

2014 DISABILITY RIGHTS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Deadline: Materials must be received by January 13, 2014

The **Disability Rights Scholarship Program** offers awards to individuals from China and select countries in Africa and Latin America for LLM study. The program aims to advance the rights of persons with disabilities, and through legal channels, help overcome the effect of exclusionary practices, so that persons with disabilities achieve a state of full and effective participation and inclusion in society.

The program intends to provide disability rights advocates and lawyers with the necessary expertise to develop new legislation, jurisprudence, impact litigation, and scholarship, thereby taking advantage of the innovations and opportunities offered by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD, which entered into force in May 2008, presents a paradigm shift in the field of disability rights and provides a framework for developing innovative legal arguments.

With the knowledge and networks gained through the program, we expect that Fellows will have the ability to challenge rights violations in their home countries by drafting enforceable legislation consistent with the CRPD, utilizing enforcement mechanisms set forth in the Convention, taking forward disability rights litigation requesting CRPD-compliant remedies, and engaging in disability rights advocacy. Alumni will also be qualified to train and mentor new lawyers in disability rights through clinical programs.

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

Fellows will be clustered at select institutions that demonstrate cutting-edge capacity for legal education in disability rights and that are interested in forming a consortium of schools dedicated to developing this field and improving their own capacity with an international perspective. In nurturing such a network, the Program strives to encourage law faculties to incorporate disability rights into existing human rights curricula and participate in collaboratively-designed workshops and research efforts in the field.

ELIGIBILITY

The Program does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, sex, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. Candidates with disabilities are particularly encouraged to apply. The competition is merit-based and open* to those meeting the following criteria:

- Citizen and legal resident of an eligible country at the time of application (China; Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe; Mexico, Peru, Colombia);
- work experience in the legal profession or advocacy focusing on human/disability rights;
- excellent academic record with a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.; in exceptional circumstances, those without a LL.B but with substantial relevant experience may be considered);
- demonstrated leadership in the field of disability rights;
- proficient in spoken and written English or French and able to meet university-designated minimum scores on standardized language tests;
- able to participate in an intensive academic writing program in Summer 2014;
- able to begin the graduate program in August or September 2014;
- able to receive and maintain visa or study permit required by host country;
- clearly committed to return to home country to aid ongoing disability rights work.

*Employees of the Open Society Foundations and employees of local administering organizations (and their immediate family members), who are directly involved in the administration of scholarships are not eligible; nor are individuals receiving other Open Society Foundations--funded support during the fellowship period.

FELLOWSHIP TERMS

The fellowship provides:

- tuition and mandatory university fees;

- monthly stipend for room, board, and other living expenses;
- program-related travel;
- accident and sickness insurance during the program;
- funds for educational materials and professional development;
- all costs associated with pre-academic summer program and annual conference.

The fellowship does NOT provide funding for dependent family members.

SELECTION

Competition is merit based, and selection is made on the basis of academic excellence, professional aptitude, leadership potential and proven commitment to work in the field of disability rights in the home country. Selection proceeds as follows:

Preliminary Selection and Testing: Applications are first reviewed by representatives from the regional program administration, host university consortium, and Open Society Foundations.

Applicants chosen to continue in the competition as semifinalists are required to take an official TOEFL or IELTS, the costs of which are covered by the program. Most participating universities require a minimum TOEFL of 90-100 (Internet-based exam) or IELTS of 6.5.

Testing Registration: Applicants should research local options for TOEFL or IELTS testing to ensure results are available by March 2014. Students with disabilities should contact the testing agency early to make the necessary arrangements for accommodation.

Interviews and Final Selection: Semifinalists are interviewed by representatives from the OSF, host universities, and other experts. The interviewing panel then recommends candidates for finalist status and subsequent placement based on the quality of the written application, interview evaluations, and standardized test results.

UNIVERSITY PLACEMENT

Fellows are matched with universities according to their chosen area of specialization, academic profile, and professional aspirations. Final decisions concerning host university placement are made by the program selection committee, which includes university admissions staff and faculty, although finalists may be asked their preference.

PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Pre-Academic Summer Program: Grantees are required to participate in a four-week intensive pre-program in Istanbul, Turkey before starting study at host universities in the fall. The program consists of classes in academic writing, social science, and humanities-based seminars.

Fellowship: Immediately after the summer program, finalists attend a pre-departure orientation (held in Istanbul). During the second semester of studies, finalists participate in a program workshop. Fellows must uphold the academic standards of the host institution and undertake full-time study for the program's duration. Failure to maintain academic and professional standards as defined by the host university may result in dismissal from the program. Failure to follow the laws governing foreign students in the host country will result in dismissal from the program.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Application and Recommendation Forms are available from the address listed below.

CONTACTS

Residents of Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe:

Centre for Human Rights

(c/o Mr. Jehoshaphat Njau)

Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria

Pretoria, 002, South Africa

e-mail: jehoshaphat.njau@up.ac.za

DEADLINE

Please submit completed application forms and all necessary accompanying documents, along with a copy of your passport to the Program Representative above by the deadline of January 13, 2014.