Public Interest Law Project 1993

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June 4, 1993

Dear Colleagues:

I am very pleased to tell you that on this coming Friday, June 11, 1993, Steve Kelban and Lori Shellenberger from NYU School of Law will be joining us for the day.

As indicated on the attached biographies, Steve and Lori direct the extraordinary public interest law program at NYU. In particular, they have developed the Pro Bono Students - NY program (description attached) which involves all 15 law schools in the state of New York and includes a database of more than 430 organizations and agencies. To a great extent, they have put into place at NYU what I would like to get off the ground through the Public Interest Law Project here at Nova.

Last month I met with Steve and Lori over two days in New York, and we have spoken frequently since that meeting. They are interested in helping us develop our public interest work and in having us become the PBS center for public interest/pro bono work in the southern states. I could not be more excited about these developments for they would surely put us on the map in the field of public interest law.

They will be joining us on June 11th as (1) consultants for our public interest work and as (2) potential partners in the planned PBS national network. I would like them to see first-hand that our commitment to public interest work is widespread among faculty, staff and students and that public interest work is central to our institutional mission. With this in mind, would you please join us for lunch at 12:15 p.m. on Friday, June 11, 1993, in the faculty lounge? Please R.S.V.P. to me by Tuesday. (By the way, you should know that Steve and Lori recognize our budgetary constraints, especially during this transition period, and are coming at their own expense.)

Thanks.

Very truly yours,

Michael M. Rooke-Ley
Professor of Law

MMR/ld
STEVEN KELBAN

Executive Director, Public Interest Law Center
New York University School of Law

Steven Kelban is the Executive Director of the Public Interest Law Center at New York University School of Law. The Public Interest Law Center is the focal point for all public service activities at the Law School. In addition, he is the Executive Director of the Root-Tilden-Snow Scholarship Program and Pro Bono Students NY, and administers both the Public Interest Committee Summer Grant Program and the Charles H. Revson law Students Public Interest (LSPIN) Fellowship Program at NYU.

Mr. Kelban received his J.D. degree from Brooklyn Law School. After graduation, he joined VISTA, where he worked as a staff attorney for the Civil Division of the Westchester Legal Aid Society. In 1972, he moved to the New York Legal Aid Society, Criminal Defense Division as a staff attorney. In 1978, he became Associate Director and General Counsel for the Court Employment Project, a not-for-profit agency that provided social services to youth involved in the criminal justice system. He was also Program Associate for the Justice Program at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, which sought to reduce unnecessary incarceration and improve conditions in this county's prisons and jails. He then was Speaker's Counsel to the Committee on Children and Families for the New York State Assembly in Albany. Mr. Kelban came to New York University School of Law in 1987.

LORI SHELLENBERGER

Program Director, Pro Bono Students NY

Lori Shellenberger is the Program Director of Pro Bono Students New York, a statewide law student volunteer program centered at New York University School of Law.

Ms. Shellenberger received her J.D. degree in 1991 from New York University School of Law, where she was a Root-Tilden-Snow Scholar and the recipient of the Jack Kroner Memorial Award for Outstanding Service to the Law School Community. Throughout law school she interned in a variety of public interest positions, including prisoners' rights work in Ohio, juvenile justice work with the Youth Law Center, and criminal defense work with the San Francisco Public Defender and the Legal Aid Society Criminal Defense Division in New York City.

Prior to joining Pro Bono Students, Ms. Shellenberger worked as a Legal Research Assistant for the Alameda County Public Defender in Oakland, California, and as a Deputy Public Defender for the Marin County Public Defender in San Rafael, California.
AN INTRODUCTION TO PRO BONO STUDENTS (P*B*S) NY

P*B*S NY was created by New York University School of Law in January, 1991. P*B*S NY is a program that places law students in organizations doing work in the public interest. Funded by a grant from the Interest on Lawyer Account Fund for the State of New York (IOLA), the program is operated and centered at New York University School of Law's newly formed Public Interest Law Center, and is utilized by each of the state's 15 law schools. P*B*S NY currently has a database consisting of more than 430 organizations, including public interest organizations, government agencies, and private law firms with pro bono dockets. (See Appendix A.) Since its creation, P*B*S NY has placed more than 1000 law students at over 200 organizations throughout New York state. (See Appendix B.)

P*B*S NY serves as an information and counseling resource to students interested in finding volunteer law placements during the school year and the summer. P*B*S NY also operates as a resource to organizations and communities in need of legal services by providing the assistance of law students. Importantly, P*B*S's services help to impart the value of doing work in the public interest in the hope that participating students will continue to do pro bono work when they become members of the Bar. In addition, P*B*S member organizations benefit from the volunteer services of highly qualified and committed law students.

