

**Pro Bono in January Winter Break Trip, January 2017  
Application Packet**

### **Trip Overview**

Texas Law students will travel to the **Rio Grande Valley** to participate in law-related volunteer projects from **January 7-13, 2017**. The trip is organized by a student leadership team in partnership with the Richard & Ginni Mithoff Pro Bono Program. Texas Law students who participate in Pro Bono in January will have the opportunity to engage in meaningful pro bono work during a week-long service trip to a region whose low-income communities have significant unmet legal needs.

Past trip projects have involved students in law-related work such as interviewing clients; hosting legal clinics; and researching, drafting, and translating legal documents. This year, students will engage in a variety of projects involving similar work in collaboration with the **South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR)** and **Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA)**. Detailed descriptions of the projects are included on pages 2-3 of this packet. Students will be expected to work on assigned project(s) for at least 8 hours a day, including some evening hours during the duration of the trip. Students also will be expected to attend all planned activities during the week, including trainings, community field trips, and receptions.

Participation in the Pro Bono in January trip is by application only. The application is open to all Texas Law students, but space is limited. **Students must commit to attending the trip at the time of application; if you are not committed to participating, please do not apply.** Although Spanish ability is not a requirement to participate in the trip, each project team must include some Spanish speakers. Accordingly, the selection committee will consider students' language abilities to ensure there are enough Spanish speakers to cover project needs. **To apply, submit a completed Application and Trip Commitment form, 1-page essay, and resume to Pro Bono Program Coordinator Sarah Sedgwick by 5 pm on Thursday, October 27, 2016.**

Participants will be selected and announced via email on Friday, November 4. Selected students will have until 4:30 pm on Wednesday, November 9 to confirm their participation. **Participants are expected to attend a mandatory pre-trip meeting on Tuesday, November 15, 2016 from 5:45 pm to 7:45 pm.** Trip packets will be distributed at this meeting. Trip participants also must attend a post-trip debriefing meeting, to be scheduled for some time in late January 2017.

We will keep a waitlist and offer spaces to students on the list if participants withdraw. **Students who want to remain on the waitlist also must attend the pre-trip meeting on November 15.**

Trip participants will be reimbursed after the trip for the following trip expenses:

- Fuel costs for those who drive carpools that include at least 2 additional passengers, and
- Meal costs based on a modest daily stipend.

The Mithoff Program will make lodging arrangements and trip participants will be expected to stay at the designated lodging site and to share a room with up to three other students. If space is available, students may choose to stay in a single room at their own cost. The Mithoff Program will make carpool and lodging assignments for the group; expect lodging to be modest.

## Project Descriptions

Students will be assigned to one of four teams: the Asylum Team, the Clinics Team, the ProBAR Team, or the Public Defender Team. All teams will participate in group orientation activities on January 7-8.

### Asylum Team

A group of 4-6 students will work with TRLA's office in Brownsville to assist immigrants who are seeking asylum in the United States. Students will help attorneys prepare for merits hearings and asylum interviews, and may draft briefs, conduct country condition research, work with clients to prepare their declarations, and draft expert declarations. The Asylum Team provides a focused experience for students who are particularly interested in immigration law and/or working with asylum applicants.

### Clinics Team

The Clinics Team will be based in Pharr and work at pro bono clinics with TRLA at various locations in Cameron and Hidalgo counties. The clinics team will include 30-36 students. The Clinics Team will participate in two evening Wills Clinics and one two-day U-Visa Clinic. The Clinics Team provides a varied experience for students who are interested in working in multiple areas of law during the trip. Additional information about the work involved is provided below.

#### *Home Asset Preservation Clinic*

Students will interview low-income property owners to draft wills as well as deeds designed to transfer property outside of probate court. Students also will help families obtain reductions in their property taxes where applicable. Attorneys will review the documents before finalizing them for clients. This clinic helps low-income families preserve what is often the only asset they have—the home—so they can pass on that asset and begin to build wealth in their communities.

#### *U-Visa Clinic*

Students will work with immigrant survivors of crime to apply for legal status in the United States under the U Visa program. This project will involve helping to prepare client declarations about the crimes they have experienced and their cooperation with law enforcement, and compiling clients' U Visa application packets.

### ProBAR Asylum Team

A group of 4-6 students will work with ProBAR's office in Harlingen to assist adult immigrants detained in the Port Isabel Detention Center. These students may help people fill out cancellation of removal applications or do a U Visa case, a bond hearing, or a bond or parole request with ICE. The ProBAR Team provides a focused experience for students who are particularly interested in immigration law and/or working with detained populations.

