

**STUDENT ORGANIZING MANUAL**

# Starting a Public Interest Student Organization



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JUSTICE  
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*Helping Lawyers Help Community*

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CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

## Chapter 1:

# Introduction

Creating a public interest organization takes a lot of work, but we believe it's well worth it. Equal Justice Works is a national organization mobilizing the next generation of lawyers committed to equal justice. We believe everyone has a role to play in closing the vast justice gap in this country. We work to ensure every law student is exposed to the needs and rewards of public interest work, and that students committed to pursue a life of public interest have the resources and opportunities during law school to launch their career.

### WHO SHOULD USE THIS MANUAL?

Organizing is a huge part of public interest work. Student organizations play a critical role in building the profile of public interest legal work among students, and providing opportunities to serve our communities. This manual is designed for students looking to start or revitalize a public interest student organization. We also provide information for students seeking solutions to the challenges of student organizing.

### WHAT'S INSIDE?

Our purpose is to cover some of the basic issues involved in running a student organization devoted to public interest law, and to help organizations avoid and overcome difficulties in planning and organizing.

### SOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

Equal Justice Works is building a national network of students committed to building opportunities and support for public interest at law schools. We want to connect and collaborate with students across the country. For more information, or to share and discuss your organizing efforts, contact Equal Justice Works at [students@equaljusticeworks.org](mailto:students@equaljusticeworks.org).

**CHAPTER 2**

**Starting a  
Public Interest  
Student Organization**

## Chapter 2:

# Starting a Public Interest Student Organization

### WHAT IS PUBLIC INTEREST LAW?

The term “public interest” is often thrown around without any precise definition. This is intentional. Public interest law reflects the needs of a particular community. We do not define public interest; your organization will determine what it means to work for the public interest in your particular community. Public interest work could be indirect or direct legal service. Many organizations keep their definition broad or vague so that it reflects the interests of all of its members.

- **DEFINING PUBLIC INTEREST:** Who is included and what is covered?
  - Example 1: Public interest aims to provide legal services to underrepresented groups and individuals in society.
  - Example 2: Public interest includes not-for-profit, public organizations, or governmental organizations that further the public interest.
  - Example 3: A definition that includes the rights of the disempowered and the underrepresented.

Generally, the thorniest issues about the definition of public interest deal with whether public interest applies to governmental agencies or prosecutors. Your group should decide how it should focus in order to best serve your community.

### WHY BUILD AN ORGANIZATION?

#### *Working with others has a huge impact*

A student organization is an example of how a whole can be greater than its parts. By forming a group, you can enjoy the company of others who share a passion for public interest work and understand the need for this work.

#### *Student organizations help build unity*

Many students enter law school wanting to work for underserved communities, but may feel lost, unsupported, and funneled into a “corporate” track. Public interest student organizations give students an opportunity to meet, work, and brainstorm with other public-interest-minded students. Others who might feel strongly about public interest law will be

drawn to such an organization and the opportunity to associate with other like-minded students. Your activities will, in turn, draw the attention of others - law school staff and faculty, other students, the community - leading them to think about their own obligation to serve the community.

### *Organizations get things done*

In addition to providing camaraderie, your public interest student organization can make things happen. You could administer a grant program that funds scholarships for students taking unpaid public interest positions. You could increase awareness at your school by hosting speakers to talk with students. You could advocate for a new class, clinic, or pro bono requirement. You could serve your community by organizing service projects and pro bono opportunities.

As a public interest student organization, your work will draw attention to the many people who are denied equal access to our legal system. Not only will you provide a haven for public-interest-minded students, you will raise awareness among other students about the need - and obligation - to ensure access to justice. Your community can build the profile and prestige of public interest legal work and careers.

### **WHAT IS EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS AND HOW CAN WE HELP?**

The mission of Equal Justice Works is to create just society by mobilizing the next generation of lawyers committed to equal justice. We provide leadership and resources to ensure a sustainable pipeline of talented and trained lawyers are involved in public service. Equal Justice Works offers a continuum of programs that begin with incoming law students and extend into later careers in the profession. We host an annual public interest Conference and Career Fair for law students and graduates, the largest event of its kind, and provide the country's leading public interest law postgraduate fellowship program.

Learn more about our programs and resources in Appendix I and review our timeline for public interest career planning in Appendix II.

CHAPTER 3

# Building Your Organization

## Chapter 3:

# Building your Organization

Once you know you want to start an organization, you need to get others interested! Eventually, you will include as many students as possible. At the early planning stages, however, it is better to have a few committed members - your “core group” - who are willing to work out the organization’s basics before everyone else joins.

### ENROLLING CORE MEMBERS

Your group should be filled with committed public interest students who are engaged in your school and in their work. Ideally, your group should be diverse and representative of your student body. If you aren’t sure how to find fellow public interest students, try these tactics:

- Talk to professors who teach public interest courses, clinical professors, and your Career Services staff. Ask them to suggest that students contact you.
- Does your school have pro bono work? Talk to the coordinator(s) and ask for a list of students participating.
- Look for school journals, moot courts, and other student organizations with a similar focus on public service. Send messages to their groups asking for students.
- Plan a happy hour for public interest students close to your law school and during a time that works well for students. See who attends and ask for names!

The right number of core members will vary based on your school and organization’s interests. You want it to be small enough to be able to effectively discuss and resolve tough issues, but large enough to allow robust discussion and represent diverse points of view.

Once you have your core membership, the work begins!

### CREATING A VISION AND A MISSION

Vision and mission statements help your core students focus on the fundamental reasons for which the organization was formed. When planning activities or events, organization members should always ask themselves whether the planned activity or event is consistent with the organization’s vision and mission. In addition, vision and mission statements explain to others what your organization is and what it wants to do, which can make recruiting members and gaining support from the school much easier.

