Interdisciplinary Research & Leadership Opportunities for Duke Law Students

About Bass Connections

Bass Connections is a university-wide program that offers graduate and undergraduate students immersive research opportunities through more than 60 year-long project teams. On Bass Connections teams, graduate and professional students, postdocs, and undergraduates work together with faculty and outside experts to conduct cutting-edge research on important issues such as health inequality, environmental sustainability, human rights, educational opportunity, and medical ethics.

Teams generally work together for nine to 12 months. Participating students usually receive academic credit (see below for crediting options for Law students), although students in specialized roles may sometimes serve in a paid role.

Team members blend their diverse skills and expertise, allowing students of all levels to learn *and* contribute. Their work results in policy recommendations, journal articles, new datasets to inform future research, health interventions, novel modes of delivering social services, prototypes, museum exhibits, future grants, and more.

Benefits of Participation for Professional Students

Professional students play a crucial role on Bass Connections teams, often serving as subject area experts, project managers or sub-group leaders, and mentors for undergraduates. Project teams also offer professional students an exciting opportunity to apply coursework to a concrete problem, access professional development resources, expand academic and professional networks, and build career-enhancing skills to stand out on the job market.

In particular, students learn how to plan and implement complex projects, work in teams, mentor and lead others, and communicate across boundaries to find solutions to complex challenges – skills that are crucial for successful careers in almost any field.

Duke Law Participation and Testimonials

Past Law students have participated on a wide range of teams, including those working on issues related to ethics, the environment, privacy and security, intellectual property, labor, health, and education.

Among many research outcomes, these teams have:

- collaborated with federal and state policymakers on Medicaid reform;
- developed cybersecurity guidelines to protect individuals' and families' personal data;
- examined incentive-based approaches to endangered species conservation on private lands;
- explored how governments and professional associations set and enforce codes of ethics in competitive industries such as law, athletics and business;
- produced documentary films on the environment and peacebuilding in post-conflict zones; and
- written policy proposals to inform animal waste management practices in the United States.

Here's what a few Duke Law alumni have had to say about their Bass Connections experience:

> *The best thing about my Bass Connections project was that, much like in the real world, the "problem" we sought to address had never been answered – it was not an assignment generated to test a skill set, but rather a totally open-ended question.*
> **-Anna Johns Hrom JD '16, PhD '18 (Law Clerk, U.S. Courts)**

> *As a result of having worked with a multidisciplinary team, my writing changed and improved my goal of reaching wider audiences…Back in Brazil, my experience with Bass Connections is also informing how I am building and leading teams of researchers and policy analysts.*
> **-Daniel Ribeiro, SJD '18 (Prosecutor, Ministério Público of the State of Rio de Janeiro)**

> *Through Bass Connections, I had the chance to meet with highly specialized practitioners that have been doing fascinating work on environmental peacebuilding. The [experience] also gave me an opportunity to step out of my usual activities…and do things I had little experience with, like drafting a script for a documentary or thinking about how certain images might help communicate the environmental impact of armed conflict in different regions of the world.*
> **-Xiao Recio-Blanco, SJD '15 (Director of the Ocean Program, Environmental Law Institute)**

Crediting Options for Law Students

Law students who are interested in participating in Bass Connections have the following crediting options:

- **Teams led by a Duke Law Faculty Member:** If a Duke Law faculty member leads a Bass Connections team (see list below), Law students are eligible to receive Law School credit (up to three credits per semester). Upon being accepted to join a team, students must apply for approval to receive Law School credit by documenting the law and policy work (research, drafting, etc.) they will be undertaking as part of the team and the amount of time they will spend on the project. Such students should contact Deans Gustafson or Lacoff in the Office of Academic Affairs.

- **Teams *without* Duke Law Faculty Members:** Some Bass Connections team are grappling with legal matters but do not include a Duke Law faculty leader (see list below). While Law students are encouraged to participate on these teams, students would not be eligible for Law School credit. Such students could opt to use their non-Law credit, noting that each student is only permitted three such credits. Students may also petition the Law School's Administrative Committee for permission to apply up to three additional credits. Such appeals must demonstrate the rigor of the project and the connection to legal matters. Students interested in participating in these projects should contact Deans Gustafson or Lacoff in the Office of Academic Affairs.

