



**PRO BONO/PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAM  
STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-KANSAS CITY**

**UMKC SCHOOL OF LAW  
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**2008- 2009**

Dear Student:

The three years of rigorous coursework, competitive examinations, professional preparation, and intensive study that characterize law school require a strong commitment on the part of students, and we are pleased that you have selected UMKC to pursue your legal education.

Many of you enter law school with dreams of promoting justice, fighting for the underdog, and making a difference in the world. Unfortunately, the amount of time and energy dedicated to academic work, coupled with the increasing amount of student loans, leaves many students feeling as if a career in public service, or even dedicating time to pro bono work, is nothing more than a dream.

This handbook was written with the intention of (1) showing that pro bono work in a law school setting is not just possible, but is highly rewarding, and (2) providing students with a means of finding, carrying out, and being recognized for such work.

As an urban institution, UMKC provides students with rich and varied opportunities to serve the public interest and to aid underserved members of our community. We hope that after reading this guide and finding out more about the myriad of ways in which you can use your education to benefit the community, you will choose to participate in UMKC's voluntary Pro Bono/Public Service Program.

By joining the Program, you will have the benefits of hands-on legal training, the opportunity to develop relationships with lawyers and legal organizations in the community, exposure to various areas of the law, and the satisfaction of making a difference in people's lives.

We hope that you will choose to take advantage of this potentially life-changing opportunity.

Ellen Y. Suni  
Marvin Lewis Rich Faculty Scholar and Professor of Law  
Dean  
University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law

## WHAT IS PRO BONO?

Before jumping into a discussion of potential pro bono work placements, how to track hours, and other rules and regulations, it is important to present a definition of pro bono, a subject on which many students are unclear.

Pro bono comes from the Latin *pro bono publico* and means “for the public good.” In modern times, work that is “pro bono” has come to mean work that is rendered without fee, or at a substantially reduced fee, to those of limited means. All types of professionals have a civic responsibility to perform pro bono work, such as doctors providing medical aid to those without healthcare, counselors providing therapy to those in crisis who cannot afford expensive sessions, or teachers who take positions in urban neighborhoods or even abroad to work with needy populations. As soon-to-be lawyers, you, too, have the ability and the responsibility to use your skills and training to help those in need of legal services, many of whom cannot afford legal fees.

In a law school setting, work may be considered pro bono if the work is performed for someone of limited means or a nonprofit organization that serves such a population and the student receives neither pay nor credit for the work performed. Participation in clinics and externships and work at a reduced salary for organizations providing legal services to underserved populations may also be considered pro bono. Work for the community that is non-law related, such as volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, would typically not be considered pro bono work because it does not require the use of legal skills, but at UMKC, some of this community service work may be eligible towards the total pro bono hours required for completion of the Program. In addition, work that improves the law, improves the legal system, or serves the Bar or similar legal organizations, including the Law School, may qualify for credit in the Program (see “The Basics” section for more details).

## **WHY PRO BONO?**

Both students and professionals are encouraged to perform pro bono work regularly. Professionals have a responsibility to use their privileged status to represent underserved populations in their communities. As students, not only do you have the opportunity to do good for the less fortunate, you also have the opportunity to obtain the many rewards from choosing to dedicate time to pro bono work.

By volunteering your time to pro bono projects, the work you do in the classroom will take on new meaning. By directly engaging with those in need of legal services, you will gain a better understanding of the needs of your community, the systems already in place, and how to navigate them. You will have the opportunity to establish relationships with individuals in your area, which will help you to gain a better understanding of your role as a lawyer and what you are able to offer. You will also have the chance to network with professionals and nonprofit organizations in the area. Also, by doing volunteer legal work, you gain exposure to various areas of the law and will be able to make a more informed decision about the type of law you wish to pursue when it comes time to find a legal position.

