

## **Drexel Law Opens with Clear Commitment to Pro Bono**

*By Karen Pearlman*

On Aug. 16, 2006, Drexel University opened its College of Law – Pennsylvania’s first new law school in over 25 years. Its 180 students come from 18 states and three foreign countries, drawn by its innovative legal curricula: six-month internships for all qualifying students, a heavy emphasis on legal research and writing, professors with practice experience, and substantive concentrations in health law, intellectual property, and entrepreneurial business – Drexel University’s core strengths.

Just as important, Drexel’s College of Law will be committed to pro bono. This commitment is reflected in the school’s motto: *Scientia, Ars, Officium*, or “Knowledge, Skill, Duty.” *Officium* means “the duty to the public good owed by a public official.” For Drexel Law, that term highlights its commitment to teach its students the lawyer’s obligation to serve the public good by providing uncompensated legal service to people and organizations that cannot afford to retain lawyers, as well as to act professionally and ethically at all times.

Drexel College of Law will require all of its students to provide at least 50 hours of pro bono work before they graduate. The initial focus of Drexel’s mandatory Pro Bono Program will be *pro se* parties in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, and the Drexel College of Law is already working with court officials to design programs where teams of its law students can help address the unmet need for legal services by the poor. The program also will develop other alternatives for direct client service. The program strives to educate students about their ethical responsibility to provide these services while fostering and promoting an appreciation of the need and importance of continuing to provide assistance and improving equal access to legal services throughout their professional careers. The program will also highlight public service opportunities for students to consider as a career path.

Drexel’s College of Law pro bono requirement complements Drexel University’s mandatory public service requirement for all undergraduates, as well as its 100-year tradition of integrating classroom experience with the real-world environment (called “co-op”). The Drexel College of Law Co-Op Program provides an opportunity for students to develop their legal skills and gain practical, hands-on, legal experience in a real work setting, under the supervision of an attorney, as an integral part of their legal education. Direct contact with and responsibility for clients is a vital part of the Drexel College of Law curriculum and demonstrates the faculty and administration’s commitment to professionalism.

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