PUBLIC INTEREST

and

PRO BONO

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL
WASHINGTON, D.C.
GW Law offers students a legal education premised on “law in action” in Washington, D.C., the center of the most dynamic legal and policy activity in the United States.

The law school is located just four blocks from the White House, across the street from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and close to major international organizations, nonprofit institutions, courts, and government agencies. This proximity allows our students to gain practical experience in externships at these nearby institutions. In addition, our students benefit from a world-renowned faculty, a broad curriculum featuring more than 275 elective courses, strong academic and personal support, and a wide variety of expert lecturers and visitors.

The GW Law experience is dynamic, rigorous, and practical. Simply put, there is no better place to study and participate in the engaging life of the law.
Public Interest and Pro Bono at GW

GW Law is genuinely committed to public interest and public service law, and the law school actively encourages students to volunteer their legal services. Our students’ engagement is evident: The Class of 2014 volunteered more than 25,822 hours of pro bono work.

A hallmark of GW’s Pro Bono Program is that we proactively create pro bono projects for our students rather than waiting for external requests for assistance. As a result, GW Law students participate in public interest projects that are exclusively created for them, as well as other projects open to students at a variety of law schools. Students receive singular access to hands-on projects and gain practical legal experience and valuable networking opportunities—tangible details that support their résumés.

The projects are designed to help students develop their skills on a smaller scale than they would in an internship or job. All projects are volunteer and short term. Students may volunteer through the Pro Bono Program to work for nonprofit and government organizations. Although the pro bono projects do not provide counsel to the general public, our well-established Jacob Burns Community Legal Clinics fill that need.

Financial assistance is available for students who are committed to public interest law. The program provides summer funding, fellowships for third-year students, and loan repayment assistance.

“GW allowed me to pursue a variety of pro bono work and really supported my efforts, especially in creating the Immigration Alternative Spring Break. Through pro bono work, I learned to think on my feet and be a resourceful advocate. I also had the opportunity to interact with clients and develop a network of practicing attorneys.”

— Jenna Brofsky, JD ’14
Projects Designed for GW Law Students

GW Cancer Pro Bono Project
Under attorney supervision, students assist patients with issues related to advance directives, employment, insurance, Social Security, and wills.

District Record Sealing Service
Under the auspices of the Public Defender Service, students assist community members seeking to have their criminal records sealed.

Homeless Pro Bono Project
GW Law students are paired with an attorney to provide legal assistance to the homeless at a D.C.-area intake site. The project is organized by the Legal Assistance Project of the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless.

Office of Administrative Hearings Pro Bono Project
Under attorney supervision, students guide clients through cases involving unemployment denial, shelter suspension, and notices of violation from the Department of Public Works.

Associate Dean Alan Morrison (center) takes public interest students to hear oral arguments at the Supreme Court.
Legendary public interest activist Ralph Nader addresses students in the Public Interest Pre-Oriention Program.
Animal Welfare Project
In an effort to raise awareness of animal welfare issues and promote legislative change, students research laws and regulations, enforcement issues, and possibilities for reform.

Gulf Recovery Network
GW Law students travel to New Orleans during winter break to provide legal support and assistance with rebuilding homes in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the Gulf oil spill.

Immigration Law Association Alternative Spring Break
Members of GW Law’s Immigration Law Association spend their spring break along the Arizona/Mexico border exploring immigration issues and performing pro bono work for a nonprofit human rights organization.

GW Family Law Pro Bono Project
Under attorney supervision, students assist pro se litigants at the Self-Help Center at D.C.’s Family Court. Students provide legal information about child custody, child support, divorce, and other family law matters.

Innocence Project
Under the guidance of the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project, which is housed at GW, students help the wrongfully convicted by screening cases, assisting with D.C. cases, and researching legal issues.

