

# HOWARD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW PRO BONO HONORS PLEDGE PROGRAM

## STUDENT INFORMATION PACKET



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**Equal Justice Program**  
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# Howard University School of Law Pro Bono Honors Pledge Program

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW INFORMATION

### **An Introduction to the Pro Bono Honors Pledge Program**

Howard University School of Law has a proud legacy of championing civil rights and social justice causes. The Pro Bono Honors Pledge Program furthers this legacy by encouraging HUSL students to engage in voluntary, uncompensated work on behalf of low-income and underrepresented populations. Pro bono (short for *pro bono publico*) means “for the public good”. The program is also designed to encourage students to begin a life-long commitment of service for the public good.

Through the program, students pledge to complete a minimum of 50 hours of pro bono and community service projects at organizations working on behalf of low-income and underrepresented populations during their 3 years of law school. Students may complete up to 25 of their 50 hours in non-legal community service work; however, the remainder of their hours must be completed with an organization engaged primarily in law-related or legal work.

LL.M. students who volunteer for the pledge must complete a minimum of 25 hours of law-related or legal work. Due to the special difficulty of non-U.S. LL.M.’s securing a traditional law-related pro bono placement, all 25 hours of their pledge may be completed in non-law related community service placements.

There are no negative consequences for students who do not meet their pledge.

### **Benefits of Pro Bono Work**

Pro Bono work will give you exposure to fields that interest you and allow you to practice legal skills such as client interviews, fact investigation, legal research, analysis, and drafting documents. Moreover, competition for jobs, particularly in the public sector, is extremely high. Pro Bono volunteering is an excellent way to gain practical legal experience and build up a resume. Finally, many organizations need students with foreign language proficiency to interpret or translate, so the Program can be an excellent way to maintain or improve your language skills. In short, you will:

- Gain experience in areas of interest
- Expand your professional network by working with practitioners, faculty and other students
- Experience what you learn in the classroom by assisting clients, conducting outreach and participating in the research and writing of legal documents
- Provide assistance to members of the community with the greatest need and the least resources

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- Get out of Houston Hall and into the larger local, national and international community around you
- Feel good about applying your knowledge and skills to help others
- Get inspired by your clients!

### **Qualifying Work**

**Community Service Placements:** Students fulfilling the community service portion of their pledge may volunteer with any nonprofit engaged in work on behalf of low-income or underrepresented people.

**Pro Bono Placements:** Students completing the pro bono portion of their pledge may volunteer with qualifying nonprofit organizations, government agencies, or HUSL Programs. In order to qualify as a pro bono placement, an organization must be engaged primarily in law-related work on behalf of low-income or underrepresented populations, and the work must be substantially legal (not administrative) in nature. The participant may not receive remuneration of any kind, including: academic credit or financial compensation, grants or stipends. The work must be performed under the supervision of an attorney and may be local, national or international in scope. The law school accepts no supervisory or legal responsibility for any pro bono legal services provided by students under this program.

**Hours Requirement:** The nature of pro bono work is that it is voluntary work performed outside the scope of a regular job and with no expectation of remuneration of any kind. Thus, any regularized employment of 20 or more hours per week during the summer, paid or unpaid, is presumptively not pro bono. Internships during the school year may qualify for pro bono credit if the student is not receiving compensation or academic credit for the internship. If the student is not taking classes (i.e. during the summer), s/he may only receive credit for pro bono services if those services are provided outside the scope of a formal job or (paid or unpaid) internship. Volunteer services rendered during the course of Alternative Spring Break will count towards pro bono hours. However, only time spent at legal services organizations should be logged. Time spent traveling to the ASB site should not be logged as hours. If you believe your work should qualify for program credit, you must seek permission from the Equal Justice Program Coordinator on a case-by-case basis.

**Identifying Placements:** Students are encouraged to identify pro bono and community service opportunities throughout the academic year. A list of possible pro bono placements in the DC Metro Area is available in the Clinic, G-18 (ND) and in the Public Interest Resource Center (Suite 101, ND). The list of suggested pro bono placements is a “living document.” If you are familiar with an organization that appears to meet the pro bono honors pledge criteria, but is not on the list, please convey the information to the Equal Justice Program Coordinator for review. If the organization meets the criteria, it will be added to the suggested placement list. Students may work for on-campus organizations or faculty programs doing pro bono work as long as the placement fulfills all the criteria described above.

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Qualifying HUSL activities include:

- Marshall-Brennan Teaching Hours
- Alternative Spring Break Internship Hours
- Community Service outreach or community trainings organized by the Clinical Law Center. (intake hours are not counted as pro bono).

**Exclusions:** Specifically excluded from both Community Service Placements and Pro Bono Placements are the following:

1. Services performed as part of a judicial clerkship or internship
2. Services performed for compensation or with the expectation of receiving academic credit, including course credit graded on a “pass/fail” basis.

### **Recognition for Students who meet the Pledge**

Students who complete the pledge prior to the end of their final year at HUSL will receive special notation in the graduation bulletin. They will also receive a certificate of achievement signed by the Dean indicating the different level of honors based on the total number of hours completed:

- Friend of Justice (50 – 74 hours)
- Agent of Change (75 - 99 hours)
- Social Engineer (100+ hours)

There are no negative consequences for students who do not meet their pledge.