- **VISION STATEMENTS:** An ideal or a dream, visions are high and lofty. They refer to the ultimate goal of the organization, which may not be realized in your lifetime. The vision is the underlying reason for your organization’s work, and captures the overall idea of what you want to accomplish. Think of the vision statement as the “North Star,” a permanent guiding principle. For example: “A society in which no one is without legal representation.”
  - ☐ Visions are concise, positive, general, and flexible.
- **MISSION STATEMENTS:** Unlike vision statements, which are oriented to the future, mission statements refer to what the organization is doing in the present. Mission statements explain what the organization does, how it does it, and who it does it for. They should reflect your organization’s vision and help define its goals and objectives. For example: “The Public Defender protects the rights of indigent criminal defendants who otherwise would be unable to hire an attorney.”
  - ☐ Missions usually are one or two sentences, outcome-oriented, descriptive, and flexible enough to adapt to changing times and community needs.

To determine your vision and mission, your core group should brainstorm on what the organization hopes to accomplish. Encourage members to express their ideas for your organization in as many different ways as possible! Keep a list of the suggestions, and then choose and refine the expression that can best serve as your vision, or your mission.

### CHOOSING A NAME

The name you choose is the first impression of your organization for many people. Look at your vision and mission statements for ideas on the information you want your name to represent to the community. Then, brainstorm away! Try to choose a name that won’t be confused with existing groups.

Choose a name with a good acronym, i.e. one that is evocative or easy to remember. Examples: Public Interest Law Association (“PILA” - University of Texas), Emory Public Interest Committee (“EPIC” - Emory University School of Law), Public Interest Students Association (“PISA” - University of Colorado Law School), Student Public Interest Law Foundation (“SPILF” - University of Kentucky College of Law), Organization of Public Interest Students (“OPIS” - University of Michigan Law School).

## BUILDING THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

To be successful, your organization will need a leadership structure that supports and guides your work toward your mission and vision. Some organizations establish the structure and necessary offices at a meeting of the core membership; others wait to decide and elect leaders at the first general meeting.

There are many ways to structure leadership. You could opt for a lead chairperson or two co-chairs, a president and vice president(s), or a general board structure. Many organizations have a Board with students serving in different positions. There is plenty of work to do, so many organizations create committees and committee chairpersons, as well.

However you choose to structure your leadership, the importance of your leaders and their roles will be similar. Your leaders' main responsibilities are to keep the group focused, ensure all members have a sense of belonging and a shared ownership in the organization's goals and accomplishments, and encourage members to become new leaders for the organization.

➤ TIP: You will need at least one person to take responsibility for the following tasks:

- Serve as a primary contact person (represents the organization)
- Serve as spokesperson and meeting facilitator
- Be responsible for recruitment of members and publicity
- Be responsible for meeting arrangements and minutes
- Be responsible for programming
- Be responsible for fundraising
- Be responsible for finances

### *Create job descriptions*

It's not enough to decide on the different leadership positions. You want the best people for each position. To attract the right leaders, the organization and its members will need to know what the job requires. You need a job description!

A job description includes the duties of the person in the position and the skills needed to perform the job well. Each position, including committee chairs, should have a description. Make a list of the tasks to be accomplished by the person in each position. Then consider the skills and abilities needed to accomplish these tasks. Share the job descriptions with your members to allow interested students to decide which positions would be the best fit for their talents.

- HOW IT WORKS: A job description for a fundraising chair might read:

**Fundraising Chair**

*Tasks: Plan and orchestrate one large fundraising event each semester. Recruit and manage volunteers. Work with Publicity Chair to create advertising materials. Manage donation funds.*

*Skills: Capable of financial management, excellent organization, creativity, energy*

*Recordkeeping*

Good recordkeeping is critical to institutional memory, from where and how files are stored, to what is included in the records for each project. Your organization's records should be so illustrative that if every member was suddenly stranded on a desert island, a new group could come in and pick up where you left off. Solid recordkeeping also enhances your reputation, and contributes to your organization's strength - practically and in its attraction to others.

- TIP: To be thorough and consistent, you want:
  - A permanent place to store records: An organization office (or shared office) or filing cabinets in your advisor's or student services office
  - Multiple copies of records: Paper and electronic files
  - Good financial records: Your organizational budget, fundraising records, grant disbursements
  - Good membership records: Updated addresses of former members for support, knowledge, and fundraising
  - Project records: For each of your projects, you should keep track of the following:
    - What
    - When
    - Action plan
    - Calendar/Timeline
    - Results
    - Evaluation
    - All contacts
    - Allies and supporters
    - Follow-up
    - Copies of letters sent
    - Phone calls made
    - Proposals written

CHAPTER 4

# Getting Established at Your School

## Chapter 4:

# Getting established at your school

### REGISTERING AND QUALIFYING FOR FUNDING

Most schools require student organizations to register in order to be affiliated with the school. By becoming a recognized student organization, you probably will receive benefits, such as the ability to take advantage of certain services (like printing and copying), free means of publicity (through the ability to post flyers and access listservs), and the opportunity for funding from the Student Bar Association/Government or law school administration.

Email or talk to your school's student affairs office or student government representative to learn the student organization registration procedure at your school. You'll also want to ask about rules. Specifically, you may want to ask about the requirements and restrictions for financial records and reimbursement, management of funds, and reservation of rooms.

### WORKING WITH YOUR ADVISOR

Most schools require all student organizations to have a faculty or staff member as an advisor. Often, advisors are assigned or carried over from the prior academic year. But if you may choose your advisor, choose strategically. Usually, your organization will be paired with this advisor indefinitely. A good candidate for an advisor is someone who is involved in public interest or career services, supports public interest broadly, and has ideas, contacts, and time.

