

COMMUNITY

Georgetown University Law Center has a vibrant and close knit community of students interested in serving the public. Whether you are a student planning a lifetime career in public interest or a student planning to work in a corporate law firm and maintain ties with the public interest community through pro bono work, there is a place in the Georgetown Law public interest community for you. OPICS sponsors many of the public interest opportunities within the Georgetown community and is also well connected to the student groups geared towards public service.

PRO BONO AT GEORGETOWN LAW CENTER

1. The Pro Bono Pledge

OPICS offers a variety of opportunities to participate in pro bono service while attending the Law Center. Each student is challenged to pledge at least 75 hours of pro bono services in the public interest community before they graduate. (JD transfer students are asked to pledge 50 and LL.M. candidates are asked to pledge 25.) The pledge provides an opportunity and incentive to participate in hands-on internships throughout a student's time at Georgetown. Students who complete the pledge are given recognition at graduation. Additionally, students who perform volunteer hours beyond what they pledged are given special recognition for exceptional service. If you are unsure whether you will have time throughout all three years, keep in mind that the pledge is non-binding. Although OPICS encourages you to complete as many pro-bono hours as possible, failure to complete your pledged hours does not result in any penalization. You can sign up for the pro bono pledge at any time in the OPICS office. Timesheets are due at the end of each semester.

2. 1L Pro Bono Service Project

First year students are often eager to begin legal work during the academic year, but sometimes it is difficult to find organizations interested in working with students who have minimal legal training and minimal time available. If, as a 1L, you are able to secure your own pro bono internship, great!¹ If not, OPICS offers the 1L Pro Bono Service Project to help you find a terrific pro bono opportunity that is right for you. Through this project, 1L students are presented with a list of pre-approved pro bono opportunities for the fall and spring. Sign ups for the project begin about a month into school through Holly Eaton, Director of Pro Bono Programs.

3. "Ad Hoc" Pro Bono opportunities

Oftentimes organizations will seek out students for short term, flexible, and/or limited-commitment pro bono projects. The opportunities range from committing to

¹ It is always a good idea to check in with Holly Eaton, Director of Pro Bono Programs, for approval of any pro bono internship that you have set up for yourself. This way you are sure that all your hard earned hours will be counted.

complete a week long research project during a school break to committing a couple of hours every once in a while throughout the semester. “Ad Hoc Opps” are updated often on the OPICS website, so keep your eye out throughout the semester.

4. Groups on campus with Pro Bono requirements

Many groups on campus encourage or require their members to participate in pro bono or community service hours. For example, there are two journals on campus that require pro bono hours as part of journal membership. For the *Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics*, students complete thirty hours of community service during their first year of journal membership. The *Georgetown Journal of Poverty Law and Policy* also emphasizes community service throughout their students’ memberships.

In addition to journals, a couple of school groups on campus provide opportunities to participate in pro bono service. The Innocence Project assists in the investigation and aid of wrongfully convicted individuals whose innocence can be proven through the use of DNA testing. Students in the Innocence Project spend two hours a week researching cases. Students involved in the Amnesty International Court Monitoring Project work for the release of prisoners of conscience who have neither used nor advocated violence. Also, the Asian Pacific American Law Students Association participates in volunteer work with the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center. Other student groups participate in smaller scale pro bono projects throughout the year. For example, the American Constitution Society, the Law Democrats, and the Republican Law Students Association all participate in voter protection days during November elections.

5. Other Pro Bono opportunities

Many students have fulfilled their pro bono service pledge hours through academic year internships they have found on their own or through job postings online. Symplicity, the job posting website used by Georgetown, includes information on available internships for the fall or spring; many of the unpaid internship opportunities qualify for pro bono pledge credit. OPICS sends a weekly “Hot Jobs” email that includes pro bono pledge eligible internships. Additionally, many students secure their own internships directly with organizations. OPICS encourages those who are interested to find pro bono opportunities themselves through Symplicity or PSLawNet, or directly through an organization; however, it is always a good idea to make sure an internship qualifies for the pro bono pledge hours before beginning. Holly Eaton, Director of Pro Bono Services, is available in OPICS to assist in finding pro bono opportunities and to check that a given opportunity qualifies for pro bono work.

COMMUNITY SERVICE AT GEORGETOWN LAW

There are many ways to get involved in community service at Georgetown. Student groups participate in service projects within their area of focus. For example,

Georgetown's Habitat for Humanity plans an annual alternative spring break trip to North Carolina to help build houses for families in need.

One of the advantages of living in DC is that there are many opportunities for you to organize your own community service. Organizations throughout DC welcome student volunteers who want to help out in the community during the year. The Law Center is located across the street from DC Central Kitchen, which collects unused food from restaurants in the area, prepares the food, and redistributes the meals to homeless shelters around the city. Additionally, the Central Kitchen trains homeless men and women for careers in the food industry. Within the kitchen, there are many volunteer opportunities for students throughout the week and weekend.

PUBLIC INTEREST STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

There are many student organizations that are either dedicated solely to the public interest community or that focus some portion of their yearly events on public interest issues.

Georgetown Outreach

Outreach is a student-run organization that gets students away from campus and into the community by participating in a variety of exciting projects throughout Washington, DC. Monthly and semi-annual service projects provide students with the opportunity to volunteer in homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and public schools.

