



JOB POSTING: Georgetown Law Seeks Experienced Disability Rights Expert for Project on Algorithmic Fairness and the Rights of People with Disabilities

Georgetown's Institute for Technology Law & Policy is seeking an experienced disability rights expert to lead a new multi-year project on algorithmic fairness and the rights of people with disabilities.

The project is designed to analyze the impact of algorithmic decision-making on people with disabilities in employment, benefits determinations and other settings, assess gaps in existing legal and policy protections, and forge cross-disciplinary collaborations to center the perspectives of people with disabilities in efforts to develop algorithmic fairness and accountability. The project is housed at Georgetown Law's [Institute for Technology Law & Policy](#) in Washington, D.C.

Issue Statement

From hiring decisions, to benefits determinations, to the filtering of online information, machine learning governs an increasing portion of our lives. Recently, important examples have shown how these processes can exacerbate existing societal inequalities. Researchers at MIT revealed that facial recognition systems have far lower accuracy rates when applied to individuals of color. A major tech company had to cancel an internal recruiting tool because its pattern recognition favored male employees' resumes. Recent efforts are raising important awareness of these issues and exploring solutions to address them.

Yet despite the vibrant conversation around fairness and accountability in machine learning, the impact on people with disabilities remains largely overlooked. Very few scholars or policy experts are considering the unique risks and impacts of AI for the millions of individuals affected by disability. And disability rights advocates are just starting to consider how machine learning may impact their community.

This troubling gap exists even though people with disabilities are, in many ways, disproportionately vulnerable to the threats of algorithmic bias. Gaps in an individual's employment history, accommodation requirements, or the need for flexible work shifts may all cause automated systems to penalize individuals. Programs that evaluate employees based on sentiment analysis may down-rate those whose expressions vary from an algorithm's perceived "norm". Job screening programs that rely on timed answers may penalize candidates who rely on assistive technologies. These are but a handful of examples.

While the emerging literature around AI bias gives some useful context for disability rights, civil rights legislation has particular requirements to safeguard the rights of disabled

people. For example, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires employers to adopt “reasonable accommodations” for qualified individuals with a disability. But what is a “reasonable accommodation” in the context of machine learning and AI? How will the ADA’s unique standard interact with case law and scholarship about AI bias against other protected groups? When the ADA governs what questions employers can ask about a candidate’s disability, how should we think about inferences from data the employer otherwise collects?

The legal framework for persons with disabilities requires specific study, to inform enforcement actions, shape employer practices, and empower individuals to know their rights. Such study must include an intersectional approach, to consider the impacts on multiply-marginalized communities and advance equity for the most marginalized groups. In turn, this work will form an important contribution to developing a more robust and inclusive discussion around algorithmic fairness and accountability.

Position Description

Georgetown’s Institute for Tech Law & Policy seeks an experienced lawyer/policy expert in disability rights to lead our work on this issue. The initial employment term is for two years, and is for a full-time position at the Institute’s offices at Georgetown University Law Center in downtown Washington, D.C.

The Project Director will work in close collaboration with the Institute’s Executive Director, Alexandra Reeve Givens, a Project Advisory Committee that is currently in formation, and the Institute’s fellows, faculty and students. The project will involve close collaboration with disability rights organizations, other civil rights organizations, and experts in machine learning and AI.

The project includes two core workstreams. The Project Director will develop a body of published work, including research papers, op-eds and short form publications, guidance documents and potentially model laws. The Project Director will also bring together disability rights advocates and those working on algorithmic bias to raise mutual awareness in both communities. This will be achieved through stakeholder convenings and other formal and informal engagement throughout the project, to shape the project’s research agenda and forge new collaborations. The project will include participation in conferences, workshops, informal interviews, and other opportunities the Project Director identifies and creates.

Responsibilities

- Develop and execute robust research agenda on algorithmic fairness and the rights of people with disabilities.
- Develop a body of written work including research papers, op-eds and short form publications.