- **TIP:** Whether or not they are your advisor, you still want to develop a good relationship with your career services office, public interest office, and clinical/experiential faculty. You and they have information about public interest programs, opportunities, and projects that are mutually beneficial for your student organization and the student body.

If your organization already has one, but you would like more or less involvement from your advisor, meet with them and discuss expectations for the advisor role. Often, the advisor has been working with past leaders, and might assume that current leaders want the same relationship and have the same vision. If your relationship doesn't improve, you should speak with your school's student services department.

- TIP: Often, advisors can be most helpful when your organization has new “never done before” ideas or is “in rough waters.” They can help you navigate through difficult situations before those situations become unmanageable. Involve your advisor in difficulties and problems before they become crises. Make sure you engage your advisor with your new ideas and positive outcomes too so they can help support your ideas and share your successes with the law school community.

CHAPTER 5

# Growing Your Organization

## Chapter 5:

# Growing your organization

Once you've established the basics of your organization, it's time to build participation. You're ready to promote interest and attract members. Every member that joins can add skills, increase your organization's strength, and expand the work you can do.

➤ TIP: Hints for a strong organization by the end of the year:

- Welcome returning members
- Recruit new members
- Provide growth opportunities for all members
- Motivate the organization toward its goals
- Hold efficient and effective meetings
- Communicate regularly

### COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS

The growth, popularity, and success of your organization are dependent upon effective communication with members and the student body. Work with your core members to create a consistent brand and methods to communicate and publicize your activities. Remember that getting students excited about your organization and work is the best way to ensure your communication is seen! Here are some ideas on reaching your members:

- Use a listserv for all members for information, upcoming events, and reminders
- Create a Facebook group and post events and updates for all members
- Create a Twitter account for event reminders, deadlines, and to share information
- Designate a communications board member who shares all events and information in a consistent manner
- Designate a 1L representative in each section to share with his or her section members
- Post information on your school's classroom chalkboards, bulletin board space, or online event calendar
- Create your own organizational website (or use the one designated by your school) for your mission, board members, events, fundraising, and other information
- Work with your Career and Students Services team to collaborate on promoting events and deadlines

For additional tips on publicizing your activities, read “Chapter 7: Publicity.”

### RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS

To be attractive to students and reach your maximum membership potential, your organization should prioritize the following:

- DIVERSITY.** Try to recruit students of different nationalities, genders, specialties, and interests instead of guessing which types of students would want to join. Your organization will be more successful if you have people from many backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.
- COMMUNICATION.** Make sure all members are informed about the organization’s activities. Not only will members feel valued and included, this will contribute to your success and popularity with the student body.
- CAMARADERIE.** Provide opportunities for all members to get to know each other and have fun.
  - **HOW IT WORKS:** You might host or co-sponsor social activities for students to connect. Picnics, sporting events, bar reviews, and even bringing food trucks to campus for lunch can be great opportunities for students to connect in a relaxed atmosphere.
- CONVENIENCE.** Check your school calendar and the first-year schedule when planning any activities. It is likely that any events occurring right before moot court competitions, or hours after classes finish, will be poorly attended.

### RECRUITING FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

- MAKE THEM SEE YOU.** There are many ways to gain name recognition among new students: Work on visibility from the first day of new student orientation. If possible, send a letter to all new students with their orientation materials. Staff a table at orientation, during tabling fairs, club days, or even during lunch, and post flyers around campus advertising your first meeting or event.
- INVOLVE THEM.** Look for first-years who are eager to be involved, and who might be leaders for the organization. Provide opportunities for these students to grow with the organization. Involve new members immediately, but give them manageable tasks,

such as giving announcements before classes, serving on committees, or recruiting a speaker.

- **BRING THEM BACK.** Once a first-year attends a meeting, be sure that student receives information about future meetings and events. Sign them up! Get their names, phone numbers, and email address. Be sure that they receive news about future events, and how they can contribute.
- **INVITE INTERESTING SPEAKERS.** When you bring in guests, look for some who will appeal to first-years. Host a variety of speakers who convey different topics and experiences.
- **SHOW THEM SURVIVORS.** More than 25 percent of law students enter law school hoping to serve the public interest. For many, this resolve fades with a lack of support from their peers and the administration. Your organization can show the new students that it is possible to survive their first year and still remain committed to public interest work.

### RECRUITING RETURNING STUDENTS

Don't forget to reach out to returning students! Students who didn't participate in prior years might be more willing to get involved because of a new attraction to public interest, changed leadership, or a more manageable schedule. Work with your organization's leadership to identify new leadership positions or areas for growth, and reach out to returning students to fill those roles. Connecting with leaders or members from other organizations may be one way to fill roles in your organization that are less time-consuming and intensive, while still helping the organization grow. Build your board by solidifying relationships with other organizations to ensure better programming and access to resources for your organization.

### RETAINING MEMBERS

Your ultimate goal is to find committed members who devote time to work for public interest at school and in the community. The best way to keep members committed is to run your organization well. Students want to be part of an organization that is impactful, efficient, and fun.

It's much easier to point to examples of well-run organizations than to instruct on how to run an organization well.

- **G.R.E.A.T:** Generally, a well-run organization offers GREAT opportunities for all of its members:
- Growth.** Your organization should provide opportunities for all members to grow and lead. While everyone can't be a chair, there should be multiple opportunities for members to lead, whether it's heading a committee or coordinating a project, or completing specific tasks in planning for an event.
  - Recognition.** Your organization should continuously recognize the work accomplished by members - ideally, shortly after it is completed.
  - Enjoyment.** Law students suffer from a chronic lack of time. If being part of the organization isn't fun and fulfilling, students will turn to a different activity. Consider building relationships among members of the group by doing social activities together once in a while.
  - Achievement.** The organization should break up broad objectives into achievable tasks. All members should work toward at least one of the tasks. No one should feel they aren't needed or are wasting their time, or that they are facing an impossible task.
  - Teamwork.** Your organization is a partnership among your members, who have joined because an organization of people achieves more than one individual. Work as a team, and encourage all members to participate in projects and decisions. Be sure to keep communication going among all members when planning events or completing projects.

