieve this unique perspective, cohort interns will be introduced to biomimicry, the practice of emulating nature's genius to solve human design challenges. Students will also be introduced to complex adaptive systems literature and explore effective visual communication beyond traditional briefing and memoranda, including but not limited to interactive systems maps, flow diagrams, and graphic reports.

In this case, environmental law is postured as the human design to be audited from legal (socio-economic) and biomimetic (ecological) lenses. By asking the question, "what would nature do to achieve X" or "how would nature achieve a specific function or process affected by environmental law" students will examine the complexity of the environmental law system (with the projects' scope) and determine whether or not the system of laws related to the challenge uses the most efficient and practical resources available by human and nature's evolutionary standards. Using established principles and deep patterns of biological evolution and the adaptation of modern law, students will determine whether environmental law is functioning as it is intended and offer insight into how that function might become more sustainable based on these models. This conclusion will then be used to determine the likelihood of the proposed projects' overall sustainability.



BIOMIMETIC LAW & SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS

The complex nature of both the environment and the law will require that the work of these integrated projects will span several years and contribute to original biomimetic and legal case studies that invite academic exploration, replication, challenge, and the evolution of current thought and practice. For these reasons, the available internships will integrate development with growth by building gradually; each cohort will assemble incremental components that can be combined and assembled as the projects move forward. Each student participant will contribute to a cohort-specific deliverable that will be started and completed within the 10-week time frame. Students are invited to continue their exploration of biomimicry and law and academically build upon these concepts.

Emulating nature's processes in response to the current environment, it is imperative that selected cohort members assist in creating and cultivating cooperative relationships in this virtual space. The integrity of the system is dependent upon participants' appropriate responses to dynamic context and honest feedback. Our organizations welcome diversity of thought, character, and experience; we value equity and inclusion within our organizations and within the communities, we will be engaged in. Our teams welcome critical thinkers who are creative and non-traditional in approaching problem solving and innovation. We welcome all eligible applicants with a genuine interest or curiosity in biomimicry as it applies to the law regardless of race, color, religion, place of origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, disability, or veteran status. Internships are unpaid in support of non-profit innovation and research. Students will receive acknowledgment for their individual contributions to each project and extensive networking opportunities across various disciplines and collaboration regions. Students will gain experience working on tangible interdisciplinary projects with well-articulated goals, objectives, and outcomes.

PROJECTS

The law student cohort will be led and managed by Shannon Sweeney, attorney and biomimicry professional. Spring 2021 projects presented are offered on behalf and in support of the following non-profit organizations:



BIOMIMETIC LAW & SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS

BORN GLOBAL FOUNDATION

Project Defined: Living Lab, Bio-Char

Location: Jonesboro, Maine, USA

Organization Website: [Born Global Foundation](#)

An Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Born Global Foundation is a 501(c)(3) mission-based charity organization that provides innovative education to advance a global Bio-economy. BG focuses on economic, process, and product innovation at the intersection of Energy, Food, and Water by using circular zero-waste models that emulate nature.

Born Global Foundation builds sustainable rural economies by repurposing biomass power plants into Circular Bio-Hub Ecosystems. The waste streams from energy, food, and water are alchemized into valuable inputs through innovative solutions that emulate nature's genius. This Bio-Hub is premised on the concept of small, decentralized, and locally responsive projects that address energy, food production, water cycles, and wetland restoration.

BIOMIMICRY AND LAW

Biomimicry, or biomimetics, is the examination of nature to discover organic models of systems, processes, and structures to emulate or take inspiration from in order to solve human problems. The literal and conceptual strategies that living complex systems have used for millennia are studied, practiced, and emulated to reconnect human-designs through a cross-system (nature to human) ethos. The ecosystem challenges solved by interconnected biological functions are analogous to social challenges with the systems of environmental law: habitat regulation and biodiversity, resource management, hydrology cycles, nutrient sequences, atmospheric pollution, changing climate effects, etc. Through evolved mutualisms, living organisms work collaboratively to ensure their environment remains conducive to all species' life-supporting needs. These well-established ecological strategies can be used as precedent for environmental best practices, and to ensure that human-designed laws emulate nature in a way that connects social and biological systems, sustainably. Applying a biomimetic lens to legal analysis, in support of these projects, offers a means to invite nature's genius at all levels of the design process, while also bringing aspects of biological brilliance and life into legal research and problem solving for future innovation in the law.

(Consolidated excerpt: Integration of Biomimicry and Environmental Law: Using Nature as a Model, Mentor, and Measure in Environmental Law Practice, by Shannon Sweeney, (internal citations omitted, please contact author for additional information or resource about how biomimicry can apply to the law.)

BIOMIMETIC LAW & SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS

ELIGIBILITY

Minimum Qualifications:

Current Law Student or Recent Law Graduate. The ABA may have specific requirements for internships available for J.D. students. Please check with Career Services to ensure you are eligible to participate. Interns selected to participate will be assigned to a project or team that best aligns with their expressed interest, goals, and education.

Recommended Areas of Interest and Project Emphasis:

- Living Ecosystems and Biodiversity
- Natural Resource Management
- Social Inclusion
- Climate Change
- Clean Water
- Clean Air
- Agriculture Systems and Impacts
- Nutrient and Waste Cycles
- Green Chemistry Processes
- Energy Alternatives, Clean Energy Programs
- Transportation Infrastructure
- Endangered Species

Intern Contributions:

- Advocacy
- Interdisciplinary
- Communication
- Impact Assessments
- Original Qualitative and Quantitative Research
- Innovative Design
- Community Engagement
- Coalition Building
- Leadership

APPLICATION MATERIALS

A resume and a single page personal statement that includes personal goals and expectations related to this experience, preferred research and communication styles, and curiosity or experience in biomimicry. Please include any relevant experience or connections to nature that might offer insight about you not otherwise be reflected in your application materials.