- In collaboration with other stakeholders, develop guidance documents, model policies, model laws and other materials to inform public policy.
- Seek out and forge relationships with appropriate collaborators for the Project, including individuals and organizations focused on disability rights, those at the intersection of disability rights and the rights of other marginalized communities, and those working on algorithmic fairness and accountability.
- Develop and manage engagement with the Project Advisory Committee, comprising stakeholders and subject matter experts who will inform the project.
- Present at conferences, workshops and other convenings.
- Engage with news outlets to raise awareness about issues covered by the project.
- Organize and manage workshops and convenings to inform the project and further its work.
- Supervise student research assistants and fellows.
- Contribute to the research, policy and educational mission of the Tech Institute.
- Other duties as assigned.

Requirements

Education: J.D. required

Experience:

- 8+ years relevant legal and/or policy experience required.
- Significant expertise in disability law and policy.
- Demonstrated experience and commitment to advancing disability rights, and to examining how new technological and economic developments impact people with disabilities.
- Demonstrated excellence in legal research, editing, and writing for both academic and popular audiences.
- Experience designing and conducting research projects in an academic and/or policy setting strongly preferred.
- Willingness to engage collaboratively with others and to work in coalitions.
- Individuals with a disability are particularly encouraged to apply.

Location: Washington, D.C.

Term: 2 years

Compensation: Commensurate with experience

How to Apply

Applicants will be considered on a rolling basis from June 3, 2019 until the position is filled.

Applicants should submit a single PDF containing the below-listed items to TechInstitute@law.georgetown.edu.

- Cover letter detailing your interest in the role, relevant professional experience, and any relevant research, publications, or relevant policy work

- Resume
- One or more writing samples (op-eds, academic articles, or memoranda on relevant subject matter preferred)
- Email address of two references whom we may contact after speaking with you
- Please submit the above items as a single PDF attachment, with the file name “[Last Name]_[First Name]_AI_application”
- Please use the email subject line “[Last Name] Application - AI Fairness + PWD”.

If you have any questions, please direct them to TechInstitute@law.georgetown.edu.

Notice

Georgetown University is an [Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer](#) fully dedicated to achieving a diverse faculty and staff. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply and will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic [protected by law](#).

If you are an individual with a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for any part of the application and hiring process, please visit <https://ideaa.georgetown.edu/ada> for more information, or contact the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Affirmative Action at 202-687-4798 or ideaa@georgetown.edu.

About the Tech Institute

The [Institute for Technology Law and Policy](#) at Georgetown Law is an academic institute within Georgetown University Law Center. It is dedicated to training the next generation of lawyers and lawmakers with a deep understanding of technology law and policy, and to providing a central forum for policymakers, academics, advocates and technologists to study and discuss the most pressing issues in technology law today.

Among other programming, the Institute offers:

- **Public convenings on key issues in technology policy.** Examples include spring 2019 events on how the digital divide exacerbates algorithmic bias; the governance of internet platforms; potential effects of communications mergers on low-income and rural communities; and ethical questions around gene editing technologies.
- **Training for Congressional staff on key technology issues.** The Institute holds an annual educational immersion program, “Tech Foundations for Congressional Staff”, and other related programming to provide Congressional staff with non-partisan, up-to-date information about current and emerging technologies.
- **Workshops to convene academics, technologists, policy experts and industry.** Examples include workshops on reconciling the tensions between privacy and data

sharing for social good; governance of the platform/data economy; how to strengthen government capacity to navigate complex questions posed by new technology.

- **Academic programming.** The Institute created and runs Georgetown's Tech Law Scholars program, which allows law students to gain a concentration in technology law and policy, and also manages *The Georgetown Law Technology Review*. We host regular on-campus speakers and discussions at the intersection of technology and public policy, typically through a lens of technology and questions of social justice.
- **Original research.** The Institute has a team of fellows working on projects such as: (1) the role of the FTC in protecting consumer privacy; (2) the importance of ensuring open, accessible and affordable communications networks to protect democratic systems and create more equal opportunities for marginalized communities; (3) new approaches to restoring trust in the online ecosystem; (4) access to justice and technology, analyzing how technology can be used to help self-represented litigants have a fairer experience in our courts; and (5) inclusive innovation.

Learn more about our work at www.georgetowntech.org.