CHAPTER 6

# Nuts and Bolts of a Successful Organization

## Chapter 6:

# Nuts and bolts of a successful organization

For a sample calendar of annual operations, including when to recruit, hold meetings and events, and select committees, please see the Appendix III.

### SET GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Identify short-, medium-, and long-term goals to accomplish during the current academic year, as well as future objectives that will advance your organization's purpose. If you have an established organization that repeats the same goals annually, discuss which to continue and whether there are any you should change.

- **GOALS:** A translation of your vision and mission into something that you are working toward over the long haul. Goals may be achievable, but not likely during your brief time in school. Examples of goals might be: “To have a law school curriculum that is supportive of public interest students,” or “To have financial programs that enable all law students who desire to go into public interest summer or postgraduate employment.”
  - ❑ Your organization should have three to five goals that set your fundamental, long-range direction.
- **OBJECTIVES:** Steps to progress toward your goals. Objectives are achievable and measurable, and most likely relate to the projects in which your organization already is involved. For example, in order to meet the goal of enabling all interested students to go into public interest summer or postgraduate employment, your organization may hold an annual auction to raise funds for summer fellowships or decide to campaign for a public interest scholarship program. The short-term goals of our annual auction would be your achievable, measurable objective.

Remember to set goals for the individual experience! Your members want to get something out of their participation. This should be an opportunity for them to develop and gain something personally. Ask what experiences (including social interaction) members are hoping to have, and how you can make sure they achieve this.

## IMPLEMENTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Once your organization has set goals for the group and its members, outline the steps required to reach each goal, and then develop a timeline for each goal and the steps necessary to accomplish it. Discuss whether your holistic plan is realistic and advances your organization's purpose. Finally, assign tasks to individuals or committees and determine who will do what.

## ESTABLISHING COMMITTEES

Committees help make tasks manageable, and help match members' skills to the organization's needs. Establish committees based on the tasks for the year. For example, you could have a publicity committee, a fundraising committee, a committee to plan projects, and a committee to plan for speakers.

## MOTIVATE!

People are motivated for different reasons. The most effective means of motivation considers why an individual chose to participate in the organization. There are four basic types of motivation, match them to each individual.

- **ACCOMPLISHMENT.** Some members are motivated by seeing the concrete impact of their work. These members might get excited when they work on projects that achieve something tangible and measurable. Certificates of completion and recognition, such as "100 hours of service," or photos of the final product, project, or event, might be great motivation.
- **BELONGING.** Some members join organizations to be part of a group. Great motivation for them is the opportunity to work with others. Social get-togethers and group t-shirts are great rewards that also convey a sense of belonging.
- **INFLUENCE.** People motivated by the desire to be in leadership or decision-making positions prefer to work for organizations that provide opportunities for leadership roles. Opportunities to be a spokesperson for your cause or event could be great motivation for these members.
- **PRAISE.** Some members are motivated by recognition for their talents and accomplishments. Motivate these members by providing opportunities to work on

projects with many little steps and with encouragement and recognition. Reward members with Thank You cards, praise, or small gifts.

## RUNNING MEETINGS

Organizations hold meetings. Meetings will vary in size, from small working sessions with the leadership, to larger meetings attended by all members and the general student body. Regardless of the size or type of meeting, a well-run meeting shows others that your organization is effective and impactful.

The key to a successful meeting is a working agenda that serves as a roadmap for the meeting.

- TIP: The agenda can be informal, but should include:
  - A summary of what occurred at the last meeting
  - The business for the current meeting
  - A preview of the next meeting
  - Time to assign work that needs to be completed before the next meeting

Members and attendees will expect the chair (either of the organization or a committee) to lead meetings. This might be intimidating, but you can successfully survive (and even excel) at meeting management by following these pointers:

- START ON TIME.** Waiting too long for stragglers might send the message to those who show up on time that they aren't important and their time isn't valuable.
- KEEP THE GROUP FOCUSED.** The meeting conversation should be forward-moving toward a resolution (decision point or identification of needed action). Discussions sometimes wander into other subjects. Be prepared to tactfully bump the conversation back to the main track. If the conversation changes to a topic that concerns many people, you might decide to add it to the agenda for the meeting or consider it at the next meeting.
- CLOSE WITH A SUMMARY.** End the meeting by repeating the tasks to be done, deadlines, and items to be discussed at the next meeting. A summary shows productivity and effectiveness, it reminds attendees of what was accomplished at the meeting and what they need to do before the next meeting.

## ORGANIZING EVENTS

### FUNDRAISERS

Raising money for different projects is a key part of successful organizing. At first, the idea of raising tens of thousands, or even thousands, of dollars might seem a little bit intimidating. But funds help enhance the projects you can plan, and provide the opportunity to support students with grants.

