



# PRO BONO & VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

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## WHY DO PRO BONO?

- Get out of the classroom, meet real clients, and see real lawyers in action.
- Try out an area of law you're interested in.
- Meet attorneys and make professional connections.
- Gain experience you can put on your resume.
- You are in a unique position to use your specialized skills and knowledge to make a real difference.
- It's some of the most rewarding legal work you will ever do.

## WHAT IS PRO BONO WORK?

Pro bono work is work of a legal nature done on a volunteer basis, earning no monetary compensation or course credit. Pro bono work is intended to be work that assists with the representation of underserved clients or causes, including advocacy and policy work.

For purposes of counting hours toward law school awards or the Public Interest Certificate requirement, please refer to the following guidelines:

- **WHAT COUNTS?**

Following are some examples of work that could be counted as pro bono hours. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list; these are merely examples of commonly-performed pro bono tasks.

- Conducting intake at a pro bono legal advice clinic
- Assisting an attorney working on a pro bono matter
- Doing volunteer research for a nonprofit or government legal office
- Volunteering at a legal services office, a public defender or prosecutor office, or other nonprofit legal office
- Participating in a training for a pro bono project
- Helping to coordinate other students' work on a pro bono project

- **WHAT DOESN'T COUNT?**

- Volunteer work on political campaigns, such working at a phone bank for a candidate
- Volunteer work that is part of a religious practice, such as teaching a Sunday School class (Please note, however, that volunteer work of a non-religious nature that is affiliated with a religious organization – such as working at a free legal clinic hosted by a church – is fine.)
- Volunteer work performed for a judge
- Work done as part of a law school clinical course, for which a student is earning course credit
- Work done through one of the law school's externship programs, for which a student is earning course credit\*
- Full-time summer internships (whether paid or unpaid) do not count\*

\* *The following exceptions apply for externships and summer work:*

Externships: Up to 25 hours of unpaid work performed in addition to the required hours for externships may be counted toward an award. For example, if a student's academic-year externship course requires 96 hours of work, and the student performs 106 hours of work, the additional 10 hours may be counted toward a law school award. Or if a student works more than 40 hours/week for 6 weeks at a summer externship, up to 25 hours of that additional work may count.

Summer Internships: Up to 25 hours of work per summer at an unpaid summer internship may be counted. For example, if a student works full-time for 10 weeks at a public interest law office, the student may count 25 of those hours toward an award. This applies regardless of whether a student receives a summer grant from the law school. Work performed at paid internships or work done for course credit may not be counted.

## WHAT IS COMMUNITY SERVICE?

Volunteer work that meets the above criteria but is not of a legal nature – such as working at a soup kitchen or tutoring in an after-school program – may be counted as community service volunteer hours for purposes of law school awards or the Certificate in Public Interest Law.

## HOW DO I FIND OUT WHAT PROJECTS ARE AVAILABLE?

Near the beginning of each semester, the Public Interest Institute will host a lunchtime information session at which the available pro bono and community service projects are presented. There are also descriptions of most ongoing projects available on the PII website:

<http://www.law.ua.edu/public-interest-institute/volunteer-opportunities/>

## WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO WORK ON A PRO BONO PROJECT?

Many projects are open to all law students, regardless of year in school. Some projects require certain skills or experience which will be included in the project descriptions. All students must have attended a Pro Bono Training Session before participating in a pro bono project.

## WILL I RECEIVE TRAINING?

Yes. Every semester the Public Interest Institute will hold at least one Pro Bono Training Session which will cover basic information on professional ethics, conduct and responsibility. If specific knowledge or skills are required for a project, additional training will be provided by either the law school or a partnering community organization.

## HOW DO I SIGN UP?

In general, online sign-up sheets will be posted at the beginning of each semester. Every effort will be made to inform all students about volunteer opportunities as far in advance as possible. In addition, links to sign-up sheets may be emailed throughout the semester if there are additional volunteer slots to be filled. You can also contact Felecia Linton or Glory McLaughlin in the Public Interest Institute to find out about available volunteer projects.

## HOW DO I REPORT MY HOURS?

Go to: [http://www.law.ua.edu/resources/contact/publicinterest\\_servicehours.php](http://www.law.ua.edu/resources/contact/publicinterest_servicehours.php)

Additionally, there are paper forms available in the Public Interest Institute (Room 173) which you may fill out and submit to Felecia Linton.

## WHAT AWARDS OR RECOGNITION CAN I EARN FOR VOLUNTEERING?

- Dean's Community Service Award – requires 40 hours of volunteer work, either community service or pro bono work, while a law student
- Student Pro Bono Award – requires 50 hours of pro bono work while a law student
- Order of the Samaritan – requires 90 hours of total volunteer work, at least 50 hours of which must be pro bono work
- Pro Bono Excellence Award – awarded to the three graduating 3Ls with the highest number of pro bono hours during law school
- Excellence in Service Award – awarded to the three graduating 3Ls with the highest number of community service volunteer hours during law school

## DO I HAVE TO DO ONE OF THE PROJECTS OFFERED THROUGH THE LAW SCHOOL FOR IT TO COUNT?

No. You are free to participate in volunteer projects that you find on your own. If you plan to count your volunteer work as pro bono hours, it is recommended that you confirm with the Assistant Dean for Public Interest Law that your project will qualify as pro bono work.