The crux of P*B*S NY is its computer program and database. The database is the most comprehensive existing list of New York government agencies, public interest organizations, and private law firms that are actively serving the public interest. The database also contains more than 30 California organizations seeking New York law students willing to volunteer during the summer.

ORGANIZATION RECRUITMENT

Organizations were initially recruited by compiling various lists of government agencies, private law firms, and non-profit organizations and conducting mass mailings to these organizations. However, the 430 organizations that currently make up the P*B*S database merely skim the surface of organizations working in the public interest. Thus, recruitment of new members is ongoing. P*B*S has been able to reach lesser known organizations by referral from current P*B*S member organizations and by suggestions from law students, thereby increasing these organizations' access to law students and other volunteers. In addition, when students express interest in an area of law that is not included in the database, the P*B*S program director works to recruit organizations in that area.
STUDENT RECRUITMENT

P*B*S also focuses its efforts on student recruitment, in the hope that each and every law student, regardless of career goals, will be exposed to the value of public service. The P*B*S program director trains each P*B*S counselor on outreach methods and sends weekly updates to counselors on current projects to assist them in educating students on opportunities. Each P*B*S counselor lists current projects in student publications and distributes P*B*S brochures at their law school.

THE PLACEMENT PROCESS

Each organization on the database completes a P*B*S membership form that includes various data regarding contact persons, organizational needs, internship requirements, and the categories of law practiced and services provided. When a student meets with a P*B*S counselor at her law school, the student’s areas of interest and work needs and desires are input into the computer. The computer program then matches the student’s interests with organizational needs. Comprehensive informational binders are then utilized by the student to learn more about the organizations in order to narrow down choices and eventually set up a placement.

Through the above outlined process of matching student interests with organization needs and educating students about organizations prior to placement, P*B*S is able to make hundreds of successful placements each year. Both students and organizations are asked to complete questionnaires regarding placements.

IMPACT OF P*B*S NY

While serving as an information and counseling resource to students, P*B*S NY contributes to organizations and communities that are in acute need of legal services and assistance through its law school volunteers. Providing information and counseling to law students concerning public interest work allows students the opportunity to make educated decisions about where they want to volunteer. In addition, P*B*S’s services impart to students the value of doing pro bono work during their legal careers. For some students, experimenting through working in different placements aids in their determination of what areas of law they would like to practice as attorneys. For other students, the experience of pro bono during law school may be instrumental in helping them to decide to devote their careers to the public interest.

Because the P*B*S database is the most comprehensive database of volunteer job placements in existence for New York state, it is also used in ways beyond the placement of law students in volunteer projects. Schools with limited public interest resources use the database for summer and career
placement. The information on the database is also accessed by organizations for referral services and joint projects. Finally, the P*B*S program director links practicing attorneys working in law firms and judicial clerkships with pro bono projects.

THE P*B*S NY MODEL AND STUDY OF A NATIONAL PRO BONO PROGRAM

Since its inception, P*B*S NY has received calls from law students, law school administrators, and public interest organizations all over the country anxious to replicate the P*B*S NY model. State attorney pro bono programs and other public interest programs have expressed interest in using the P*B*S NY model as a clearinghouse linking those in need of legal services with organizations and private attorneys serving those needs. In addition, the directors of P*B*S NY have had discussions with health care providers regarding a P*B*S-type program coordinated with legal volunteer efforts to support and expand volunteerism among doctors, nurses, and others in the health care profession.

Under a grant received from the Ford Foundation, P*B*S NY is exploring the possibilities for sharing its program and database with law schools across the country. In addition, P*B*S would like to examine the potential for coordinating other professional public service efforts in conjunction with the creation of a national database.

The goal of the P*B*S planning process is to bring together people experienced in pro bono efforts around the country to analyze the feasibility and desirability for use of the P*B*S program model in various public interest efforts including, but not limited to, (1) law school student pro bono programs; (2) law school placement; (3) other graduate public service efforts, including volunteer programs, placement and fellowship programs; (4) attorney pro bono programs and other professional volunteer programs; (5) legal services referral efforts; and (6) other volunteer program efforts and public service programs.

P*B*S is very excited about the potential impact of a national pro bono network. The confidence that the Ford Foundation has shown in the current program, coupled with the support and enthusiasm generated at potential centers across the country, has led P*B*S to believe that this network could fill a vitally important gap in law schools and other professional schools today. At the same time, public service organizations can benefit from increased volunteerism.

Particularly with the growing emphasis placed on public service by the current administration, a national P*B*S network has unlimited potential. P*B*S is excited about the opportunity to further explore this possibility.