

## 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 50 year-long project teams each year. 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.

The [application for 2022-2023 Bass Connections teams is now open](#) – the deadline is **February 11, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.**

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.

### 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 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 [Dean Lacoff](#) or [James Lambert](#).
- **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 [Dean Lacoff](#) or [James Lambert](#).
- **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.

## 2022-2023 Project Teams Eligible for Law School Credit

### Environmental Justice, Climate Change & Community Engagement (2022-2023)

Poor communities and communities of color are the most likely to be harmed by new policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This project team will focus on confronting systemic exploitation in decarbonization policy and creating an equitable, community-led alternative. Team members will document different approaches to correcting environmental injustice in policy development and implementation around the United States and in other countries. They will design proposed guidelines for novel policy, law, rule and institutional proposals to implement a better system in North Carolina. Finally, the team will convene a design charrette with North Carolina EJ community members and stakeholders to refine and develop proposals, and develop a short-form documentary on environmental justice and the energy system in North Carolina.

**Law School faculty leaders:** Ryke Longest & Daniel Lee Miller

## 2022-2023 Project Teams Not Eligible for Law School Credit

*Law students are welcome to apply to any of the [50 teams](#) that are currently recruiting new students but the following teams may be of greatest interest to Law students.*

### Examining Racial Inequality & Reform Through Driver's License Access (2022-2023)

Racial and ethnic minorities, in particular Black Americans, are much more likely to have a driver's license revoked, which contributes to other systemic racial inequalities, such as inequalities in the labor or housing markets. This project team will investigate the role of driver's license revocation to understand how it affects employment, housing and well-being and exacerbates racial inequalities. The team will investigate this issue in Durham, where 46,000 county residents have a revoked or suspended license. Approximately half of these people had their license revoked or suspended due to failure to appear in court or pay fines.

### Improving Access to Behavioral & Mental Health Services for Latinx Children in NC (2022-2023)

This project team will build on cross-sector early childhood research to address the scarcity of child-focused developmental and behavioral health services and the complexities in navigating service bureaucracies, particularly within Latinx communities in NC. Team members will work to understand the barriers faced by Latinx families when attempting to access community, educational and health system-based developmental, behavioral and mental health services for children, and will develop future policy recommendations.

### **[Machine Learning & Surveys to Understand Migration Experiences \(2022-2023\)](#)**

This project team will examine the social and economic impacts of increased deportations on the affected individuals or their host communities in the United States. Using household surveys, interviews, and machine learning the team will develop forecasting models for anti- and pro-immigrant events across the U.S. and will develop policy reports addressing the impact of mass deportation events.

### **[Mental Health & the Justice System in Durham County \(2022-2023\)](#)**

Mental illness is over-represented in the incarcerated population, and the Durham County Detention Facility is not an exception. This project team will examine the trajectories and patterns of usage of medical and criminal justice services for those involved in the Durham County Criminal Justice System; explore the effects of local and state policies on recidivism and the use of mental health resources; and provide recommendations regarding the detention facility population's needs and service usage.

### **[Novel Therapies for Treating Cervical Cancer in Peru \(2022-2023\)](#)**

Globally, more and more people are being diagnosed with and dying from cancer every year, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Surgery remains the cornerstone treatment for cancer. However, five billion people lack access to basic surgical care. Duke researchers have demonstrated the safety and efficacy of a point-of-care ethanol ethyl cellulose (PEEC) therapy, which can be used as an alternative to surgery in some clinical situations. This project team aims to translate this therapy into the clinic for treatment of cervical cancer by focusing on three aims: 1) conducting a needs assessment; 2) collecting data to better understand the local health care climate; and 3) identifying and navigating the appropriate regulatory pathways to generate clinical evidence of PEEC safety and efficacy.

### **[Policy Surveillance of Universal Health Coverage Financing in Developing Countries \(2022-2023\)](#)**

The United Nations set a sustainable development goal to “achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.” This project team will create a centralized source to track the evolution of universal health coverage (UHC) financing policy for low- and middle-income countries over time. The goal is to provide information for researchers and policymakers about three main UHC financing components: resource generation; risk pooling; and strategic purchasing and payments. These components are aligned with the World Health Organization's advisory to countries on strengthening health financing for UHC.

### **Benefits of Participation for Professional Students**

Project teams 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. 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. In recognition of the important leadership role that professional students play on teams, Bridget Eklund JD' 21 was awarded the 2021 [Bass Connections Award for Outstanding Mentorship](#).

Bass Connections teams offer professional students the opportunity 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)**

*Bass Connections provided [our team] with an opportunity to work across disciplines to solve a complex and multifaceted problem and to develop a meaningful solution to that problem—one that has the potential to have tangible benefits in the real world. It is exactly the type of opportunity that I had been looking for when I decided to apply to Duke in the first place: to take my education beyond the classroom to make a difference in the wider world.*

**-Matthew Phillips JD '20 (Founder, Phillips Admissions)**