

# UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LAW SCHOOL VOLUNTARY PRO BONO PLEDGE

## Statement of Purpose

The University of Michigan Law School not only trains its students to be fine lawyers and advocates but also to be exemplary members of their communities. The goal of the University of Michigan Law School Voluntary Pro Bono Pledge is to encourage students to use their professional training to benefit the community, particularly underserved populations. The American Bar Association (ABA) [Rule 6.1](#) states that “every lawyer has a professional responsibility to provide legal services to those unable to pay. A lawyer should aspire to render at least (50) hours of pro bono publico legal services per year.” As such, the Pro Bono Pledge is founded on the principle that attorneys have an ethical obligation to their communities, and with the knowledge that pro bono legal work provides students exposure to a range of important legal issues and invaluable experience that will shape their education.

## The Pro Bono Pledge

A voluntary program, the University of Michigan Law School Pro Bono Pledge encourages students to perform fifty (50) hours or more of qualifying pro bono work over their three years in law school. Graduating students performing at least 50 hours of pro bono work will receive a Certificate of Pro Bono Service from the Dean, recognition at an annual pro bono banquet, and acknowledgment during the Honors Convocation.

### I. “Pro Bono Work” Definition

**A. Qualifying Work.** Students’ work must be: (1) law related; (2) supervised or approved by an attorney; (3) provided to the client free of charge or at a substantially reduced rate; (4) not for credit and uncompensated; (5) at least 10 of the 50 hours must be completed while classes are in session (see Section B for more information); and (6) provided to underrepresented persons, interests, or communities on behalf of a non-profit or government organization approved by the Office of Public Service.

Examples of qualifying work include but are not limited to:

- A. Law-related work on behalf of indigent clients at a non-profit organization as defined under IRS sections 501(c)(3) & (4);
- B. Law-related work at a Prosecutor’s or Public Defender’s office;
- C. Law-related work for a government agency or office;
- D. Law-related work for a student organization, such as the Food Stamp Advocacy Project or Family Law Project;
- E. Efforts to protect important legal rights and liberties at non-profit organization as defined under IRS sections 501(c)(3) & (4); and
- F. Educating the public’s understanding of a law.

Examples of non-qualifying work include but are not limited to:

- A. Clerking for a judge;

- B. Assisting in political campaign efforts;
- C. Fundraising;
- D. Work done for a law journal or similar organization; and
- E. Work that receives academic credit or compensation.

**B. Regarding Work Done While Classes are Not in Session.** To fulfill the Pledge, a student must complete at least ten (10) hours of Pro Bono Work while classes are in session. The remaining forty (40) hours may be completed during the summer, between terms, or during winter break, so long as the work otherwise qualifies under Section A—that is, the work must be law-related, supervised by an attorney, provided free or at a substantially reduced rate, not for credit and uncompensated, and on behalf of underrepresented parties on behalf of an approved organization.

Examples of this include:

- If you are working for a firm and complete a pro bono assignment, it would not qualify under the Pledge, since it was done for compensation in the normal course of your job duties. However, if your firm offered an optional opportunity to assist at an advice and referral clinic, outside of your work hours or on a weekend, the hours spent (up to 40 hours) would qualify under the Pledge.
- If you receive the Dean's Fellowship, an SFF grant, the Public Service Guarantee, or other summer funding, your summer job at a non-profit would not count toward the Pledge. However, if your organization allowed you to stay beyond the required 10 weeks and work without compensation, or you worked beyond the normal 40-hour work week, the extra hours you complete (up to 40 hours) would qualify under the Pledge.
- If you volunteer with an organization unrelated to your summer internship and the work otherwise qualifies under the Pledge, that volunteer work would qualify under the Pledge (up to 40 hours).

## II. Program Operation

To obtain credit under the Pledge, students must ensure that two forms are returned to the Office of Public Service no later than 30 days after the work has been completed: 1) **a student evaluation**, and 2) **an organization evaluation**, which includes the total number of hours completed by the student and the signature of a supervising attorney [evaluation links will be active by October 1, 2009]. Further, to receive recognition at the Honors Convocation, all forms must be completed and submitted no later than October 25 for December graduates and March 25 for May graduates.

Please note that you are welcome to report more than 50 hours of Pro Bono Work, as we will be able to place the total hours you complete on your Certificate of Pro Bono Service.

The final decision regarding whether work qualifies for the Pledge will be made by the Office of Public Service. If you have any doubts about whether something qualifies, please contact Amy Sankaran, Pro Bono Manager, at [aharwell@umich.edu](mailto:aharwell@umich.edu) or (734) 764-7787.