- **TIP:** Fundraising is doable, and can even be fun! Follow these pointers:
  - DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL.** If your organization is known for a certain event each year, and you have been successful at raising the money you need, then follow the guidance from last year. You can modify the event, but keep some continuity while you create new ideas too. Succession planning to ensure there are always some members who carry over each year on your board is especially important with fundraising and event planning. If you have donors, sponsors, vendors or staff and faculty supporters from last year, contact them again.
  - SET YOUR GOAL.** First, determine how much you want to raise. This may be a discussion with your advisor as well as your school's development office. Then, plan your fundraisers based on the best type of activities for raising that amount. For example, if your goal is to raise \$3000 - is a bake sale going to achieve this goal? Or is your time better spent on a larger-level fundraiser that may bring in more funds?
  - DON'T OVERDO IT.** As you plan your fundraiser, consider your organization's limitations, such as the time and number of students needed to plan certain types of events. Choose activities that meet your organization's particular abilities.
  - MAKE A TIMELINE.** Fundraising events are a process, and you don't want to skip steps. Plan the different stages of your fundraiser and be realistic about how long each step might take. If you are creating something brand new for your group, speak with student affairs and your development office. They are very experienced with event planning and can give you guidance.

- INVOLVE AS MANY MEMBERS AS POSSIBLE. Fundraising efforts often are labor-intensive. If all of the work is done by a few people, they might burn out quickly, and the organization might suffer if you lose their participation. Collaboration is key. You may find that there are some existing student groups, clinics, or departments who would be happy to publicize your needs to their membership. They may even be willing to co-sponsor or join in your fundraiser when they understand that the beneficiary is a public interest group.
- INCLUDE YOUR PAST GRANT RECIPIENTS. If you are raising money for a particular project or public interest grants, include these students in your fundraising. They can give testimonials, discussing their experiences, to potential donors (large and small), either in groups, or one-on-one. You can also be creative with social media. Tell stories of how they helped the community. You can make a video, show photos and stories at the event, and talk about the valuable work they did in sponsorship letters too. You can also have your grant recipients invite their supervising attorneys to participate in some of your events, such as an auction, panel or networking event. They will come and support their law students.
- USE YOUR VOLUNTEERS! Actively recruit volunteers from the entire law school community. Give them tasks with which they are comfortable and will feel good about accomplishing. Be especially careful to plan events and assign tasks around the academic calendar. Keep everyone involved and delegate. Make sure you show your appreciation for all volunteer efforts, no matter how large or small. Some people may want to help, but are new to fundraising and event planning. Work together. These are valuable skills for all to learn, especially for those who are interested in a public interest career. Treat all committee members and volunteers with respect at all times.
- TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR SCHOOL'S RESOURCES. There might be some services to which the school will be willing to provide access at no charge, such as copying and printing, telephones, computers, alumni lists, mailing invitations, designing thank you notes, etc. Also, join together with other student groups and ask them to co-sponsor events with you. This may provide shared costs, for example, for food, and help recruit more attendees to your events.

- HAVE FUN!** You won't generate much enthusiasm, or attract new members, if your organization seems too stressed or too somber.
- THANK PARTICIPANTS, SPONSORS, DONORS, and VOLUNTEERS.** Throughout the planning of the event, and after the event, your leadership should be thanking everyone! In addition to attendees and donors at the event, volunteers who put in long hours and businesses that provide donations or services to make your event possible should know their efforts are appreciated. Hand-written thank you notes are a great way to show your appreciation. Create a time when you can join together after the event and all write the notes together, even if the message is the same on all notes. Contact your school's development office, they may need to send out donor letters for tax purposes, so make sure you keep track of who donated what.
- KEEP A RECORD:** Keep a careful record of your contacts, vendors, event plans, volunteers, donors, income, and expenses. After large events it is valuable to take the time to debrief with your planning committee about what went right and what could be improved. Pass on this information to the next year's board.
- **HOW IT WORKS:** The types of fundraisers you can hold are limitless! Examples include:
  - Pledge drives and auctions
  - Talent shows and sporting events
  - Food sales and t-shirt sales

### *SPEAKERS*

Inviting speakers to your school has many positive results. You will give students an opportunity to learn about a particular area of law, interest new students in your organization, show that your school has committed public interest students, and possibly facilitate the arranging of a job or internship between your guest and a student.

- **TIP:** Here are some suggestions on how to create a positive experience:
  - **Before the presentation:**
    - DETERMINE THE NEEDS OF YOUR AUDIENCE.** Are you looking for someone to provide substance about a particular field of law, or generate enthusiasm for your organization's area of law? It is easier to find the right content first, and then look for the right speaker.

- ESTABLISH YOUR DATE and TIME, and YOUR BUDGET. Determine at least two dates that are available at your school, and make sure a room is available for those days before you invite your speaker. Also, decide if your organization is willing to pay an honorarium, and perhaps charge a registration fee to students.
- LOCATE YOUR RESOURCES. Personal referrals often are the best way to find a speaker. Ask members, grant recipients, your advisor, faculty, and your alumni office for their ideas and recommendations, especially those who have worked in public interest law.
- SELECT YOUR SPEAKER. Contact recommended speakers and arrange for a presentation. If possible, give a speaker at least a month's notice, and provide some background information about your organization, the number of people you expect to attend, a suggested outline/structure, including how long they should speak, and any other details to help guide their presentation.
- SEND A CONFIRMATION. Send your speaker a written confirmation of the date, time, location, and topic. If possible, include information about available A/V, parking, and a map of the school. If they have materials to share, discuss whether you can provide copies or share the expected number of attendees.
- FINALIZE THE LOGISTICS. Book your room, arrange A/V, order food if you are providing it, and make sure your speaker has somewhere to park if needed. You may want to give a small gift to the speaker, perhaps a coffee mug with your school logo in a gift bag.
- ADVERTISE! Without advertising, no one will know that your speaker is coming! If the speaker's area of expertise or topic relates to another existing student group or organization, ask if they are willing to co-sponsor the event and publicize it to their membership. Post about the event on student forums and send it out to any public interest listservs. Create a flyer to give a face to your event, and use the same graphics when emailing or posting. Be sure your flyer includes date, time, place, whether food will be provided, and speaker/topic information.

