



PRO BONO & VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

August 2014

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.

- Volunteer work on political campaigns (i.e., working at a phone bank for a candidate) or as part of a religious practice (i.e., teaching Sunday School) do not count as pro bono hours.
- Externships, clinics, and full-time summer internships (whether paid or unpaid) do not count toward the law school pro bono awards – with the following exceptions:
 - Unpaid work performed in addition to the required hours for academic-year externships may be counted toward an award. For example, if a student's 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.
 - If a student continues to do unpaid work at a summer internship or externship past 10 weeks (for a full-summer placement) or past 6 weeks (for a split-summer placement), the student may count up to 25 of those additional hours toward a law school award.

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.

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.

WILL I RECEIVE TRAINING?

Yes. Every project will have at least one scheduled training session. If specific knowledge or skills are required for a project, those will be provided at the training. Training sessions will also include basic information on professional ethics, conduct and responsibility.

HOW DO I SIGN UP?

At the information session at the beginning of each semester, sign-up sheets will be made available. In addition, links to sign-up sheets may be emailed throughout the semester if there are 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 slots.

HOW DO I REPORT MY HOURS?

Go to: 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 (beginning with class of 2017)
- Excellence in Service Award – awarded to the three graduating 3Ls with the highest number of community service volunteer hours during law school (beginning with class of 2017)

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.