The American Bar Association (ABA), in its Model Rules of Professional Conduct, states that lawyers should aspire to provide 50 hours of pro bono services per year to those of limited means. M.R. 6.1. Many law firms require their employees to meet this standard, and so by beginning your commitment to pro bono early, you make yourself more marketable and also develop a sense of professional values that will stay with you throughout your later career.

In addition, the ABA's Standards for Approval of Law Schools provides that "a law school shall offer substantial opportunities for...student participation in pro bono activities." In compliance with that standard, UMKC has made a concerted effort to develop an organized, formal, voluntary pro bono program, described in this handbook, to make student participation in pro bono activities as easy as possible.

## MISSION

As a law school, UMKC recognizes the key role it plays in shaping the professional values of its students. Thus, we strive to create an environment that instills a sense of civic responsibility in its students and demonstrates a commitment to public service and meeting the needs of those of limited means in the community.

## THE BASICS

- Participation in the Pro Bono/Public Service Program is highly encouraged
- Students who complete the required number of hours for program completion will be recognized at graduation
- Hours must be logged and reported monthly
- All pro bono work placements that are not on the approved list must be approved by the Pro Bono Office before a student begins work
- Important Definitions:

*Pro Bono and Public Service* – services involving direct representation of underserved people or organizations serving underrepresented people, service to governmental organizations, and service to other public interest organizations involved in legal representation or advocacy

*Service to the Profession* – service to the Bar or bar-related organizations, other organizations dedicated to improvement of the law or the legal system, other law-related organizations, or the law school or law school organizations. Purely or primarily social activities do not constitute service.

*Service to the General Community* – non-law related work that benefits the community (e.g., Christmas in October, Habitat for Humanity, etc.)

*Uncompensated* – work for which no credit or monetary compensation is received

*Partially Compensated* – work for which course credit or monetary compensation at least 50% below the “going rate” for law clerk work is received. However, if a law student performs work above and beyond that required for credit, the additional work may be considered uncompensated at the discretion of the course supervisor

*Compensated* – work for which payment that is more than 50% of the “going rate” is received

## **THE STEPS**

### **1) INTENT**

If you are interested in participating in the UMKC School of Law’s Pro Bono/Public Service Program, you must submit the *Letter of Intent* to the Pro Bono Office located in the Career Services Office.

You may submit your Letter of Intent as early as your first year or as late as the end of your third semester of law school. However, first year students are limited to submitting no more than 20 hours towards the Pro Bono/Public Service Program during their first year for hours earned during periods when school is in session. For the class of 2010, the Letter of Intent must be submitted by April 15, 2009. For the class of 2009, students may submit applications for participation in the Program that will be reviewed on an individual basis.

Hours completed before the Letter of Intent has been filed *may* be permitted to count toward recognition if a) appropriate forms demonstrating completion of hours are filed within 30 days after filing the Letter of Intent and b) an explanation for the late filing is submitted with the letter and is accepted by the Pro Bono Committee.

### **2) PLACEMENTS**

Upon receiving your Letter of Intent, the CSO can help you find approved pro bono placement(s) that match your interests. UMKC offers numerous pro bono placements as well as clinics and externships from which to choose. You can arrange your own placement. If the placement is not on the approved list, it must be approved in advance.

Upon determining a placement, you must turn in a *Placement Initiation Form*, signed by your placement supervisor, to the Pro Bono Office.

### **3) TRACKING HOURS**

Students must turn in a log of their hours signed by the student and his or her supervisor at the end of each month. Your hours will be kept on file in the Pro Bono Office, but you should maintain a copy as well.

### **4) SUPERVISION**

All pro bono placements **MUST** be supervised, and the supervisor’s signature will be required on all work logs.