Public Defender Team

A group of 4-6 students will work with TRLA's regional public defender program to assist clients charged with criminal offenses in Starr and/or Willacy County. Students will work in TRLA's Edinburg office but also may travel to court proceedings and client meetings in Raymondville or Rio Grande City. These students may help TRLA attorneys investigate cases, prepare cases for trial and other court hearings, or prepare expunction petitions. The Public Defender Team provides a focused experience for students who are particularly interested in criminal law and/or public defense.

**Students may indicate their team preference on the trip application, but assignment to the preferred team is not guaranteed. Students will be informed of their team placement at the time they are notified of their selection.**

**Pro Bono in January Winter Break Service Trip Application**  
**Part I: Personal Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you speak Spanish? (If so, please indicate your language ability by marking all relevant options below. If not, indicate this by marking "Do Not Speak Spanish.")

\_\_\_\_\_ Do Not Speak Spanish

\_\_\_\_\_ Basic Conversational

\_\_\_\_\_ Basic Reading

\_\_\_\_\_ Basic Writing

\_\_\_\_\_ Proficient Conversational

\_\_\_\_\_ Proficient Reading

\_\_\_\_\_ Proficient Writing

\_\_\_\_\_ Fluent Conversational

\_\_\_\_\_ Fluent Reading

\_\_\_\_\_ Fluent Writing

Team Preference (Rank team assignments by number in order of preference; if you have no preference, mark "No Preference"; if there is an assignment you do not want under any circumstances, write "No" before team name.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Asylum Team \_\_\_\_\_ Clinics Team \_\_\_\_\_ ProBAR Team \_\_\_\_\_ Public Defender Team

\_\_\_\_\_ No Preference

Have you applied to a previous winter break trip? Yes/No If yes, how many times? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you gone on a previous winter break trip? Yes/No List years: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you taken the Pro Bono Pledge? Yes/No

Are you able to drive your own car to the Valley if selected for the trip? Yes / No

If so, are you willing to take passengers? Yes / No

How many? \_\_\_\_\_

*\*\*Drivers who receive reimbursement for fuel costs will be expected to drive at least 2 other passengers to and from the trip location and to and from work locations, trainings, field trips, and meals during the week.*

Would you prefer to stay in a single hotel room at your own cost? Yes / No

If you are not selected in November, would you like us to put your name on a waiting list? Yes / No

**Part II. Statement of Interest and Resume**

Please provide a copy of your resume and a brief essay (no more than 1 page, double-spaced) explaining your interest in participating in this trip. If you feel you have any specialized skills or experiences that might be relevant to the trip, please explain these in your essay (e.g., familiarity with the trip locales, immigration experience, etc.). This information will help us determine team assignments for those selected for the trip.

**Part III. Trip Commitment**

I have read the Application Packet in its entirety and have indicated my team preferences on the Application. If I am selected and placed on any team that I did not mark “No” on the application, I will participate in the trip from January 7-13, 2017.

I understand that students traveling to the Valley will provide their own transportation or carpool to the trip location. I understand that the Law School will reimburse meal costs for all participants during the week at a modest per diem rate, as well as fuel costs for those who drive their own cars to the Valley and drive at least 2 other participants to and from the trip location and to and from work locations, trainings, field trips, and meals during the week. I also understand that the Law School will pay for hotel/lodging costs in shared rooms for Saturday through Thursday nights. I will stay at the group hotel/lodging and understand that the lodging will be modest. I will either share a room with up to three other students or, if I have indicated on my application form and if space is available, pay for a single room at the group hotel at my own cost.

If I am selected to participate in the trip, or choose to remain on the waitlist, I will participate in a mandatory pre-trip meeting on November 15, 2016 from 5:45 pm to 7:45 pm, and post-trip debriefing meeting to be scheduled in late January 2017. I also will submit required forms, including a copy of a state-issued ID, health, and auto insurance, if applicable, by the due date announced at the pre-trip meeting. I will arrive at the trip location by the designated time on January 7, 2017 as specified in my trip packet, and will attend all scheduled group events. Finally, I will work on my assigned project(s) for at least 8 hours a day, including some evening hours during the duration of the trip.

I understand that the Law School will post information about the trip and trip photographs on its website. I give the Law School, the Richard & Ginni Mithoff Pro Bono Program, and the William Wayne Justice Center for Public Interest Law permission to post and otherwise disseminate my photograph and information about my participation in the trip.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Submission Instructions:** Please submit your (1) Personal Information Sheet, (2) Essay, (3) Resume, and (4) and signed Trip Commitment form to Pro Bono Program Coordinator Sarah Sedgwick **by 5pm on Thursday, October 27, 2016**. Applications may be submitted in person at the Pro “Boo-no” Week Celebration in the Susman Godfrey Atrium from 11 am to 1 pm on October 27; by hand to CCJ 1.324 or the Mithoff Program box in the Communications Center; or by email to [ssedgwick@law.utexas.edu](mailto:ssedgwick@law.utexas.edu).