- **Other options:** Some students participate on Bass Connections teams in a paid capacity, particularly if they are serving in a leadership/project management role on the team. Each team is structured differently. It is at the discretion of faculty team leaders whether they offer paid roles. Law students may not earn academic credit if they are paid for their work.

  Some students also participate on Bass Connections teams in an extra-curricular capacity because they are passionate about the topics, see sufficient professional benefits to participation, and/or because the topic aligns with their own research/career interests.

In some circumstances, Duke Law students may also document leadership or other skill development through a Bass Connections team experience that may count toward the professional development graduation requirement. Please contact a career counselor if you are interested in pursuing this option.

2019-2020 Project Teams *Eligible* for Law School Credit

American Predatory Lending and the Global Financial Crisis

Topics covered: Economics, policy, regulation, oral history

Law School faculty leader: Lee Reiners

Ten years after the failure of Lehman Brothers, there is still debate about the causes of the global financial crisis and the efficacy of policy responses. However, there is little debate about the central role subprime home loans originated by mortgage brokers and banks played in the crisis. This team will explore mortgage market data and collect oral histories from people on the front lines, including consumer advocates, state attorneys general and their staffs, state financial regulators, housing counselors, bankers and mortgage lenders, to deepen the public's understanding of the policy and market dynamics in the run-up to the crisis.

To participate: Interested students should send a resume and a statement of interest to Lee Reiners (lee.reiners@duke.edu). *Applicants should have experience or interest in oral history collection.*

Consumer EEG Devices: Attention, Emotion, Privacy and the Brain

Topics covered: Privacy, technology, ethics, business, policy, public interest

Law School faculty leader: Nita Farahany

Consumer-based EEG devices are marketed and sold to consumers for tracking and improving their brain activity through neurofeedback. These devices prompt privacy and data-sharing concerns because of their unprecedented ability to gather and decode real-time brain activity in everyday contexts such as education, employment, gaming and fitness. This project team will develop and administer surveys to the general population to gain a nuanced perspective of views on brain data privacy across ethical, legal and policy contexts.

To participate: Interested students should send a statement of interest, a resume, and a writing sample to William Krenzer (william.krenzer@duke.edu).

DECIPHER: Decisions on the Risks and Benefits of Geoengineering the Climate

Topics covered: Environment, risk, ethics, governance, policy, business, media, public interest

Law School faculty leader: Jonathan Wiener

Geoengineering is the large-scale modification of the Earth's systems to address climate change and includes a range of speculative approaches, such as solar radiation management or extraction of greenhouse gases directly from the atmosphere. These strategies pose both benefits and risks. This team will examine a series of risk-based decision scenarios involving geoengineering technologies to support a broadly considered projection of the consequences of geoengineering. Team members will produce assessment and policy reports on the economic, legal, ethical, political and environmental

impacts of geoengineering and will have the opportunity to interview high-level stakeholders across a range of organizations and perspectives.

To participate: Interested students should send a statement of interest and a resume to Tyler Felgenhauer (tyler.felgenhauer@duke.edu).

Regenerative Grazing to Mitigate Climate Change

Topics covered: Environment, agriculture, economics, business, technology

Law School faculty leader: Michelle Nowlin

Cattle are a leading contributor to greenhouse emissions, but recent research suggests that intensive pasture-based cattle systems can actually sink more carbon than they emit. This project team will research the policy, historical and market contexts to understand how the modern cattle industry developed and what it will take to shift toward new production systems that can help reverse climate change. Specifically, law students will map existing farm bill programs, regulatory frameworks and contractual arrangements with an eye toward how they may be repurposed toward the development of a carbon-neutral, economically just and humane beef sector. Students will also gain experience developing and implementing a pilot carbon offset protocol for pasture-based rotational grazing systems.

To participate: Interested students should send a statement of interest and a resume to Michelle Nowlin (nowlin@law.duke.edu).

2019-2020 Project Teams *Not Eligible* for Law School Credit

Duke Design Health Fellows Program

Topics covered: Health innovation, business, technology, regulation, intellectual property, human-centered design

The Duke University Design Health Fellows Program provides an immersive learning experience to undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate fellows who identify, validate, prioritize and solve problems that have an impact on human health. Small design teams will work together to collect unmet patient needs, develop new concepts and tools, research the business, regulatory, clinical and manufacturing landscape around medical innovation and create implementation plans for new products.

