***Pro bono – what’s in it for students?***

The ideals of a Student Law Office give students the fundamental opportunity to experience the expectations of a prospective lawyer, whilst concurrently providing legal advice *“for the public good.”**[[1]](#footnote-1)* As with anything done on a voluntary basis, it can be somewhat uncertain as to what benefits accrue to the volunteer, but alternative opportunities (i.e. a paralegal role within a reputable firm) can be equally uncertain, the reason being that “unqualified advisors require supervision.”[[2]](#footnote-2) As such resources are scarce and the vast majority of aspiring lawyers are potentially left unaccounted for. According to *LawWorks[[3]](#footnote-3)*, 70% of law schools in the UK now run student law clinics, a practical concept that accommodates the *“vast quantity of forthcoming lawyers that are limited in access to hands-on experience within the field.[[4]](#footnote-4)”*

The Advantageous nature of Pro bono to students is recognised internationally; In *Georgetown (U.S),* Students of Law are expected to perform 50 hours of Pro Bono work on a compulsory basis[[5]](#footnote-5). Whilst the priority is to provide free legal service to those in poor socio-economic demographics, institutional academics stress that trainee lawyers cannot fully appreciate the prospects of a Lawyer in its absence.

Law students from the University of Manchester have emphasised that Pro Bono, *“ offers students the opportunity to gain practical legal experience, foster links to legal professionals, firms and advice agencies, and develop legal skills that aren’t taught in the classroom,”[[6]](#footnote-6)* an attitude that incorporates the most pertinent benefits to the law student. By gaining invaluable experience of real client contact, taking a hands-on approach with legal skills (i.e. Drafting), and developing professional contacts, the student immediately makes themselves more attractive to the potential of a training contract or professional opportunity, thus increasing the likelihood of a successful career.

It is imperative to understand that the benefits of Pro Bono are not limited to professional applications; legal involvement within the community allows one to make meaningful contributions to those in need, and in doing so allows the student to appreciate the *“vital role the law plays.”* *[[7]](#footnote-7)* Legal Service has been denoted as being *“unaffordable and out of reach.”* The common view held is that “*one of the most perplexing facts about our perplexing legal market is its failure to provide affordable services for just about anyone but the rich and corporations.”*7 Thus, by providing legal aid to those who lack financial stability, the student is able to experience *“intrinsic morale”*2 and self-worth, something that all lawyers must be familiar with, and something that extends beyond the walls of the classroom.

Whist it is apparent that Pro Bono could not exist without a public demand for legal services; it is perhaps as equally apparent that an adequate and sustainable legal service could not exist without the concept of Pro Bono. So when considering the benefits to a student, one can assume that the student is playing a fundamental role in accommodating the “perplexing legal market.”7

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1. John Cary, *The Power Of Pro Bono* (Metropolis Books 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 'Pro Bono And Law Students: What's In It For Me?' (*LawCareers.Net*, 2016) <http://www.lawcareers.net/Information/Features/02112015-Pro-bono-and-law-students-whats-in-it-for-me> accessed 8 June 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Rebecca Parker, 'The Lawworks Law School Pro Bono And Clinics Report 2014' (LexisNexis 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 'Legal Aid: The Consequences Of LASPO And The Implications Of The Latest Proposed Cuts' (*LawCareers.Net*, 2016) <http://www.lawcareers.net/Information/Features/09122014-Legal-aid-the-consequences-of-LASPO-and-the-implications-of-the-latest> accessed 8 June 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 'New York Bar Pro Bono Admission Requirement — Georgetown Law' (*Law.georgetown.edu*, 2016) <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/careers/opics/pro-bono/nybar-probono.cfm> accessed 8 June 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Rachel Shepard, 'Pro Bono Work | Prospects.Ac.Uk' (*Prospects.ac.uk*, 2016) <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/law-qualifications/pro-bono-work> accessed 8 June 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Michael Zuckerman, 'Is There Such A Thing As An Affordable Lawyer?' (*The Atlantic*, 2014) <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/05/is-there-such-a-thing-as-an-affordable-lawyer/371746/> accessed 8 June 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)