

ALBANY LAW SCHOOL

PRO BONO SOCIETY

Project Descriptions

2012-2013

INTRODUCTION

Albany Law School has a deep and abiding commitment to pro bono service, and to supporting students pursuing public sector careers. In addition to Albany Law School's outstanding public interest curricular offerings, the pro bono program provides a broad range of services to students interested in pro bono service. Albany Law endeavors to shape professional values, including a commitment to pro bono service. Pro bono programs offer multiple educational benefits in areas including professional responsibility, problem solving, lawyering skills, and leadership skills. Pro bono programs also assist students' career development and help foster good will between the school, our alumni, and our broader community. The Pro Bono Society, a student run pro bono program at Albany Law, offers a broad range of projects to meet those ends.

1) Albany County Help Desk and Attorney for the Day

Project Director: Christopher Wagner, '14 – cwagner@albanylaw.edu
Community Partners: Albany County Bar Association and Albany Family Court, Legal Aid Society of NNY
Faculty Advisor: Professor Benjie Louis – bloui@albanylaw.edu
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: 15 hours per semester.
Project Description: In conjunction with the Albany County Bar Association, students provide assistance to those conducting business with the Family Court. While no legal advice is given, students provide invaluable assistance in completing necessary paperwork. Students generally volunteer their time on a weekly basis, and while at the Family Court, are afforded the opportunity to observe court proceedings. Secondly, in conjunction with the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern NY, students attend landlord/tenant hearings to provide assistance to an attorney by conducting initial client intake interviews. Typically, participants in this project will volunteer at the Family Court Help Desk on a weekly basis, and then participate in Attorney-for-a-Day once a month.

2) Animal Law Project

Co-Project Director: Megan Mutolo, '13 - mmutolo@albanylaw.edu
Co-Project Director: Julia Steciuk, '14 – jsteciuk@albanylaw.edu
Community Partner: TBA
Faculty Advisor: TBA
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: 15 hours per semester.
Program Description: Students will perform law related research, assist in community education, and conduct outreach efforts around specific bills related to animal law issues.

3) Anti- Human Trafficking Legal Project

Project Director: Nathan Zilak, '13 – nzilak@albanylaw.edu
Community Partner: NYS Anti-Trafficking Coalition
Faculty Advisor: Professor Dorothy Hill – dhill@albanylaw.edu
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: 15 hours per semester

Program Description: In collaboration with the NYS Anti-Trafficking Coalition, students will conduct grassroots organizing efforts on campuses in the Capital District to build support for the “Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act”; conduct research; and engage in legislative lobbying efforts around this act. In the long term this project will continue to develop means for combatting human trafficking, and partner with other community groups for future assignments.

4) Child Advocate Project

Project Director: TBA
Community Partner: Equal Justice Works & TBA
Faculty Advisor: TBA
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: 15 hours per semester
Project Description: In collaboration with the Empire Justice Center, students will be updating their “Patchwork of Policies” report. New York receives nearly \$1 billion in federal monies for child care subsidies for low income families every year. In part because EJC is a state supervised, county administered welfare system, this money is distributed to the counties and they are allowed within certain parameters to set the rules for eligibility for child care subsidies. These rules are ever changing and there is very little public awareness of what they are, how often they change, and how widely disparate the rules are from county to county. This year all the social services districts were required to file new “Consolidated Services Plans,” which meant that many of them changed their child care subsidy eligibility rules. Students will review all the consolidated services plans and update the EJC report. This report is used extensively in EJC’s lobbying efforts to move the state to creating a statewide child care subsidy system, and also has informed our litigation challenging the copayment disparities.

5) Christian Legal Project

Project Director: Amanda Keller, ’13 - akeller@albanylaw.edu
Community Partner: Persing & O’Leary, LLP
Faculty Advisor: Professor Daniel Persing - dpers@albanylaw.edu
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: 15 hours per semester.
Project Description: In conjunction with the Persing & O’Leary, LLP firm, students will be providing legal assistance to churches and Christian organizations concerning property/real estate issues and; providing legal assistance to Christian families who wish to/are homeschooling their children in order to navigate the legal issues surrounding such a task.

6) Civil Rights Project

Project Director: Craig Mackey, ’13 - cmackey@albanylaw.edu
Community Partners: New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)
Faculty Advisor: Professor Anthony Farley – afarl@albanylaw.edu
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: 15 hours per semester.
Project Description: In conjunction with the NYCLU, students will be conducting research, developing education materials, conducting outreach, and providing assistance to attorneys involved in litigation efforts.

7) Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Project

Project Co-Director: Chris Scoville, ’14 - cscoville@albanylaw.edu
Project Co-Director: Kristin Rogers, ’14 - kr Rogers@albanylaw.edu
Faculty Advisor: Professor Sarah Rogerson - srode@albanylaw.edu

Community Partners: Empire Justice Works (EJW); Whiteman, Osterman, & Hanna; & the NYS Dept. Of State
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: At least 15 hours per semester.
Project Description: In conjunction with community partners, students will be serving the needs of undocumented immigrants who wish to apply for deferred action under DACA. Students will conduct research, and develop educational material for both practitioners serving clients who may qualify for deferred action, as well as for the community. They will also assist with law day events to provide direct legal services to individuals seeking to apply for deferred action.

8) Education Project

Project Director: Kathleen Rivers, '14 - krivers@albanylaw.edu
Community Partners: New York State Department of Education, Office of Innovative School Models (Charter Schools)
Faculty Advisor: Professor Anthony Farley - afarl@albanylaw.edu
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: 15 hours per semester, but flexible depending on availability of students.
Project Description: Students will assist the Office of Innovative School Models (Charter Schools Office) with legal research relating to education law, compliance issues, and legal analysis of statutes and regulations. Students have the opportunity to enhance their legal research and writing skills through hands-on experience in education law.

9) Elder Law Project

Project Director: Brittiny Belmonte, '14 - bbelmonte@albanylaw.edu
Community Partners: Rural Law Center
Faculty Advisor: Professor Dorothy Hill - dhill@albanylaw.edu
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: 15 hours per semester.
Project Description: This placement allows students to provide information to rural and elderly New Yorkers about a variety of legal issues, including Health Care Proxies, living wills, and public benefits.

10) Fair Hearings Project

Project Director: TBA
Community Partners: Empire Justice Center
Faculty Advisor: Professor Ray Brescia - rbres@albanylaw.edu
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: This project includes extensive training and a minimum commitment of reading, summarizing, and posting at least 20 cases.
Project Description: In collaboration with the Empire Justice Center and the Western NY Law Center, law students will help update the online digest of administrative hearings submitted by attorneys from all over the state.

11) IRAP – The Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project

Project Director: Steven Sacco, '13 - ssacco@albanylaw.edu
Faculty Advisor: Professor Christian Sundquist - csund@albanylaw.edu
Community Partners: IRAP
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: A minimum of 15 hours per semester.
Project Description: IRAP organizes law students and attorneys to provide legal representation for Iraqi refugees and their families who cannot otherwise afford it. IRAP helps these individuals navigate the

rules and processes of resettlement in the U.S. and helps families escape from harm and persecution abroad. Each student will work on and IRAP case under the direct supervision of a volunteer attorney from ALS or the surrounding community.

12) Language Access Project (LAP)

Project Director: Trevor Casperson, '13 - tcasperson@albanylaw.edu
Community Partners: The Legal Project, Albany Law School Clinic and Justice Center, MAMI, and more.
Faculty Advisor: TBA
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: TBA
Project Description: Law students who speak a language other than English assist attorneys in interviewing and communicating with non-English speaking clients. Students may gain knowledge about judicial and administrative proceedings and develop legal skills in client counseling, advocacy and litigation through the second-hand experience of being a practicing attorney. Students speaking Mandarin and Spanish are especially encouraged to participate.

13) LawHelp Project

Project Director: Nicholas Orecki, '14 - norecki@albanylaw.edu
Faculty Advisor: TBA
Community Partners: LawHelp NY
Training: Students will receive software training, as well as instruction on how to handle information request and difficult cases. Additional assistance is available throughout the semester, often on an instant basis.
Time Commitment: 3 hours per week.
Project Description: Students act as online LawHelp operators, providing “know your rights” materials and referral information about free or low cost legal services for indigent New Yorkers. This project provides an opportunity for students to develop issue spotting skills; to practice relating to clients with difficult, pressing, and often emotional problems; and to learn more about a wide range of legal issues facing low-income, disabled, and elderly people. The community partner has a particular need for students that can read and write in Spanish.

14) LGBT Rights Project

Project Director: Dan Koskinen, '14 - dkoskinen@albanylaw.edu
Faculty Advisor: Professor Nancy Ota - nota@albanylaw.edu
Community Partners: Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: 15 hours per semester.
Project Description: Students will provide outreach, conduct research, and develop educational material to address LGBT legal issues, such as in areas relating to marriage rights and benefits, discrimination, and name changes. Students will also be involved in efforts to educate the public on the GENDA bill, and provide support to the Empire Pride Agenda in their legislative goals.

