Dear Friends:

From our Pro Bono Program’s humble beginnings in 2007 (which Professor Ben Kempinen so thoughtfully explains later in this issue) through the end of the 2014-2015 Academic Year – our Pro Bono Program has made great strides. We now have 21 different pro bono projects to offer students and every semester we have students who choose to create their own unique pro bono project. Our program continues to grow primarily because of the interest, energy, and enthusiasm of our law students as well as the dedication and devotion of our volunteer attorneys. The percentage of our student body involved in pro bono projects has steadily increased and the number of students who devote more than 50 pro bono hours in their three years has also increased.

In the current political climate not only in this state but also on a national level – it is easy to become cynical and to view our world as one that is dominated by selfish people. I feel so very fortunate to work with people every day who demonstrate that selflessness matters, that service makes a difference and that those of us who do serve others are, in the end, the ones who benefit the most. Every day we work with people who have survived harrowing life situations and devastating loss and yet they persevere. In fact, they smile and offer us their trust and their stories. It is transforming and inspiring to work with people who are motivated by hope and the belief that we are all in this together and we do our very best when we support one another.

I am inspired by our volunteers. I am inspired by our clients. And I thank all of you who know about and support our efforts. We benefit from, and appreciate, your support.

Thank you!

Warmly,
Laura C. Smythe, M.A., M.A., J.D.
Director, UW Law School Pro Bono Program
Pro Bono Program at a Glance

We are impressed with the clear demonstration of enthusiasm for pro bono work reflected in students’ choices about how they spend their time. Between the 2013-2014 school year and the 2014-2015 school year, overall student participation increased by 16%, while inductees into the two tiers of the Pro Bono Society grew by 35%. In early 2016, the Pro Bono Program bid farewell to Program Coordinator Amanda Meyers, and Dawn Matlak stepped into this position. Anthony Moore has taken on the re-established role of Veterans Law Center Administrator.

"I am excited to be the incoming administrator for the Veterans Law Center. As a veteran, I am glad to provide legal services to the local veteran community. As a law student, I am happy to be working with all the great volunteers from the local legal community."

Anthony Moore, VLC Administrator

"As a community organizer and social justice advocate, I am aware of the critical necessity of pro bono services. Working with UW law students and supervising attorneys gives me enormous insight into the work it takes to continue making these services accessible."

Dawn Matlak, Pro Bono Coordinator

What our students have to say

“Volunteer Income Tax Assistance gives students the opportunity to provide a valuable service to the community while helping them learn more about personal income taxation. Because VITA services are open to anyone in the community, volunteers get to help a very broad spectrum of clients. A volunteer may help a small business owner in the morning and then a retired individual surviving on social security in the afternoon, and everyone in between. VITA provides students the opportunity to help clients understand something that is unfamiliar and unnerving to many people. By providing free return preparation VITA helps clients compete their required tax return accurately will providing them the best support possible. I decided to get involved with VITA as a way to provide a very tangible benefit to the community. Because VITA sees a very diverse client base, I knew it would be a great opportunity to interact with many people from Madison. I have enjoyed doing it every year and love seeing familiar faces from year to year that really appreciate the service we provide!”

Thomas Wilson, JD Candidate, May 2016

Would you or someone you know like to partner with the Pro Bono Program? If so, please contact us!

Thomas Wilson and Lara Carlson speaking at the Spring Pizza Panel
Looking Back: Nine Years of Service through the University of Wisconsin Law School’s Pro Bono Program

Ben Kempinen
Clinical Professor

Even though it was 2007, it seems like yesterday that I, Professor Marsha Mansfield, and Kristin Davis, formerly of our Career Services office, met with a handful of PILF students to plan how to create our Law School’s first pro bono program. Would there be institutional support? Who would be responsible for oversight? And, most importantly, would students support and participate in such a program? Then and now the success of such a program depends on student support and engagement.

We were encouraged by the results of an online survey of students which asked about their current volunteer activities and whether they would support opportunities coordinated at the Law School. We were amazed and humbled by the students’ responses. An incredible number reported a wide variety of activities, including volunteer tutoring at Madison schools, working for local non-profits, and serving meals at local homeless shelters, to name a few. More importantly, there was significant enthusiasm for having volunteer opportunities available through the Law School.

Our first pro bono case matched a single law student with a newly graduated private attorney to challenge an insurance company’s denial of benefits. The clients were of modest means and could not afford extensive litigation costs. The new attorney lacked the time and experience to challenge the insurance company’s legal team without some help. However, together – the law student, the new attorney, and their client – they were able to achieve a fair result. The logistics of the early days were challenging – Marsha, Kristin and I tried to recruit students, screen potential clients, and find volunteer lawyers, all while handling our normal teaching and other law school responsibilities.

