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Pro Bono at University of Richmond School of Law

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Regent School of Law

by Rosey Mellion

The legal profession is both a vocation to practice law and a call to serve. Calling and service are tenets integral to the mission and culture of Regent University School of Law. The School of Law recently approved a standard that all law students are expected to give fifty hours of community service during their time in the program. The fifty service hours can be a combination of a minimum of thirty hours pro bono legal service and up to twenty hours of other community service.

The pro bono program will partner with Regent Law's Civil Litigation Clinic and Law Career Services. Associate Professor Kathleen McKee, who has directed the Civil Litigation Clinic for seventeen years, has overseen our Legal Aid internships and opportunities for students to use their Virginia Third Year Practice Certificate. Working with Professor McKee, our Career and Alumni Services office will coordinate pro bono opportunities for our students, including cases they can handle in their third year.

This public service outreach is also a reflection of the commitment Dean Michael Hernandez has demonstrated to supporting pro bono services across the commonwealth. Hernandez is on the Virginia Bar Association's Pro Bono Council, and he has worked with Norfolk Firms in Service and on our bi-annual community service projects. He also appointed me to develop and coordinate our public service and pro bono initiatives. I was recently selected to serve on the inaugural Virginia Access to Justice Commission Pro Bono Coordinating Consortium.

Regent Law's Pro Bono Community Legal Service Program will provide students experiential learning and networking opportunities while providing invaluable legal assistance that will impact Hampton Roads and beyond. We are excited to be able to launch this important initiative.



Rosey Mellion is associate director for Career Services & Alumni Relations at the Regent University School of Law.

Pro Bono at University of Richmond School of Law

by Tara L. Casey

"Pro bono" is often the first legal Latin that a law student learns, before other courses come in with their *res ipsa loquitur* and *in flagrante delicto*. The reason for this primacy is the greater emphasis law schools have placed upon pro bono programming in the past ten to fifteen years. Indeed, the American Bar Association's Standards and Rules for Approval of Law Schools require schools to provide opportunities for students to participate in pro bono activities.

The challenge in taking advantage of these opportunities is that the very nature of pro bono requires that it be done without any intent of remuneration, either in financial or academic credit. Often, committed law students find themselves juggling classes, journals, and jobs in their pursuit of service. True, many of them will receive invaluable experience and skills development, as well as networking, through their service. However, many of them are simply open to the idea of service in and of itself — and making it work.

For some it will not just be about making it work, but making it thrive. Beginning in 2009, the Carrico Center for Pro Bono & Public Service at the University of Richmond School of Law has awarded a Pro Bono Certificate to graduating 3Ls who have performed at least 120 hours of pro bono service during their law school careers. This past May, nearly 20 percent of our graduating class received the Pro Bono Certificate, with approximately 5,400 hours of service total. In many ways, these law students are already our profession's best teachers when it comes to pro bono service.

Every fall, I get to speak to the new class of first-year law students about the tremendous pro bono and public service opportunities that await them. I describe a set of keys they will receive in the next three years that few in our society get to hold, keys that are meant to unlock barriers to justice. The question for them is whether they will only use those keys for their own benefit. In many ways, that question will stay with them through law school and into practice. However, through the incorporation of pro bono programming into our legal education, it is a question they will be better prepared to answer.



Tara Casey is the director of the Carrico Center for Pro Bono & Public Service at the University of Richmond School of Law.