15) Matrimonial & Family Law Program

Project Director: Sara Mendicino, '13 - smendicino@albanylaw.edu
Project Co- Director: Mark Miller, '14 - MMiller@albanylaw.edu
Faculty Advisor: Prof. Melissa Breger - mbreg@albanylaw.edu

- Pro Se Divorce Program
Community Partners: The Legal Project

Training: TBA
Time Commitment: 5-7 hours per semester.
Project Description: Students involved in the *Pro Se* Divorce Program attend training once a semester with attorneys from The Legal Project and subsequently work at a *pro se* divorce clinic in Mechanicville, New York. At the clinic, students work with members of the community to complete *pro se* divorce applications.

- Kinship Care Program

Community Partners: Office of Child and Family Services of Rochester, Kinship Program; Gerald Wallace, Esq.

Training: TBA

Time Commitment: Approximately 1-2 hours every other week on research tasks.

Project Description: Students working with Gerald Wallace, Esq. as part of the Kinship Care Program help research grandparents and relatives rights in relation to child custody and support issues. Rights of incarcerated parents are also addressed. Students in this program have the opportunity to attend meetings relative to these issues and help draft new policies for different agencies.

16) Prisoner's Rights Project

Project Director: Carly Walas, '13 – cwalas@albanylaw.edu

Assistant Director: Mike Wetmore, '14 - mwetmore@albanylaw.edu

Faculty Advisor: Professor Laurie Shanks - lshan@albanylaw.edu

Community Partners: Prisoners Legal Services, Albany County Reentry Taskforce

Training: TBA

Time Commitment: 15 hours per semester.

Project Description: Through this project, students have the opportunity to work with the Prisoners Legal Services of New York to provide legal support for prisoners by writing legal articles and providing research. Students may also have the chance to conduct administrative appeals for prisoners who are challenging disciplinary hearings, as well as draft and file Article 78 Petitions (all purpose tool to challenge decisions of state agencies).

17) Project Salam & Freedom Now Project

Project Co-Director: Ashley Dougherty, '14 - adougherty@albanylaw.edu

Project Co-Director: Katerina Kramarchyk, '13- kkramarchyk@albanylaw.edu

Faculty Advisor: TBA

- Community Partners: Freedom Now

Training: TBA

Time Commitment: Less than 15 hours per semester.

Project Description: Students will work with Freedom Now to free prisoners of conscience through focused legal, political and public relations advocacy efforts. Students will conduct research on international laws and cases, draft legal briefs and assist with political advocacy initiatives.

- Community Partners: Project Salam

Training: TBA

Time Commitment: Less than 15 hours per semester.

Project Description: Students will be conducting research and examining post-9/11 terrorism cases in an effort to determine whether, in each case, there was substantial evidence of criminality to substantial the prosecutions. Additionally, students will examine the

tactics and strategies of the prosecution in these cases to determine if the government has created conditions under which the right to a fair trial is not possible.

18) U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) Project

Project Director: Kelly Hendricksen, '14 - khendricksen@albanylaw.edu
Community Partners: USCRI
Faculty Advisor: Professor Peter Halewood - phale@albanylaw.edu
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: A minimum of 15 hours per semester.
Project Description: Three students will work under the direct supervision of one of the USCRI's attorneys at their office in downtown Albany. Students will work to assist clients with forms and other documents. In addition, students will conduct research for, and provide assistance to, the attorney on immigration and refugee matters.

19) Veteran's Rights Project

Project Director: Benjamin Pomerance, '13 – bpomerance@albanylaw.edu
Project Assistant: Josh Bennett, '14 - jbennett@albanylaw.edu
Faculty Advisor: Professor Vincent Bonventre - ybonv@albanylaw.edu
Community Partners: Legal Aid Society of Northeastern NY, the Albany Housing Coalition, Christina Eagle, Esq., Tully and Rinckey
Training: TBA
Time Commitment: 15 hours per semester.
Project Description: The Veteran's Rights Project works to provide free legal services to the men and women who have served in our armed forces and now need legal assistance in a variety of areas. In particular, the Project focuses on assisting homeless military veterans in the Albany region.

20) Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Project

Project Director: Anjalee Daryani, '13 - adaryani@albanylaw.edu
Faculty Advisor: Professor Danshera Cords - dcord@albanylaw.edu
Community Partners: United Way, Key Bank, IRS Vita
Training: TBA – over the Winter break
Time Commitment: 15 hours per semester.
Project Description: Students are certified in tax preparation so as to provide tax assistance to low-income families in the Capital Region throughout tax season.