Students for Public Interest Community Enhancement (SPICE)

SPICE is a new student group on campus that aims to strengthen further the community of public interest students. SPICE runs topical events to spotlight public interest opportunities and organizes social events and a mentor system to encourage camaraderie amongst public interest students.

Equal Justice Foundation

EJF is a student run group that raises money to provide summer stipends for those students working in the public interest sector. EJF holds silent and live auctions in the fall and a donation drive in the spring to raise funds for the stipends.

Innocence Project

The Georgetown Innocence Project focuses on two main goals. First, students investigate cases, trying to find DNA evidence to help exonerate innocent people in jail. Second, the group plans social events to raise awareness of innocence issues and the criminal justice system. For example, in the past the group has had exonorees come to speak and play jazz music, organized the mailing of Christmas cards to people in the criminal justice system, and displayed artwork of people in the criminal justice system.

Georgetown Human Rights Action

Georgetown Human Rights Action increases awareness within the Georgetown community of human rights violations around the globe. The group has helped to hold teleconferences with Guantanamo detainees and held events commemorating the beginning of the Iraq War. Additionally, the group sends students on fact finding missions to foreign countries to research human rights implications of different policies; students have gone to Ecuador, Guatemala, and Haiti.

Youth Advocacy Project

Each year, this group holds various events for those students interested in working in youth/children's advocacy. They also put together mentoring pairs for clients in the Juvenile Justice Clinic and they collect school supplies from the Law Center community for at-risk children.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International is centered around working for the release of prisoners of conscience who have neither used nor advocated violence. The group on the Law Center campus organizes panels and meetings for students interested in international human rights.

Habitat for Humanity

Each semester, the Habitat for Humanity group on campus organizes approximately two build days. These trips provide students in the Law Center community the opportunity to get off campus for a bit and help out in the greater community in a non-legal way. Habitat also coordinates a trip to North Carolina each spring break for a weeklong building trip.

Active Minds

Active Minds works on Mental Health law issues within both the Law Center and the broader community. The group puts on an annual Mental Health Law Conference that brings in speakers to discuss concerns within the field. The group seeks to increase mental health and wellbeing by holding book drives for patients at local hospitals and by teaching students at the Law Center de-stressing techniques during exam periods.

Student Animal Legal Defense Fund (SALDF)

SALDF holds events to educate the law school community about animal rights and the legal issues surrounding animal welfare. Their events include meetings and symposiums with experts who work in the legal animal rights field. And of course, there is always delicious vegan food for those attending the meetings.

Starting your own public interest student organization

One of the benefits of attending a large law school such as Georgetown is the unique opportunity to find many people with your specific interest. Due to the size of the

school, it is easy to find like-minded friends interested in a particular cause and start a new student group.

Once you have gathered the people and brainstormed ideas for events, there are many resources around campus to help pull off those events. To reserve a room for an event on campus, sign up in the Office of Student Affairs. You can also request funding for events through the Student Bar Association. As a new group you would request provisional funding from the Appropriations Committee. Once a group hosts multiple events on campus, it can “graduate” into a recognized student organization after a year and thereby matriculate into the yearly student organization budget process. Then the organization can request a budget for an entire semester or year instead of filling out a new provisional request for each event.

ANNUAL PUBLIC INTEREST PROGRAMS AT GEORGETOWN LAW CENTER

Home Court

Every spring, Home Court organizes a basketball game between Georgetown University Law Center professors and members of Congress. All proceeds are given to the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, which provides much needed legal services for homeless people. Home Court provides the opportunity for students to apply to be Home Court Fellows, who work with the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless to organize basketball game.

International Week

In the spring, the International club on campus works with the administration to dedicate a week to careers and issues in the international realm. The week is packed with speakers, symposiums, and brown bag lunches covering a wide array of topics.

For the Love of Chocolate

February at the Law Center always includes a day of competition for the best recipe including chocolate. Students and staff can help themselves to copious amounts of chocolate in exchange for either donating a chocolate dish for the competition or making a small financial donation. All proceeds go to raise money for the Bettina Pruckmayr Award. The Award is named for a Georgetown Law graduate and public interest attorney who was murdered in 1995. The Award is given to a graduating student who has demonstrated a commitment to international human rights work.

Vagina Monologues

Around Valentine’s Day each year, a group of students (and sometimes faculty) puts on a rendition of the Vagina Monologues to raise money for organizations helping domestic violence victims.

Outlaw

Outlaw is a group on campus that works to foster greater awareness of legal issues concerning gays, lesbians and bisexuals. The group holds events to raise awareness of the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy.

Election Law

There are many opportunities to gain pro bono credit hours during elections, by manning phone banks and fielding questions regarding election law and voter eligibility.

Public Interest Proud

In order to celebrate the amazing public interest work Law Center students do each year, OPICS holds an annual awards celebration in April to honor students' contributions to community service and pro bono work.

Other Events

The events listed above are only a snapshot of programs that are held yearly on the Law Center campus. There are many symposiums and panels relevant to public interest law that are organized by the variety of student groups on campus, as well as by Institutes, OPICS, and other administrative offices.