### The day of the presentation:

- SET THE STAGE. Double-check all of your arrangements for the event. If you have a panel, bring printed name cards for the speakers and moderator. Make sure your room is available and that the A/V, room temperature, and chair set-up will be fine. If your speaker needs additional equipment, make sure that is available. Post signs on campus at the entrance or outside the room to welcome your speaker and encourage attendees.
- STAY ON SCHEDULE. If you delay the speaker's presentation, you might indicate that their time isn't valuable or that you are disorganized.
- WARMLY INTRODUCE YOUR SPEAKER. Someone from your organization should set the stage for your speaker by calling the audience to attention and then providing a little background about your speaker and the event. A good introduction is short, energizing, and excites the audience.

### After the presentation:

- THANK YOUR SPEAKER. Your guests take time out of their schedule for your organization. Be sure to thank your speaker for their time and insights directly after the presentation with a letter or note.
- EVALUATE THE PROGRAM. Try to gauge the reactions of your members. Even an informal discussion about the program with different members will allow you to gather some results and plan for future events.

## *PROJECTS*

Because the purpose of public interest organizations is to encourage service to the underserved, many sponsor and implement pro bono or community service projects. Projects can be legal or nonlegal, depending on your organization and mission, although one with a legal services aspect more tightly meshes with the goals of public interest law. Some organizations plan a single project, while others have ongoing projects and match students with different opportunities. Your organization will need to decide what fits best. You should discuss your new ideas with your advisor and also with your school's Pro Bono Coordinator if you have one.

- TIP: When planning your project, ask these questions:
  - Will students be excited about the project? Have you built in “fun” while maintaining quality and keeping it challenging?
  - Is the project realistic? Is it within your organization’s and volunteer’s resources (time, people, money, and expertise)?
  - Will the project conflict with any other organizations or events on campus, or face any opposition?
  - Is there a potential to build coalitions with other organizations?
  - Do students understand their volunteer roles and responsibilities?
  - Is the project safe? Have you brainstormed to foresee any potential dangers and taken the necessary precautions?
  - If it is law-related, is there a legal services organization whose efforts you can support rather than creating a potentially duplicative new program?
- Below you will find some ideas for potential projects. Please keep in mind that any project that is law-related would require a supervising attorney.
  - Spring break trip/project
  - Visits to a youth detention center to give legal information sessions on their rights
  - Assisting cancer patients or the elderly with creation of wills
  - Immigration assistance
  - Unlawful Detainers
  - Expungements
  - Small Claims matters
  - Guardian ad Litem: contact your local program to determine requirements/needs
  - Contact your local Legal Aid office and speak with their pro bono coordinator to coordinate with their need for law students

## MANAGING AND DISTRIBUTING YOUR FUNDS/BUDGET

While some schools have structural means to fund some fellowships, many public interest organizations raise money for summer public interest grants. In addition, some schools provide additional funds, sometimes a lump sum and sometimes a match of funds raised. Research possible sources of funding and design your fundraising efforts to be complementary.

➤ POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING:

- Student organization fundraising
- Law school match
- Student Bar Association
- Employer contribution
- Federal Work-study funding

You'll also have to set how you will administer any grants. You want transparency throughout the process. Both potential supporters and applicants want to know you have a reliable, consistent, and impactful program.

When creating criteria and methods of selection, remember you want to build your program and enhance your name recognition. Try to avoid alienating potential applicants and supporters. Try instead to solicit input from these groups, which can make them feel more invested in your program.

➤ RUNNING THE GRANT PROCESS - A CHECKLIST OF MAJOR TASKS:

- Establish criteria for eligibility and application procedure
- Possible factors to consider (grant amount, allocation of procedure, etc.)
- Investigating tax consequences
- Possible documents/information to request
- Selecting who will make the decision
- Publicizing the criteria and method of selection
- Selecting candidates
- Announcing the recipients

CHAPTER 7

# Publicity

## Chapter 7:

# Publicity

All projects, meetings, and events need to be publicized. And so does your organization, itself! Publicity can attract new members, increase name recognition, improve your ability to raise funds, and make members feel good about their efforts.

### SPREAD THE WORD!

There are two types of publicity: organizational publicity and event publicity. Organizational publicity spreads the word about your organization, its mission, and its achievements. It is an ongoing process, which is in part supported by the methods you use to publicize events. Event publicity spreads the word about a specific activity or occasion. Well-publicized, smoothly orchestrated events will provide a great reflection on - and great publicity for - your organization.

### PUBLICIZING YOUR ORGANIZATION

Building recognition for your organization should be a long-term strategy, rather than a one-day-at-a-time method to publicize individual events and activities. Publicizing your organization is critical, especially because students, faculty, and sponsors - who may never attend one of your events - often make decisions about providing funding (or in the case of businesses who sponsor your events, donations), for the organization and its projects. Those decisions will be based on your organization's reputation.

Name recognition is enhanced by updates on social media, articles in school newspapers, newsletters, and the image portrayed through your organization's events and activities. The actions and opinions of your members can provide the best - or worst - type of publicity. If your organization has internal conflicts that aren't resolved quickly and fairly, they almost always will become known by the larger school community. On the flip side, if members feel appreciated and enjoy participating in the organization, the school community will learn this, too.

Be seen. Table at law school orientation events and student organization affairs. When you partner with other student organizations or administrative offices, make sure your organization is identified as a co-sponsor on promotional materials and announcements.

The development of a strong vision statement and mission statement is essential for publicizing your organization. Clear, strong statements will help to keep the organization's members on the same page regarding the vision of the organization and what it does. The statements also will help the members to communicate effectively about the organization in order to develop a strong brand.