To participate: Interested students should send a statement of interest and a resume to Eric Richardson (eric.richardson@duke.edu).

Gene Therapy in Alzheimer's Disease: Novel Therapies and Ethical Aspects of Somatic Gene Editing

Topics covered: Health innovation, ethics, technology

Gaining insight into the biological pathways and molecular basis underlying Alzheimer's disease should lead to the development of disease-modifying and preventative treatments. This project will advance development of new gene therapy technologies using cutting-edge genome editing technologies and state-of-the-art stem cell techniques to target age-related brain diseases such as Alzheimer's disease. Team members will also consider the ethical, legal and social issues of Alzheimer's disease treatment.

To participate: Interested students should send a resume and a statement of interest (including an explicit proposal for how you will engage with the team) to Misha Angrist (misha.angrist@duke.edu).

How to Build Ethics into Robust Artificial Intelligence

Topics covered: Ethics, artificial intelligence, economics, technology, policy

Autonomous systems such as self-driving cars, surgical robots and artificial intelligence to aid criminal justice have the potential to provide many services that will help society, but they also raise significant concerns. Autonomous agents need to be programmed with an artificial intelligence that instructs them how to interact with other agents, but how can we do this? This multi-year project attempts to build morality into artificial intelligence by incorporating morally relevant features based on crowd-sourced data concerning moral judgement. Combining principles and methods from moral philosophy, economics, game theory and computer science, team members will examine the history and future of artificial intelligence interventions and construct and test scenarios to evaluate how moral factors interact in decision making.

To participate: Interested students should send a resume, a transcript including GPA, and a statement of interest detailing how your background and skills fit the aims of this project team to Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (walter.sinnott-armstrong@duke.edu).

Pocket Colposcope: Bringing Elements of Referral Services to Community Care

Topics covered: Health policy, health innovation, economics, business

Since 2012, Duke researchers have been working to develop a low-cost, portable cervical cancer screening device called the Pocket Colposcope, which has the potential to expand access to cervical cancer screening and diagnosis worldwide. Since 2016, this Bass Connections team has been working to introduce this device in low- and middle-income country settings. In 2019-2020, the team will partner with three Duke-affiliated community clinics in low-income settings in North Carolina to assess barriers to acceptance and implementation of the Pocket Colposcope from both the patient and provider perspectives. Team members will evaluate cost inputs necessary for implementing the device in a community health setting and use this information to determine how the Pocket Colposcope can be positioned for widespread scaling in a decentralized care model.

To participate: Interested students should send a statement of interest and a resume to Marlee Krieger (marlee.krieger@duke.edu).

Sustainable Laparoscopic Surgery for Low-Income Countries: FDA Approval and Business Model for Access

Topics covered: Health policy, health innovation, international regulation, intellectual property, business, technology

This multiyear project aims to develop a low-cost, reusable laparoscope suitable for use in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). In 2019-20, the team will transform their newly developed prototype into a viable commercial product. In addition to improving the current prototype based on user feedback, team members will work with the Duke Office of Licensing and Ventures to file patent applications for the device's innovative features; examine relevant regulatory environments around biomedical innovation in East Africa; and develop a strategy to move from technology to product, which

will involve market research, competitive analysis, an operations plan, and strategies for product pricing, marketing and launch.

To participate: Interested students should send a statement of interest and a resume to Tamara Fitzgerald (tamara.fitzgerald@duke.edu) and Jenna Mueller (jenna.mueller@duke.edu).

The Value of Love: Global Perspectives on the Economy of Care

Topics covered: Economics, labor, international governance, policy, gender, public interest

This project offers an opportunity to join the launch stage of an international, interdisciplinary collaboration reconsidering how we value "care" in various forms — including not only household and dependent care but also ecological, cultural, and social care. The team will focus on three research areas, including: 1) metrics (i.e., how we measure care and its value), 2) governance (i.e., what laws and policies currently exist to ascribe value to care), and 3) social practices (e.g., alternative household and kin formations, social movements oriented toward care, and care within social organizations). A principal objective of this team is to create a public-facing resource of analysis, data sets, and white papers that might be of use to policymakers and civil-society leaders interested in this topic.

To participate: Interested students should send a statement of interest and a resume to Jocelyn Olcott (joceyln.olcott@duke.edu).