

Pro Bono Program

Enhancing Legal Education Through Commitment to Community



Dean Brinkley '92 reviews a draft will for Mike Jones '17 and Sierra Lyda '19 during a winter break pro bono trip to a senior center in Cherokee, N.C.



"On the Winter Break trip, we met and learned about the Cherokee people, the reservation's history, and the tribe's unique legal system. Most importantly, we could provide legal services to clients who otherwise may not have had any other legal support, which was an incredible and humbling experience."

—KEN BLACK '20 (J.D./M.B.A.)



"The Pro Bono Program offered me an unparalleled opportunity to gain practical skills as a law student. Rounding out my classroom education, the program allowed me to learn new substantive law and practice core legal skills such as drafting work product and interacting with clients. As attorneys, we all have a responsibility to address unmet legal needs, and beginning this crucial process as a law student improved my confidence, sharpened my skill set, and informed my practice as an attorney for both private and pro bono clients."

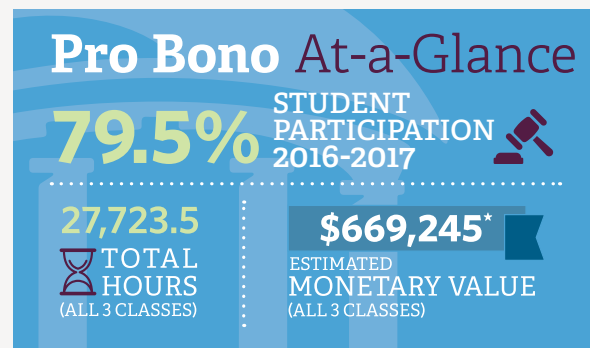
—LAUREN CRANFORD '12,
ASSOCIATE, SIDLEY AUSTIN LLP

What We Do

The UNC School of Law Pro Bono Program aims to provide high-quality, low-cost legal services to people in need in North Carolina and beyond while allowing law students to build skills for practice and meet unmet legal needs in the community. Since its creation 20 years ago, the program has connected law students to hundreds of projects with supervising attorneys in public interest organizations, government agencies and private practice.

A 13-member student board directs the Pro Bono Program in conjunction with the school's director of pro bono initiatives. The program facilitates pro bono projects throughout the state, fostering lifelong commitments to pro bono work among the Carolina Law community and the North Carolina legal community at large. To engage alumni and build connections between alumni and students, the Pro Bono Program also maintains an alumni board.

www.law.unc.edu/probono/



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*Based off 2016 national value of volunteer time, found at www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time

Attorney-Sponsored Projects

Throughout the academic year, attorneys post pro bono projects for students including research, interviewing and legal writing. These projects encompass a wide variety of practice areas and can be completed both remotely and in-person. Students sign up on a first-come first-served basis.

Trips

During academic year breaks, the Pro Bono Program sponsors trips to areas beyond the Triangle to host clinics with legal services agencies. In the past, students have worked on wills, divorces, expungement, advanced directives, health insurance enrollment and more.

Communities Served by Past Special Trips

Aberdeen	Hamlet	Rocky Mount
Alliance	High Point	Scotland Neck
Asheville	Jackson, MS	Siler City
Belhaven	Kinston	Sparta
Boone	Lumberton	Sugar Grove
Canton	Midway	Trenton
Charlotte	New Bern	Weldon
Cherokee	New Orleans, LA	Williamston
Columbia	Newland	Wilmington
Durham	Pembroke	Winterville
Fayetteville	Pittsboro	
Greensboro	Plymouth	
Greenville	Roanoke Rapids	

Winter Break and Spring Break

Much like attorney-sponsored projects during the academic year, the program gathers projects from attorneys and organizations during winter and spring break. Winter break projects are a popular way to get involved in pro bono work, especially for first-year students ready for practical experience after a semester in the classroom.

Featured Projects

In addition to soliciting projects from attorneys and organizations, the Pro Bono Program manages several projects like the Cancer Pro Bono Legal Project, Lawyer on the Line and non-partisan Election Protection. Additionally, the program organizes special clinics and events, allowing students to complete a project during orientation or work on a short project during lunch.

Student Groups

Many student groups create and manage their own projects, clinics and trips based on chosen focus areas of the groups. These range from ongoing – like the Innocence Project – to seasonal or one-day – like the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance project and Lambda Law Students Association's transgender name change clinic.

Faculty Initiatives

Faculty members participate in projects run by the Pro Bono Program and work on pro bono cases and initiatives on an individual basis. Faculty members regularly engage students in the pro bono work that they do, providing students with unique opportunities to work on areas of interest that they share with a professor and develop relationships that extend beyond the classroom walls.

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