We were able to obtain modest funding through an AmeriCorps grant to hire a coordinator to oversee an expanding program. Then, through institutional support from the Law School we hired a Pro Bono Director to manage day to day operations, expand program opportunities, and reach out to students. The Pro Bono Society was established to recognize students who found time in their busy schedules to serve underrepresented people in Dane County and elsewhere.

Looking back, it is both gratifying and humbling to see what has been accomplished. From a single student, attorney, and client we have expanded to the point that nearly a fifth of our students participated in the program during the last academic year, providing countless hours of service to many who had nowhere else to turn. Although I have served as a faculty co-director of the program since its inception, I take no credit for what we, as a community have accomplished. I have received so much more than I have given – the opportunity to work with and be inspired by devoted colleagues such as Marsha Mansfield, Ann Zimmerman, and Laura Smythe; a chance to collaborate with dedicated and gifted local attorneys in Dane County, too many to mention by name; the ability to get to know scores of talented and enthusiastic law students eager to share their talents; and finally, to see the heartfelt and humble gratitude of those helped by our program.

Perhaps most importantly, at a time when public discourse seems coarse and cynical and the future uncertain, this program, and the opportunities it provides, can serve as a beacon of light for students beginning to define themselves as professionals, to show them they can achieve a life balance that is meaningful and rewarding, and that a commitment to service can provide sustaining rewards to themselves as well as those served. In the words of Emerson, “[t]he best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” To all of those who have worked to make our program what it is today I thank you.
Awards and Celebrations

Volunteers of the Semester

**Tiffany Woelfel** has an impressive history with the Pro Bono Program that began during her 1L year. She has volunteered with many pro bono opportunities, including Legal Assistance for Disaster Relief (LADR), Legal Intervention for Non-Violence Clinic (LINC), Veterans Law Center (VLC), and Wills for Heroes. Additionally, Tiffany coordinated the Winter 2015 LADR Trip and is currently coordinating the Spring Break 2015 Indian Wills Caravan Trip. Overall, Tiffany has contributed more than 160 hours of pro bono service.

**Janelle Ramsel** began her remarkable pro bono service during her 1L year by volunteering with the Unemployment Appeals Clinic. Soon after, she started volunteering with the Tenant Resource Center, Legal Assistance for Disaster Relief, and the National Immigrant Justice Center Detention Facility Trips. For these opportunities, Janelle has enhanced campus awareness and has helped recruit and train law students and undergraduates. Overall, Janelle has contributed more than 130 hours of pro bono service.

**DCBA Student Pro Bono Award: Amanda Meyers**

Each year, the Dane County Bar Association celebrates and honors attorneys, law students, law firms and organizations providing pro bono legal services in Dane County. In May 2015, Amanda Meyers received the Student Pro Bono award from the DCBA.

Amanda has participated for nearly 200 pro bono hours with the Indian Wills Caravan, Unemployment Appeals Clinic, Wills for Heroes, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Veterans Law Center, and Legal Intervention for Nonviolence Clinic. She was also the Pro Bono Coordinator from May 2014 until January 2016.
Congratulations 2014-2015 Pro Bono Society Inductees!

Pro Bono Society inductees have completed a minimum of 50 hours (Tier 1) or 100 hours (Tier 2) of approved pro bono service.

**Tier 1**

- Hillary Annin
- Yoon Bang
- Mel Barnes
- Janel Bergsbaken
- Abigail Churchill
- Mary Bryn Concannon
- Anna Dontje
- Alexander Ebert
- Diana Eisenberg
- Laura Graham
- Sydney Hawthorne
- Grace Knutson
- Matthew Lantta
- Zachary Leigh
- Bridget Laurent
- Alexander Lewein
- Daniel Lewis
- Jeffrey Mason

**Tier 2**

- Jonathan Aftalion
- Samantha Ahrendt
- Jordan Behmke
- Elizabeth Bradley
- Eileen Dorfman
- Leslie Freehill
- Nicholas Herdrich
- Courtney Hollander
- Steven Hughes
- Amelia Maxfield
- Aaron McKean
- Kellan McLemore
- Max Meier
- Amanda Meyers
- Angela Munoz
- Gabriela Parra
- Renee Parton
- Victoria Mattox
- Martha Mohs
- Christopher Moore
- Shawn O’Connell
- Lorenz Schuerch
- Polly Shoemaker
- Nicholas Sideras
- Richard Staley
- Heidi Thole
- Luis Valdez
- Joyce Williams
- Hannah Wrobel
- Anna Zielinski

Angela Munoz and Jordan Behmke, Tier 2 Pro Bono Society inductees

Winter 2014 Pro Bono Society inductees
Events

2014 Fall Reception

We had a full program at our Pro Bono Reception in 2014. 3L Elizabeth Bradley, selected as the Spring 2014 Pro Bono Volunteer Student of the Semester, spoke eloquently about what she has learned outside of the classroom and through her pro bono work. Karen McKenzie, instrumental in the formation of the VLC, was recognized for her significant work, Attorney Victor Forberger shared his experience managing the Unemployment Compensation Appeals Clinic, and our guest speaker, U.S. District Court Judge Barbara Crabb, spoke thoughtfully about "Pro Bono and Law in Action". It was a delight to share a bit about our work with so many attendees from the Dane County community.