## 5) RECOGNITION

The UMKC Pro Bono/Public Service Program is a tiered program, meaning that various levels of service (as demonstrated by total number of completed hours) will be recognized in varying degrees. The following levels of recognition are provided for students:

**Level 1 – Honors in Pro Bono/Public Service** (includes honor cords at commencement and recognition at the Awards Ceremony)

A total of 200 hours, of which:

- [a] at least 140 must be uncompensated; of the remaining 60 hours, no more than 20 may be compensated, and the remainder may be either uncompensated or partially compensated hours;
- (b) at least 160 hours must be in the Pro Bono and Public Service category; and
- (c) up to 20 hours may be in Service to the Profession and up to 20 hours may be in Service to the General Community.

**Level 2 – Special Recognition for Pro Bono/Public Service** (includes recognition at the Awards Ceremony)

A total of 150 hours, of which:

- (a) at least 105 must be uncompensated; of the remaining 45 hours, no more than 15 may be compensated, and the remainder may be either uncompensated or partially compensated hours;
- (b) at least 120 hours must be in the Pro Bono and Public Service category; and
- (c) up to 15 hours may be in Service to the Profession and up to 15 hours may be in Service to the General Community.

**Level 3 - Recognition for Pro Bono/Public Service** (includes recognition at the Awards Ceremony)

A total of 100, of which:

- (a) at least 70 must be uncompensated; of the remaining 30 hours, no more than 10 may be compensated, and the remainder may be either uncompensated or partially compensated hours;
- (b) at least 80 hours must be hours in the Pro Bono and Public Service category;
- (c) up to 10 hours may be in Service to the Profession and up to 10 hours may be in Service to the General Community.

**APPENDIX A:**

**LETTER OF INTENT**

I have read through the UMKC Pro Bono/Public Service Program handbook and wish to participate in this voluntary program.

I understand that I must follow procedures as outlined in the handbook in order to be recognized for my work upon graduation. This includes having my pro bono work placement approved BEFORE making a commitment to the organization if it is not already approved, filing a Placement Initiation Form, and reporting all hours MONTHLY.

I understand that, if I have questions or concerns at any time, I can contact the UMKC Pro Bono Coordinator for clarification.

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

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year/Section: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B: PLACEMENT INITIATION FORM**

**UMKC SCHOOL OF LAW  
Placement Initiation Form**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Title of Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Expected Start Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Expected End Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Expected Hours Per Week: \_\_\_\_\_

Expected Total Hours: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer Type: Nonprofit    Government    Firm    Private Attorney    Other

Nature of Work: Pro Bono and Public Service    Service to General Community

Service to Legal Profession

Category of Service: Uncompensated    Partially Compensated    Compensated

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

Supervisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please take a moment to read through the student guidelines on the following page, sign and date it, and return it along with this form to the Pro Bono Office.*

## **STUDENT INTERN GUIDELINES**

As a student participant in the UMKC School of Law Pro Bono/Public Service Program, you will:

1. When an organization offers you a position, respond within three business days unless other arrangements have been made.
2. Upon acceptance of a position, finish the work agreed-upon with your supervisor, recognizing that you have undertaken a professional responsibility. Only extraordinary situations will exempt you from finishing the agreed-upon work. Under such circumstances, you will inform your supervising attorney and your law school's Pro Bono Coordinator and will strive to minimize the adverse impact of your departure.
3. Ask your supervisor to explain assigned work if you do not understand how to proceed, to clarify expected time-lines, and to review and evaluate your work.
4. Fully disclose all prior legal work to your supervisor. Strive to avoid any conflicts of interest regarding a placement, whether from previous or current employment, interest, or activity.
5. Perform legal activities only under the direct supervision of an attorney.
6. Generally perform substantive work although your duties may include routine work that professionals in a particular office are expected to perform. However, if clerical work constitutes the majority of your volunteer activities or if you have any other problems while serving at an organization, you should discuss the problem with your supervising attorney and the law school's Pro Bono Coordinator.
7. Understand that the choice of an organization with which to volunteer is yours alone and that you have the right to decline or withdraw from any placement or project in which you are professionally not comfortable or that presents risk of injury or harm.

Student's Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

