

# Public Service

**We believe lawyers have an obligation to serve.**

**“Each time a man stands up for an ideal or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”**

**—Robert F. Kennedy '51**



**UVA LAW is committed to helping students make an impact in their communities and in the world.** Through financial support, counseling, mentorship, and a network of peers and alumni practitioners, UVA Law prepares students to become leaders in public service.

**The Virginia Loan Forgiveness Program** helps repay the loans of graduates earning less than \$100,000 annually. [law.virginia.edu/loanforgive](http://law.virginia.edu/loanforgive)

**The Mortimer Caplin Public Service Center** provides individual counseling and sponsors events focused on educating students about working in the public sector. Counselors advise and prepare students seeking external summer funding and distinguished postgraduate fellowships such as Skadden and Equal Justice Works fellowships.

Through **The Virginia Public Interest Interview Program**, students interviewing with public service employers across the country receive funding to defray the costs of travel.

**ROBERT F. KENNEDY '51 FELLOWSHIP**

The school's Kennedy Fellows receive funding to work for any public service employer they choose for the year after graduation.

Fellows receive a \$50,000 salary and are eligible for the Virginia Loan Forgiveness Program.

Recipients work in legal aid offices, prosecutors' and public defenders' offices, government agencies and nonprofit organizations across the country.

Alumni have obtained permanent positions immediately after their fellowships with employers such as the Arlington County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, The Bronx Defenders, District of Columbia Attorney General's Office, National Labor Relations Board, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, Poverty and Race Research Action Council, Santa Barbara District Attorney's Office, Southern Environmental Law Center, and various U.S. Senate and House committees.



► Adam Younger '23

**HOMETOWN:** New York City and Westchester County, New York

**EDUCATION:** Case Western Reserve University, political science; New York University, public administration and policy

**NEXT:** Assistant district attorney, Manhattan District Attorney's Office

*"There are abundant professional and academic support resources here to get you to where you want to go—particularly Assistant Dean Leah Gould at the Public Service Center and Assistant Dean Sarah Davies in the Office of Student Affairs.*

*When I was applying to public service jobs, I met with Leah nearly a dozen times to review my application essays, discuss strategy and prepare for interviews. And when I wanted to improve my time management as a 1L, I met with Dean Davies, who helped me create a Microsoft Excel chart allocating time for class, reading for class, outlining, sleep, office hours, the gym, etc.—a rubric that I still use today. In short, these resources helped me see and reach my potential."*

**UVA Law funds public service fellowships**

The school guarantees summer funding for all students working in public service.

In 2023, \$789,000 was distributed to 162 students, including \$49,000 in funds from the Public Interest Law Association. First-year students each receive \$4,000 and second-year students each receive \$7,000 from the Mortimer Caplin Public Service Center.

The grants funded the internships of Ryan Moore '25 and Shelby Singleton '25.

Moore worked for the Fairfax County Public Defender's Office, where he helped public defenders and participated in a mock trial through which interns practice the skills they learned over the summer.

Singleton worked with the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division, assisting with civil rights enforcement and policy matters.



Ryan Moore '25



Shelby Singleton '25



Ruby Cherian '23



Mary Merkel '23

**Seeking equal justice**

The Law School also supports students seeking national postgraduate fellowships.

Ruby Cherian '23 earned a two-year appointment as an Equal Justice America fellow at the Legal Aid Justice Center in Richmond, where she will be joining the civil rights and racial justice unit. She plans to pursue civil right claims on behalf of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people.

Mary Merkel '23, a former schoolteacher, won an Equal Justice Works fellowship to represent students and parents in school proceedings with The Bronx Defenders. She is the school's 12th EJW fellow.

**POWELL FELLOWSHIP IN LEGAL SERVICES**

This two-year fellowship awards a \$55,000 yearly salary, benefits and loan forgiveness to a graduating student or judicial law clerk who enhances the delivery of legal services to the poor under the sponsorship of a host public interest organization.



As the 22nd Powell Fellow in Legal Services, Helen Song '23 will assist survivors of human trafficking. Working with Justice At Last in Oakland and San Francisco, Song will provide direct legal representation and train pro bono attorneys and community partners.

"A lot of undocumented survivors live with the fear of being deported or experiencing retaliation from their traffickers, so they don't really reach out for help," Song said. "They'll often not realize they have legal rights, and they'll continue to just live in fear."

**THE LAW SCHOOL** fosters a robust **public service** community.

Virginia has more than 20 student organizations that work in the public interest, help members gain experience and foster a community of servant-leaders.

The Law School has a committed team of career counselors with experience as public interest attorneys who help students achieve their goals. Students also receive support from faculty and alumni mentors.

The annual **Shaping Justice Conference** and dozens of public service panels and events bring distinguished public service attorneys to UVA Law each year.



► The Class of 2025 helps local nonprofits at the annual Public Interest Law Association day of service in August 2022.

CONTACT

**PUBLIC SERVICE**

Leah Gould  
(434) 297-8878  
publicservice@law.virginia.edu

Pro Bono: Kimberly Emery  
(434) 924-3883  
probono@law.virginia.edu

law.virginia.edu/publicservice

**PUBLIC SERVICE 2022-23**

► \$740,000 awarded to 162 students working in public interest jobs during the summer of 2023

► 16,284 pro bono hours logged in 2022-23

► 82 Class of 2023 graduates completed at least 75 hours of pro bono while in law school

► 6,390 hours logged by 197 students at 92 organizations during winter break



**THE PROGRAM IN LAW AND PUBLIC SERVICE**

Founded in 2009, the program provides specialized courses and intensive training to prepare students for careers in public service. Students meet inspiring public interest lawyers from around the country in numerous events designed for fellows, and attend dinners, workshops and social events throughout the year.

**THE PRO BONO PROGRAM**

The Pro Bono Program is a voluntary program encouraging all students to complete at least 75 hours of pro bono service during their three years of law school. Opportunities are available locally and nationwide. The

program also organizes pro bono projects that focus on areas such as child advocacy, immigration law and veterans' disability claims.

In addition to the many national pro bono opportunities faculty

and students explore, the school has strong ties to local legal aid organizations, such as Charlottesville's nationally recognized Legal Aid Justice Center. The Law School has also partnered with Richmond-based

law firm Hunton Andrews Kurth to offer pro bono services to indigent clients in the areas of immigration/asylum and family law. Members of the UVA Law community regularly volunteer, sometimes in joint

efforts at legal reform or legal aid. Opportunities to volunteer in regional community service organizations are plentiful.