2015 Spring Pro Bono Pizza Panel

On February 2nd, eight pro bono student volunteers and supervisors gathered together to present information regarding the various pro bono projects they are involved in. The Pro Bono Program hosts this event every year in order to acquaint 40-50 students with available opportunities and give them a chance to interact with peers, attorneys, and organization leaders who are involved in pro bono work. By providing a forum to answer questions and offer a range of perspectives, this lunch panel has been an effective way to engage new and interested students in pro bono work.

Above: Hannah Wrobel speaks about the Dane County Timebank Youth Court. Right: Erica Lopez presents on various opportunities at Legal Action.
In the Academic Year of 2014-2015 – we had 5 students who dedicated more than 150 pro bono hours during their three years of law school. When I learned last year at this time that we had several students who were closing in on 150 hours and several more who had already achieved 150 hours – I knew that we had to do something to recognize and celebrate their remarkable achievement. I reached out to the then Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson of the Wisconsin Supreme Court and asked her if she would be willing to host a dinner for our students who had dedicated so very many pro bono hours. She responded within minutes and said she would be delighted to do so. On a beautiful balmy evening in late April, we met in a lovely restaurant on the Capitol Square and spent more than two and a half hours with Justice Shirley Abrahamson. She spoke individually with each student and asked about how they had spent their pro bono time and what their dreams were for the future. She regaled all of us with wonderful personal stories about her work, her life, and her values. Every one of us was charmed with her gracious hospitality, candor, and thoughtful advice.

Our Pro Bono Program has decided that it is important to create a similarly fantastic opportunity every Spring for our students who dedicate 150 hours or more to Pro Bono Service. As we approach another graduation, we have another exciting event planned for our students who have dedicated 150 hours to pro bono work. Stay tuned next year to find out how we celebrated their selfless service! ~Laura Smythe

### Pro Bono Program Statistics

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<td>Pro Bono Society Winter Graduates</td>
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<td>Pro Bono Society Spring Graduates</td>
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### Community Placements

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<td>Access to Justice Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Immigration Law Center (CILC)</td>
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<td>Community Justice, Inc. (CJI)</td>
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<td>Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)</td>
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<td>Dane County Time Bank Youth Court</td>
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<td>Legal Intervention for Non-Violence Clinic</td>
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<td>National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC)</td>
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<td>Other/ Various projects</td>
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<td>Ready to Rent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenant Resource Center (TRC)</td>
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<td>Unemployment Appeals Clinic (UAC)</td>
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<td>UW IJC &amp; CILC Bilingual Program</td>
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<td>Veterans Law Center (VLC)</td>
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<td>Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisconsin Wills for Heroes</td>
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*Matt Lantta and Puck Tsai*
UW LAW SCHOOL
PRO BONO PROGRAM
2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Contact us!
probonoprogram@law.wisc.edu

Visit us online!
law.wisc.edu/probono

2014-2015 Student Advisory Committee
Sam Ahrendt, Legal Assistance for Disaster Relief
Chris Avallone, Environmental Law Society
Jake Blair, Veterans Law Center
Lara Carlson, National Lawyers Guild
Mary Bryn Concannon, Student Bar Association
Maro Kim, Wisconsin International Law Society
Maura Ross, Unemployment Appeals Clinic
Carolyn Staats, Veterans Law Center
Thomas Wilson, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program
Tiffany Woelfel, Elder Law and Estate Planning Society
Hannah Wrobel, Public Interest Law Foundation
Sarah Zwach, WI Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

Special Thanks To:
Dane County Bar Association
Dean Margaret Raymond
Economic Justice Institute
Legal Action of Wisconsin
Marquette Law School
State Bar of Wisconsin
UW Law School Career Services
UW Law School Communications
UW Law School Copy Shop & IT Department
UW Law School Alumni Relations &
External Affairs

Consider donating!
Gifts made to the Pro Bono Program support UW law students as well as the community organizations and individuals served through student efforts. Donate to the Pro Bono Program via check or online payment through the Economic Justice Institute:
law.wisc.edu/eji/giving.html.

ON THE COVER
Clockwise from the top: Bridget Laurent tells us why she does pro bono; Students at the 2014 Annual Fall Reception; Winter at the Law School; Hilary Annin tells us why she does pro bono.