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Legal practices

University law students lead the state in pro bono hours for a third consecutive year

By Lisa Catto
News Reporter

University law students have won the Oregon State Bar's Pro Bono Challenge for the third time in as many years. The competition tracks pro bono hours donated by practicing attorneys and students at Oregon law schools.

Jane Steckbeck, assistant director for Career Services at the University School of Law, said law students reported 11,214 pro bono hours in 2003, which makes up 71.5 percent of the state total of 15,686 hours. She added that at law clerk wages, the students' work was worth approximately \$134,568.

All the hours were performed by 112 law students. The law school faculty determined the definition of pro bono work as "work directly related to the delivery of legal services to indigent individuals by attorneys or organizations." It can also be work for an attorney on behalf of an organization, work related to the administration of the University's pro bono program or law-related work for different levels of the government, except law enforcement.

A group of "passionate" law students who were already doing pro bono work on their own started the program in 1996, Steckbeck said.

She added that students asked law faculty to make pro bono work a part of graduation requirements, but the faculty voted to make the program voluntary and reevaluate it at a later time.

It will most likely remain a voluntary program because the budget and funding aren't available to staff such a requirement, Steckbeck said.

She said there are many reasons why law students participate in pro bono work. Some believe it is their professional responsibility to provide access to justice for those who need it, and they have a deep desire to use their law experience to help people. Others turn to pro bono work to develop skills in law, build their résumés and, they hope, obtain references they can use to get future jobs.

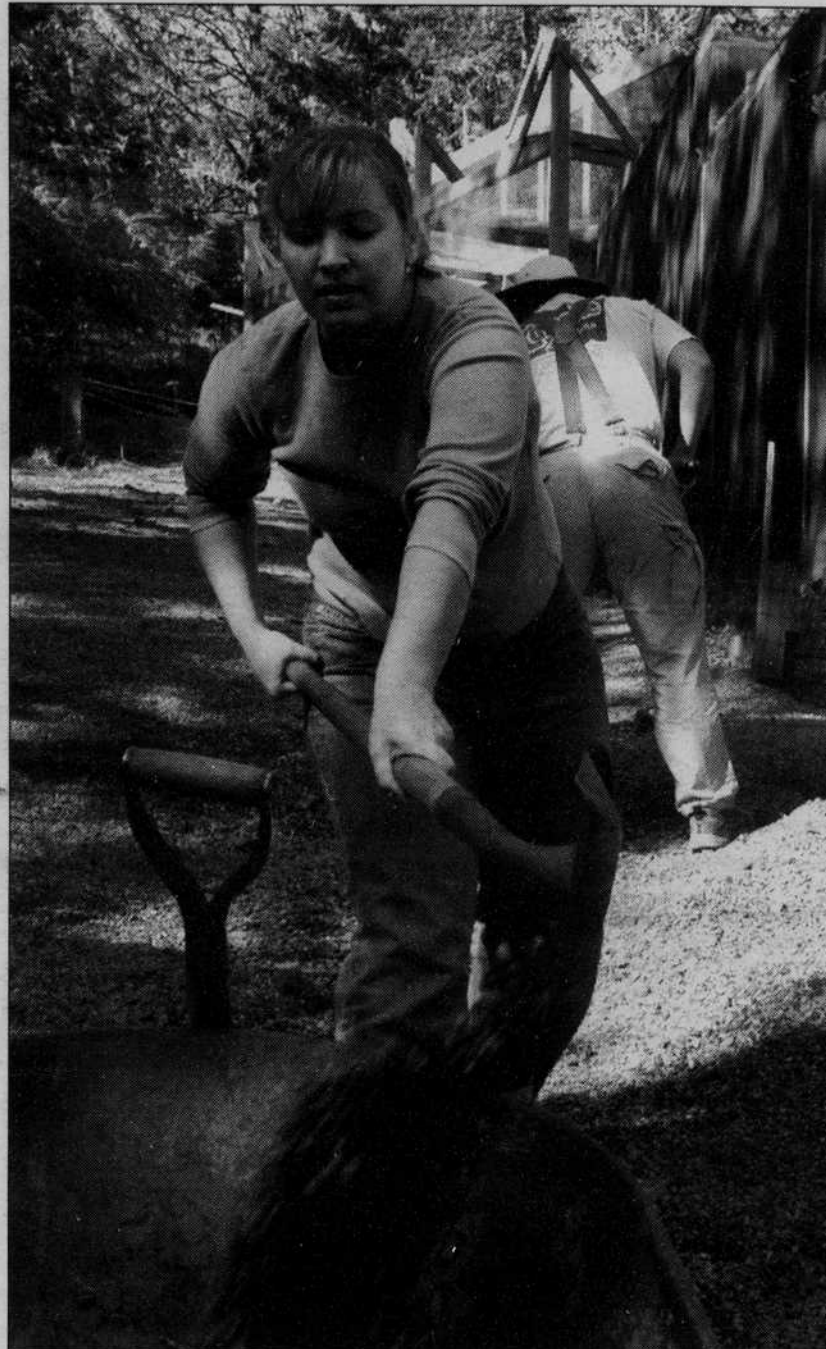
She added that many students participate in pro bono work because it can lay a foundation for a career in public service.

