

~ Minutes ~  
Public Service and Trust Commission  
Pro Bono Committee  
Law School Workgroup  
January 7, 2016  
9:00 a.m.  
Teleconference

Co-Chair Professor Timothy Everett called the meeting to order at 9:01a.m. with the following Workgroup members participating in the call: Hon. Ingrid Moll, Hon. William Bright, Jr., Attorney Karen DeMeola, Co-Chair, Attorney Susan Nofi & Attorney Charles Ray.

The Workgroup meeting was called to order at 9:01a.m.

1. The draft minutes from the June 24, 2013 meeting were unanimously approved.
2. Professor Everett began the meeting by re-stating the Workgroup's charge as summarized in the June 24, 2013 minutes. The Workgroup is tasked with studying recent changes in law school curriculum in Connecticut and other states and recommend ways to increase and foster pro bono involvement by law students.
3. The Workgroup began by discussing the recent changes to New York's bar admission rules. Until recently, New York required bar applicants to complete 50 hours of pro bono service before admission to the bar was permitted. The most recent revisions to New York's bar admission rules have been amended to include an experiential component. New York has been one of the leaders in the movement to overhaul law school curriculum in order to produce more "practice ready" attorneys.

Under the new rules, which are effective for new bar applicants who begin their study after August 1, 2016, applicants for admission in New York State must complete a skills competency component requirement, choosing one of five pathways to meet these requirements:

- Pathway 1 allows an applicant to satisfy the requirement by submitting a certification from the applicant's law school confirming that the school's curriculum incorporates the teaching of skills and professional values required for participation in the legal profession, and that the applicant has acquired sufficient competency in those skills and sufficient familiarity with those values. This pathway recognizes that law schools should be permitted the freedom to identify and articulate the necessary skills and professional values, as well as the

ways in which the schools will measure their students' attainment of these skills and understanding of these values.

- Pathway 2 permits an applicant to meet the requirement by submitting proof from the law school that the student completed 15 credits of practice-based experiential coursework designed to foster professional competency training. Students may earn as many as six of the 15 credits for law school certified non-credit bearing summer employment programs, provided those programs meet certain criteria. At least 50 hours of full-time employment is required for each substituted credit.
- Pathway 3 provides that any applicant who has successfully completed the Pro Bono Scholars program will be deemed to have satisfied the skills competency requirement. The Pro Bono Scholars Program, implemented in New York in 2014, gives law students the option to take the bar exam early and spend their final semester of study performing pro bono work.
- Pathway 4 allows applicants to complete a post-graduation six-month apprenticeship in the United States, or in a commonwealth, territory or country outside the United States, under the supervision of an attorney authorized to practice and in good standing in the jurisdiction where the work is performed. The apprenticeship can be paid or unpaid.
- Pathway 5 allows an applicant who has been authorized to practice law in another state, or in a commonwealth, territory or country outside the United States, to meet the skills competency requirement by establishing that the applicant has been in good standing and practiced law full-time for one year or part-time for two years.

The Workgroup discussed how the gradual steps towards more experiential learning in Connecticut's law schools have created a window of opportunity to further amplify the pro bono conversation. Judge Bright reported that he met with the Chief Justice and Judge Moll about the importance of ingraining the message of pro bono into law students early on versus any mandatory pro bono requirements for new graduates.

The Workgroup also discussed the recent implementation of pro bono requirements for law students at Western New England and Quinnipiac schools of law and the types of activities that constitute pro bono service for law students. Professor Everett offered that UCONN law school does not count clinical work done by the law students as pro bono work as academic credit is earned for these hours.

4. Next, the Workgroup discussed having a representative of the legal community in addition to Professor Everett address the first year law students about the value of pro bono service. The consensus of the Workgroup was that the students might be more receptive and responsive to a new and different voice delivering the pro bono message.

Additionally, the Workgroup discussed whether baseline data existed on the amount and type of pro bono work performed by law students. Attorney DeMeola volunteered to gather the existing data from Western New England, Quinnipiac and Yale along with the definition of what constituted pro bono service for each of the respective law schools.

The Workgroup also discussed the role of the bar and the CBA in promoting the importance of pro bono service to law students. There was consensus that the pro bono message might be more broadly received if the CBA took a more active role in championing pro bono for law students. Additionally, the CBA's involvement might also lend itself to matching up attorneys, law students and pro bono opportunities to help expand pro bono while creating mentoring relationships.

The Workgroup further discussed why the CBA's mentoring program was not more robust and Attorney DeMeola offered to contact the CBA to see if she could identify any issues with the mentoring program. Attorney Nofi cited Illinois' mentoring program as a model that might be worth researching and offered to obtain additional information on Illinois' mentoring program and report back to the Workgroup.

- The Workgroup discussed New York's Court Navigator program and whether the program might be worth looking at for Connecticut. The Navigator program trains college students, law students and other persons deemed appropriate by the Program to assist unrepresented litigants, who are appearing in Nonpayment proceedings in the Resolution Part of Housing Court or the Consumer Debt Part of the Civil Court. The goal of the Court Navigator Program is to help litigants who do not have an attorney have a productive court experience through offering non-legal support. Participating volunteers work in the courtroom under the supervision of a Court Navigator Program Coordinator. Some of the ways the Court Navigator may assist court patrons are by:
  - Helping persons find resources in the courthouse and outside the court to assist in resolving their cases.
  - Help persons collect and organize documents needed for their cases.
  - Accompany persons during hallway negotiations with opposing attorneys.

- Accompany persons in conferences with the judge or the judge's court attorney.
- Respond to a judge's or court attorney's questions asking for factual information on the case.

Court Navigators **do not** give [legal advice](#) or get involved in negotiations or settlement conferences. Generally, court navigators also do not give out legal information except with the approval of the Chief Administrative Judge of the courts.

Judge Moll inquired whether there was a need to expand the use of law students in the Court Service Centers. Support staff reported that the Centers can always use additional assistance and the experience of working in a Court Service Center could provide valuable exposure to the bar, the bench and an opportunity to work one-on-one with self-represented parties in a real-world court environment.

The Workgroup also discussed the possibility of having a judge speak to the first year law students about the importance of pro bono. Judge Bright indicated that he would be happy to meet with the law students at an organized event at UCONN law school where the pro bono video could be shown and a discussion could be had with the students about how they can contribute to pro bono. Attorney Ray offered to attend with Judge Bright to provide the firm perspective on pro bono to the students. Attorney DeMeola thought that planning an event for the fall might be feasible for a gathering of first year law students with representatives from the Judicial Branch, the CBA and private firms to discuss the benefits, opportunities and the professional obligation to pro bono service. The Workgroup agreed that a similar event at Yale, Quinnipiac and WNEC would be appropriate.

Next, the Workgroup discussed the value of law students to Connecticut's legal aid organizations and whether the investment of time for training and oversight was beneficial to legal aid long term. Attorney Nofi offered that the law students had significant value and impact but it was important to find the right project for them to work on. Attorney Nofi discussed the law student involvement in the live chat feature on [CTLawHelp.org](#) website where law students from Quinnipiac provide assistance navigating the website and providing information on content. Attorney Nofi will send additional information and tutorials to the Workgroup on the training materials for the law students about the type and scope of assistance provided through the live chat feature.

Professor Everett summarized the follow up information gathering tasks assigned to the remaining Workgroup member.

5. The Workgroup meeting was adjourned at 9:54a.m.