### **Getting Started**

**Fill Out the Pledge Agreement Form:** To participate in the Pro Bono Honors Pledge Program, students must turn in a Student Pledge Agreement form to the Clinical Law Center (G-18).

**Selecting a Placement:** Students are encouraged to identify a pro bono placement that focuses on an area of the law or issue area that is of particular interest to them. In addition, some Howard partnerships with local non-profit organizations will be available for students to engage in during the school year.

Resources are available to help you select a pro bono placement:

- ✓ The Equal Justice Program maintains a list of suggested pro bono placements with brief descriptions of the organization and its work, located in the Clinical Law Center, G-18 (ND).
- ✓ Search the Organizations Database on [www.pslawnet.org](http://www.pslawnet.org) for an extensive listing of local nonprofits. Use your Howard email account to register for free.
- ✓ Search [www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org) for a variety of community service placement ideas.
- ✓ Meet with Professor Raj, (G-15 Notre Dame) [craj@law.howard.edu](mailto:craj@law.howard.edu), to find out about Howard Law partnerships with legal service organizations and discuss ways to develop new pro bono projects.

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**Reporting Pledge Hours:** Students are responsible for tracking and reporting their hours each semester. For community service placements, students must complete the *Community Service Time Verification form*, including the signature of a supervisor.

For pro bono placements, the student's attorney supervisor must sign the *Student Time Log* attesting to the hours completed and work undertaken. Students must also complete an evaluation of their placement experience upon completion of the placement. Copies of student evaluations are kept in a binder and are available for review by other students.

**Deadline for turning in time sheets and forms:** All required forms and documents related to the student's participation in the program must be submitted to the Clinical Law Center by the last day of classes each semester. Graduating students must complete all 50 hours by the 10<sup>th</sup> week of their final semester in order to qualify for the pledge. Students who turn in required documentation late will still receive an honors certificate from the law school for their participation, but due to time considerations, may not be recognized at the awards or graduation ceremonies or in the graduation bulletin.

### **SUMMARY: How do I get started?**

- 1. Stop by the Clinical Law Center, G-18, Notre Dame, and fill out Pro Bono Honors Pledge Form**
- 2. Review a list of suggested pro bono placements.**
- 3. Set up a meeting with Professor Claire Raj ([craj@law.howard.edu](mailto:craj@law.howard.edu)) to discuss current pro bono projects and how to become involved.**
- 4. Track Pledge hours on the Student Time Log (or on the Community Service Time Verification sheet for non-legal community service).**
- 5. Obtain appropriate supervisor signatures and turn in the Student Time Log to the Clinical Law Center by the last day of classes each semester. Community service placements require a supervisor signature. Pro bono placements require a supervising attorney signature.**
- 6. Complete your student evaluation at the end of each placement and turn forms into the Clinical Law Center.**



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**STUDENT TIME LOG**

(Attach additional pages if necessary, return to Clinical Law Center (G-18 ND) or fax to 2/806-8436)

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class of: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Placement Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ End Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Work:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Week:	Hours:

Week:	Hours:

**Total Hours** \_\_\_\_\_

This is an accurate and complete log of my hours:

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The number of hours reported on this time log is an accurate account of the time worked and the tasks performed:

Supervising Attorney's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervising Attorney's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

*(Pro Bono hours should be reported no later than the last day of class each semester. Graduating students should complete all 50 hours by the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> week of their final semester.)*

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**COMMUNITY SERVICE TIME VERIFICATION**  
(To be used for non-legal volunteer hours in place of Student Time Log)

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Contact Information

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor Name/Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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Project Information

Total Hours Volunteered: \_\_\_\_\_ Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Description of Tasks: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**The student whose name appears above has completed the reported number of volunteer hours:**

**Supervisor's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**STUDENT EVALUATION:**

(Your evaluation will not be shared with your supervisor, but instead, will be accessible for other interested students.)

Please remove my name before making my evaluation accessible to other students: \_\_\_\_\_

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Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class of: \_\_\_\_\_

Placement Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ End Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Hours Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Evaluation Questions**

How would you rate your placement in terms of supervision (i.e., guidance, feedback and evaluation)?

Excellent       Good       Satisfactory       Poor

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you assess the training and orientation provided by the placement?

Excellent       Good       Satisfactory       Poor

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the kinds of assignments given to you?

Excellent       Good       Satisfactory       Poor

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

How much client interaction did you have?

Constant       Substantial       Frequent       Little

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the issues you worked on at this placement:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe the type of work (i.e., intake, research, writing, outreach and education, etc):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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What was the size of your placement Center or organization?

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How would you describe the (working and social) atmosphere at your placement?

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Would you recommend this placement to another student? Why or why not?

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Do you feel your commitment to doing *pro bono* work after law school was strengthened by this experience?

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What have been the primary benefits to your participation in the Pro Bono Honors Pledge?

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Please provide any feedback or additional comments regarding the Pro Bono Honors Pledge Program at HUSL:

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Would you be willing to share your experience with other students?

No

Yes, have students  e-mail or  call me.

Completed forms can be faxed to 202-806-8436, emailed to [craj@law.howard.edu](mailto:craj@law.howard.edu), or brought to the Clinical Law Center, G-18 (ND).