

Paralegal / Internship Programme at the UPSLSA

By the inspiration of the Hon'ble Executive Chairman of the UPSLSA, Justice S.R. Alam, the UPSLSA has initiated an internship programme for law students with the Authority. The internship programme at the Uttar Pradesh State Legal Services Authority is a unique internship program in the country that aims to train law students as para legals. The program is usually spread over a period of three weeks where the student interns are exposed to all aspects of the Justice Delivery System in the country as implemented in the State of Uttar Pradesh, the Administration, as well as NGOs, social activists and the issues facing the disadvantaged sections of the society.

Need & purpose of training law students as para-legals :

The profession of Law , like Medicine , is a profession of direct impact and relevance to every citizen of the country. The profession of Law is not only about being professionally successful but also about being sensitive to the plight of the disadvantaged and the downtrodden sections of the society. Lawyers are not only professionals counselling clients for a fee but also social activists , politicians , critics of the existing socio-political systems and agents for positive social and political change.

The students of 5 and 3 year law degree courses are advocates , Judges , activists and leaders of the future that will practice in the Bar , serve the Bench , evolve consensus on frontier areas of Law and Public Policy , as well as fight for the rights of the aggrieved and all sections of the society. Hence, it is of the utmost importance that the students of law are sensitized to the prevailing social, legal and administrative problems of the country so that as professionals of the future they are well-aware of the challenges and opportunities in these crucial areas. Furthermore, law students are relatively better placed than their non-law background counterparts to be able to understand the practical aspects of implementation of laws as the law students have the theoretical background. Such law students and advocates can educate the people in a better manner about the different laws and rights.

Also, a major purpose of this training / internship is to inculcate a sense of social responsibility and sensitivity towards the underprivileged sections of the society in the students of law so that they develop a habit of contributing their bit to the society apart from progressing in their careers and family life. This is even more relevant in today's times when law students in increasing numbers are opting for corporate or law firm jobs which are far removed from the lives of the underprivileged and the downtrodden and in which the social interaction is limited to people belonging to a certain level of education and financial affluence only. The student interns are encouraged to take an active part in the interactive sessions with senior IAS/PCS officers, Magistrates, High Court Judges, leading advocates, academicians, social activists, and journalists, specially organized for them by the Authority during the course of internship. The interns are specially encouraged to suggest changes in the system of administration, justice delivery system, and method of functioning of Government departments, in their interactions with the senior officers and Judges, as well as in their internship reports, which are then forwarded to the concerned departments for necessary action. The interns are also encouraged to network with the social activists and journalists and join causes with them in any area of activity of mutual interest.

In addition, the internship programme includes substantial field visits to the High Court, district courts, tribunals, various commissions and vigilance organizations of the State, prisons, observation homes, NGOs, government offices, Boards, Tehsil offices, etc. to gain a first hand knowledge of the functioning of the administration and the justice delivery system.

Achievements :-

The internship programme at the UPSLSA started in January 2009 with the first batch of interns from the Ram Manohar Lohia National Law University, Lucknow. Since then two more batches have interned with the authority from different laws schools from all over the country like Allahabad University, Rajiv Gandhi School of IP Law (IIT-Kharagpur),

Chanakya National Law University (Patna) etc. Bhartiya's vidyapeeth Pune, University of Petroleum & Energy Dehradun.

Till date three batches of interns have been trained¹ (batches A, B, and C) with the first batch (batch A) having had the privilege of receiving their certificates of participation from none other than Justice Arijit Pasayat, Executive Chairman of the National Legal Services Authority and Judge, Supreme Court of India.

As a result of the training imparted in the internship, Legal Aid Clinics have started functioning at the RMLNLU, Lucknow and Faculty of Law, University of Allahabad.

Advantages of the training for the Authority :

The internship program at the UPSLSA helps the Authority to carry out its task of Legal Literacy, and Legal Aid more effectively by utilizing the talents and the enthusiasm of the Law students from the topmost law schools of India. The students have a natural youthful zeal and enthusiasm to bring about a positive change in the society and this energy is harnessed by the Authority to fulfill its purpose of ensuring justice for all.

Furthermore, the young and inexperienced students offer a fresh and unique perspective and insight on the various aspects of administration, justice delivery system, social ills, corruption, women and child rights, and other issues of direct relevance to the aims and objectives of the Authority and are not afraid to air their opinion on these matters. This enables the Authority as an organization to implement its policies and adapt its functioning according to the needs of the contemporary society and the citizens.

¹ annexure with names provided

Advantages for the other departments :

The Authority is not the only department that benefits from its interaction with young law students. Other departments who are often lacking in and looking for a feedback on their functioning and the effectiveness of their policies on the ground get an honest feedback from the bright young law students from all over the country. It has been found that the Judges, senior officers, and department heads always welcome an interaction with the student interns and more often than not there is a free and frank exchange of ideas regarding the present and future directions of policy and policy implementation and the ideas put forth by the student interns are welcome and also implemented according to their merit. State Authority permits only those students whose names are recommended by their institute.

Law students desirous of entering UPLSA, may send their resume through the Dean/Head of institution along with their C.V.