### **PUBLICIZING AN EVENT**

Before you begin your efforts, determine your audience. Some activities are aimed at current members, while others, like an auction or a pledge drive, should interest the entire law school community. Some activities might have several audiences. For example, you might have chosen a speaker based on current members, but might hope that speaker attracts students who've never attended a meeting, as well.

Once you've identified your audience, figure out the best way to advertise to reach them. Brainstorm ways to spread the word. After you have a list of possible publicity methods, narrow it down to the best ones. You can slim down your list by considering how many people a certain method might reach and how much it might cost, and deciding whether the reach is worth the cost.

As a rule of thumb, you should add your event to your school's master events calendar, if possible. You should have the events added as early as possible so that students are aware of them and can put plans to attend the events on their personal calendars.

- **TIP:** It's tough to predict how individuals will respond to different types of publicity. For example, some people don't read flyers posted on bulletin boards, and some don't read emails. In order to reach as many people as possible, use at least three different methods of publicity for each event.
  
- **HOW IT WORKS:** Here's a sampling of tactics to build interest in your activities:
  - Add-a-letter sign (Post a sign and add one letter of the title of your program each day until your event is revealed)
  - Advertise in the community through local newspaper, radio, and website calendars
  - Announcements
  - Balloons (Table with balloons that have event information on them)
  - Banners
  - Billboards
  - Bookmarks

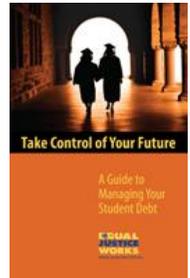
- Bumper stickers
- Campus radio
- Cartoons
- “Celebrity” spokesperson
- Chalk messages (washable!)
- Classroom presentations
- Contests
- Door knob hangers
- Door prizes
- Emails
- Early Arrival prizes
- Elevator messages
- Faculty endorsements
- Fake dollar bills with program information on them (great for an auction!)
- Flyers
- Fortune cookies
- Free cookies/brownies at information table
- Fundraisers (for your event)
- Giveaways
- Hershey’s kisses with messages attached
- Huge wall calendar
- Involve a variety of organizations
- Invitations to your event
- Kiosks
- Letters to interested groups
- Leaflets
- Listserv messages
- Mailbox reminders (remember the boxes of your fellow organizations!)
- Make footprints through common areas on campus
- Mystery guests
- Notices in classrooms and near computer labs
- Paint information on a sheet
- Photos
- Posters
- Put members in costumes and have them pass out information
- Satisfied volunteers
- Seek sponsors
- Songs
- Table tents
- T-shirts
- Videos
- Whiteboard messages
- Word of mouth

# Appendix I: Equal Justice Works Resources and Opportunities for Public Interest Law Students

## MANAGE YOUR STUDENT DEBT

[www.equaljusticeworks.org/ed-debt](http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/ed-debt)

Equal Justice Works is a national leader in advocating for programs and legislation that enable graduates to pay back their loans as a percentage of income and receive loan forgiveness after 10 years of public service. Follow our weekly blog, sign up for our webinars, and download our e-book, “Take Control of Your Future: How to Manage Your Educational Debt.”



## DISCOVER NEW OPPORTUNITIES: CONFERENCE AND CAREER FAIR

[www.equaljusticeworks.org/law-school/conference-and-careerfair](http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/law-school/conference-and-careerfair)

Each year, the Equal Justice Works Conference and Career Fair brings together more than 150 regional and national employers with 1,200 law students from 200 law schools for interviews, networking, and workshops. Don't miss out on all

these opportunities under one roof.

## AMERICORPS JD: FUNDING FOR LAW STUDENT PUBLIC INTEREST WORK

<http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/law-school/ameriCorpsjd>

AmeriCorps JD offers law students the opportunity to gain first-hand experience and legal skills year round, by serving a minimum of 300 hours as an AmeriCorps member, with a \$1,212 education award at the end of their service.



## CREATE YOUR DREAM JOB: POSTGRADUATE PUBLIC INTEREST FELLOWSHIPS

[www.equaljusticeworks.org/post-grad](http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/post-grad)

Since 1992, Equal Justice Works has helped launch the public interest careers of more than a thousand attorneys through its paid postgraduate public interest fellowship programs. Through our Equal Justice Works Fellowships, AmeriCorps Legal Fellowships, justice AmeriCorps, and VISTA Affordable Housing Preservation Project programs,

more than 250 attorneys are in the field providing critical legal assistance to vulnerable individuals and communities throughout the country on all types of issue areas.

## Appendix II: Plan Your Public Interest Career

### EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS TIMELINE

Program	Apply or Register	Class Year	Program Dates
2015 Conference and Career Fair	August 11, 2015 to October 9, 2015	All students or recent graduates	October 23 & 24
2015-2016 AmeriCorps JD	August 2015 to April 2016	All students	September 2015 to August 2016
2016 Equal Justice Works Fellowships	July 6, 2015 to September 18, 2015	Rising 3Ls or recent graduates	September 2016 to September 2018
2015 AmeriCorps Legal Fellowships	July 2015 to August 2015	Recent graduates	August 2015 to August 2016
2016 justice AmeriCorps	October 2015 to December 2015	Recent graduates	December 2015 to December 2016
2016 VISTA Affordable Housing Preservation Project	December 2015 to February 2016	Recent graduates	January 2016 to March 2016