Street Law
As members of this vibrant student organization, students teach basic legal courses in D.C. public schools.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance
Students provide free tax preparation to low-income D.C. residents.
Annual Events

Public Interest Pre-Orientation Program
During a three-day, pre-orientation program, students receive an intensive introduction to some of the public service opportunities in the Washington, D.C., area. Recent visits have included juvenile and adult detention facilities, as well as both the D.C. Superior Court and the Office of Administrative Hearings, where students met with judges and clerks and observed cases.

Alternative Spring Break in Washington, D.C.
Students gain insight into public interest law by attending oral arguments at the U.S. Supreme Court and working with D.C. public schools, among other activities. The event is held each year during spring break.

Pro Bono Recognition Ceremony
JD students who volunteer 60 or more hours of pro bono service and LLM students who volunteer 20 or more hours are honored at the annual Pro Bono Recognition Ceremony, held during commencement weekend.

For additional information about the projects and how to submit an application, please view our website at www.law.gwu.edu/gwl/probono.
Leadership

Alan Morrison, Lerner Family Associate Dean for Public Interest and Public Service Law, leads the law school’s public interest initiatives. In 1972, Dean Morrison teamed up with Ralph Nader to found and direct the Public Interest Litigation Group, the litigating arm of the consumer advocacy group Public Citizen. One of the most celebrated public interest litigators in the country, he has argued 20 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court and has been involved in many leading public interest law issues over the past four decades.

David Johnson, Assistant Dean for Pro Bono and Advocacy Programs, oversees the Pro Bono Program. He has taught legal courses to prison inmates, ran a public interest law school’s career services office, placed hundreds of students in public interest externships throughout the D.C. area, and has spoken about pro bono projects throughout the country.

Immigration Law Association members perform pro bono work during Alternative Spring Break along the Arizona/Mexico border.
Student Assistance

Financial support for students who undertake public interest and pro bono work is available in various ways. First, the law school provides nearly 100 fellowships annually for students who perform public interest legal work during the summer. Awardees may serve in organizations nationwide and abroad. Second, the law school’s J.B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Public Service Fellowship Program funds third-year students who work at least 20 hours per week at a public interest organization in the Washington, D.C., area. In addition, law school graduates who pursue careers in public interest may be eligible for the Income Based Repayment Program (IBR). Through IBR, all outstanding public or government-subsidized loans (but not loans from private entities) are consolidated, and an affordable monthly loan payment is set based on each student’s income.

For additional details about financial assistance, please visit our website at www.law.gwu.edu/gwl/probono.
Field Placement Program

In addition to undertaking pro bono activities through the projects listed, students may engage in semester-long field placements. Through the Field Placement Program, more than 600 students each year earn academic credit while they participate in dynamic, hands-on externships with judges, prosecutors, and defense counsel. Students receive supervision by leading legal practitioners and practical experience that help jump-start their careers. For more information, please visit [www.law.gwu.edu/gwl/fieldplacement](http://www.law.gwu.edu/gwl/fieldplacement).

Career Development

GW Law’s Center for Professional Development and Career Strategy (Career Center), which features one of the largest legal career counseling teams in the country, designates one counselor to focus solely on public interest placements. All Career Center counselors are former practicing attorneys with extensive experience working in both the public and private sectors. As a result, our counselors prepare students to obtain clerkships; work at large, medium, and small law firms; serve in government positions; and work in international and domestic business ventures. The Career Center hosts nearly 100 programs annually, including panels and networking opportunities, the fall recruitment program, the spring interviewing program, diversity events and programs, and the public sector recruitment program. For more information, please visit [www.law.gwu.edu/gwl/careers](http://www.law.gwu.edu/gwl/careers).
Contact Information

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Admissions Information

JD Admissions
Law School Admissions Office
202.994.7230
admissions@law.gwu.edu

LLM and SJD Admissions
Graduate Programs Office
202.994.0715
For U.S. law school graduates: grad@law.gwu.edu
For non-U.S. law school graduates: igpo@law.gwu.edu

www.law.gwu.edu/gwl/probono

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