"I think there's a perception that public interest jobs are easy to get, perhaps because they're low paying," she said. "That's actually very untrue. Public interest jobs are very competitive and students who volunteer with an organization have an advantage when it comes to hiring for a permanent position."

Graduating third-year law student Sarah Drescher has been doing pro bono work since her first year as a law student. She estimates that she has done more than 200 hours of pro bono work, and tonight she will be receiving the law school's Outstanding Service Impact Award.

Most of her pro bono hours have been spent working with the American Civil Liberties Union. She said the organization needed

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Tim Bobosky Photographer
Kristen Parcher, student chairwoman of the Public Interest Public Service program, works with fellow law student Jason Hartz at the Cascades Raptor Center off Fox Hollow Road Saturday.

Senate agrees to reimburse USSA trip

ASUO Vice President Morales questioned senators' voting motives in regard to creating a student-issues committee

By Jared Paben
Senior News Reporter

The ASUO Student Senate compensated a controversial lobbying group \$2,250 for its cross-country trip, and ASUO Vice President Eddy Morales hinted at governmental racism as senators contemplated creating a new committee in a nearly four-hour meeting Wednesday.

The Senate voted 15-1 to pass a motion authorizing a funds transfer for the United States Student Association to allow the group to pay for a 15-member University-student delegation trip to Washington, D.C.

ASUO President Maddy Melton, who is a member of USSA, told senators that the students on the spring-break trip lobbied on behalf of University students.

Sen. Colin Andries, who voted against the motion, said USSA is a lobbying group that may not have the support of all students and shouldn't be funded with incidental fees.

But Senate President Ben Strawn said USSA's mission and goals have already been approved, and the meeting was not the proper forum for such deliberation.

Several senators questioned why USSA requested funds after the group had already paid for and taken the trip — not before. Plane tickets to Washington, D.C., were put on ASUO Accounting Coordinator Jennifer Creighton-Neiwert's credit card, Morales said.

Melton said she didn't request the funds before the trip because that would have meant appearing before the Senate

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Candidate voting bloc PSST violates ASUO flyer rule

The ASUO Elections Coordinator says the group improperly posted fliers on student group windows and doors in the EMU Wednesday

By Jared Paben
Senior News Reporter

The Progressive Students Starting Today voting bloc violated ASUO election rules Wednesday when members posted multiple PSST fliers on student group doors on the bottom floor of the EMU, ASUO Elections Coordinator Stephanie Day said.

According to election rules, campaign material promoting a specific candidate or group of candidates may be posted on public bulletin boards, but not on doors or windows.

Day said the ASUO Elections Board will not punish the group for the violations because the board does not think it is a serious enough problem to warrant discipline. She added that the board does have the power to impose sanctions on candidates, including removal from the ballot, if they determine circumstances justify it.

"The election board's goal is to avoid going through the grievance process when a problem arises," Day said. "The elections board sees no reason to invoke anything. We asked them to

take it down. They did. I see no need to take any further action."

PSST, a group of 13 ASUO candidates, hopes to "give a voice to the voiceless who right now are the majority of the student population," according to the group's platform.

Day said she didn't know how many fliers were posted, but she said she removed a few. After contacting PSST, members of that group "removed others that I wasn't aware of," she said, adding that PSST members were all informed they couldn't post on doors.

But PSST member Khanh Le called the rules "very vague," adding that the group was confused by the "broad issues."

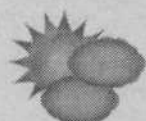
"We've been working together to make sure nobody violates any rules," he said. "Most of the regulations out here are very vague."

Section 6.2 of the ASUO elections rules states that "Campaign material may not be posted (affixed by any method) on, in or to any University building..." The provision cites several exceptions to the rule, such as distributing fliers in the EMU and posting them on bulletin boards. ASUO Student Senate candidate Spencer Hardy saw the fliers Wednesday and approached the elections board with his complaint. Hardy estimates he saw four or five

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