### LAW SCHOOL TIMELINE

FIRST YEAR		
Fall	Expand your knowledge of public interest subject areas by attending educational panels and on-campus events.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Become involved with student organizations and introduce yourself to alumni and others working in your interest areas. Participate in volunteer opportunities and pro bono projects. Sign up with <b>Equal Justice Works</b> to learn more.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Attend the <b>Equal Justice Works annual Conference and Career Fair</b> to meet public interest students and begin investigating public interest organizations from across the country.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Start your summer internship search. Log on to your school's jobs database, draft your resume in law school format, and sign up for PSJD and Idealist.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Meet with a career counselor to review your resume, discuss goals for the summer, and get advice on your public interest career path. Be sure to ask if there is a counselor at your school with expertise in public interest job searches.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	After December 1, begin applying for summer internships.	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Contact employers you would like to meet to schedule informational interviews during winter break.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Continue conducting your summer search for an internship and summer job during winter break.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Spring</b>	Continue to build credentials by getting involved in public interest student groups and participating in pro bono opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Attend local public interest career fairs. If your school does not participate in or host one, ask a career counselor about alternatives.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Research and apply for internal and external summer funding to support public interest work. Apply to <b>Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps JD</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Attend information sessions on opportunities for 2Ls: externships, clinics, Street Law, and issue-specific courses.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gain as much experience from your activities as you can. Take advantage of brown bag lunches or other educational/networking opportunities offered by your school and student organizations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Summer</b>	Utilize your summer to focus on gaining skills that will assist you in your career and your 2L and postgraduate job searches.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Consider whether your summer employer is a potential postgraduate employer or fellowship host.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Attempt to draft a writing sample through your summer position. Gain as much experience as you can. Take advantage of brown bag lunches or other educational/networking opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Determine whether you want to explore a new area during your 2L year or during the summer, or deepen prior experience. Begin your 2L spring and/or summer internship search.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Participate in recruitment/on-campus interviews (OCI) and submit direct applications. Remember to research organizations and government agencies that recruit in early fall.	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SECOND YEAR**

<p><b>Fall</b></p> 	<p>Continue your search for 2L spring and/or summer position. If you have a fall or spring internship, check to see if you can apply for the <b>Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps JD</b> program before the spring.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>As one factor in your search, determine whether organizations have postgraduate opportunities. Do they regularly hire staff attorneys, have their own fellowship or successfully host externally-funded fellowships like <b>Equal Justice Works</b>?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Meet with a career counselor to discuss long-term plans and how they relate to 2L summer. Ask about information sessions and/or counseling services regarding postgraduate fellowships.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Continue participation in public interest student groups and pro bono opportunities. Take on leadership roles in these groups and projects.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Engage in networking opportunities to discuss future career plans and discover job opportunities.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Attend the annual <b>Equal Justice Works Conference and Career Fair</b> to interview with employers and participate in topical sessions.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Attend public interest events, panels, and networking opportunities hosted by your school.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Spring</b></p>	<p>Attend your local public interest career fair and continue to check PSJD, Idealist, and your school’s jobs database for job postings.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Engage in networking opportunities to discuss career plans and discover job opportunities.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Attend any available programming regarding postgraduate fellowships.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Research and apply for internal and external summer funding. Apply to <b>Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps JD</b> program.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>If considering postgraduate judicial clerkships, meet with a career counselor and discuss the upcoming application process.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Summer</b></p>	<p>Make connections and maintain a good relationship with your supervisor. These contacts can be crucial to postgraduate employment and long-term career success.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>If applying for privately-funded fellowships, such as the <b>Equal Justice Works Fellowships</b> or Skadden Fellowships, meet with a counselor to discuss the application process.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Draft a writing sample to use for future employment opportunities. Work hard to get as much experience as you can and hone skills you’ve begun to develop.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Apply to judicial clerkships and postgraduate fellowships with fall deadlines.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Review on-campus interview deadlines and Government Honors Programs deadlines.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>THIRD YEAR</b>		
<b>Fall</b> 	Meet with counselor to plan postgraduate job strategy and update your resume. Sign up to receive job postings from PSJD and Idealist and attend the annual <b>Equal Justice Works Conference and Career Fair</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Continue participation in public interest student groups and pro bono opportunities. Take on leadership roles in these groups and projects.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Spring/ Summer</b>	Apply for fellowships with spring deadlines. Utilize your career services office and advisors.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Apply for jobs that post announcements in spring and summer. Utilize your career services office and advisors. Apply for <b>Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellowships</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Study for the bar. Public interest organizations often hire only after applicants pass the bar exam.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/law-school>

## Appendix III: Outline of Annual Operations

BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS	
Send letter to incoming first-years.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hold first planning meeting of board.	<input type="checkbox"/>
WHEN SCHOOL STARTS	
Set up publicity. A table or signs around school, allow incoming students to see you immediately.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participate in activities open house or club day.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welcome second and third-years back and inform them of the organization's plans for the year.	<input type="checkbox"/>
FIRST MONTH OF SCHOOL	
Hold first general meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the mission and vision of the organization.</li> <li>• Explain what the organization hopes to achieve during the year.</li> <li>• Allow time for current members to talk informally with new members.</li> <li>• Have several sign-up sheets, including a general attendance sheet.</li> <li>• Create opportunities for new members to immediately be involved in an activity.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hold first activity. (At some schools, this might be combined with the general meeting.) Ideas of activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a reception where past grantees talk about their experiences,</li> <li>• a service project,</li> <li>• an educational speaker, or</li> <li>• speaker panel.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish committees: these could include an educational speaker committee, a publicity committee, a fundraising committee, a service project committee, and other committees that your organization needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
FIRST SEMESTER	
Organize fundraising/service event.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hold general meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>

If planning an auction, hold first planning meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hold meeting explaining the fellowships and how students can apply for them.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BEGINNING OF SECOND SEMESTER</b>	
Continue to publicize grants.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan fundraising events.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>SECOND SEMESTER</b>	
Hold fundraising/service/publicity event.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assist grant applicants.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Select grant applicants.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hold educational speaker.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>FINAL MEETING OF THE YEAR</b>	
Evaluate the work over the last year.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan on ways to improve next year's activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hold elections for next year.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Give information to the next leaders.	<input type="checkbox"/>