



*The 2005-2006 Board meets in the Burdman Lounge*

**Student Leadership of Public Interest and Pro Bono at Duke Law School**  
***A Brief History of Public Interest & Pro Bono,  
Student/Administration Collaboration  
and the Creation of the Public Interest and Pro Bono Board***

Students have always been active in the leadership of public interest and public service activities at Duke Law School, long before the creation of the Public Interest and Pro Bono Board in fall 2002. In fact, students were finding ways to serve the community even before faculty/administrative support was established in 1991 with the creation of the Pro Bono Project. In the 1980s, active pro bono service groups were VITA, the Prisoners Rights Project (that morphed into the Innocence Project), Guardian Ad Litem (which was organized by the Durham GAL program) and Brogden Middle School tutoring. In addition, students have long had a public interest group, similar to the current Public Interest Law Society (PILF). They have used it in various ways over the years, sometimes fund-raising, sometimes lobbying for additional public interest programs, and sometimes creating programming of their own. The predecessor to PILF was Student Funded Fellowships (SFF). In the early 1990s, the name changed to Public Interest Law Society (PILS), and then to the current Public Interest Law Foundation (PILF).

This brief history will document the formal Law School structures that have developed both to devote faculty/administration time to public interest and pro bono and to formalize student contributions:

In 1991, the faculty created the Pro Bono Project and hired a faculty/administrator, Carol Spruill. In 1993, she expanded opportunities beyond pro bono to add the first public interest program activity – the Public Interest Book Club. She worked with a student director, and one or two students were directors of the Public Interest Book Club from then until 2002-2003.

*Continued >>>*

*Office of Public Interest and Pro Bono  
Revised 8/25/2008*

## **Student Leadership in the Duke Law Office of Public Interest and Pro Bono continued ...**

Spruill became Assistant and then Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for three years, 1996-1999, while also retaining the role of Director of Public Interest, and she hired first Cindy Adcock and then Brenda Berlin to run the Pro Bono Project, both of whom were lawyers with several years of public sector experience. Over this period, Spruill worked extensively with the Co-Presidents of PILS to organize many lunch speakers and programs in addition to the Public Interest Book Club events. Cindy Adcock added the Public Interest Retreat to public interest offerings in the late 1990s and this quickly became a joint student/faculty/administration initiative. PILS co-sponsored it and added Public Interest Retreat Director to its list of elected officers for several years.

In 1999, the Office of Public Interest and Pro Bono was created, and Carol Spruill left Academic Affairs to concentrate more time on building the public interest and pro bono program, including enhanced support for those seeking a public interest career. Additional public interest program features were added and school-sponsored summer fellowship opportunities grew at the same time that PILF was finding ways to raise more fellowship money every year.

Initially the Office staff consisted of an Associate Dean, a small part of the time of the Pro Bono Director, and part of the time of faculty support member Kim Burrucker. In fall 2003, the staff was reconfigured and Kim Burrucker became full-time Coordinator of Public Interest and Pro Bono, and now Director. At that time, Spruill and Burrucker were the only two staff members, working with Board members and research assistants. A third half-time Coordinator position was added in August, 2006, and Laura Brockington became Coordinator in fall 2007.

As the Office was created in 1999, Professor Kate Bartlett became Dean and she called for a review of student leadership opportunities. She created a Leadership Committee and appointed Spruill, Dean Jim Coleman and Adcock to it. She charged the committee with exploring how to involve students in the leadership of all facets of school administration. Specifically, she asked the Office of Public Interest and Pro Bono to create a board of student advisors and to focus only on the program features that students were willing to support.

Thus, beginning in fall 2002, the Office of Public Interest and Pro Bono institutionalized its collaboration with students in the leadership roles they take with the Office. It created the Public Interest and Pro Bono Board and gave student leaders positions in planning and implementing the work of the Office. In the first year, approximately 25 students were on the Board, and since then, from 40 to 50 students have been active as board leaders. Each member of the Board is responsible primarily for one of the main features of the Office, including activities and group pro bono projects. The full Board meets four times during the year for overall planning and for support of the projects of their fellow board members. This approach provides avenues for the development of leadership skills, ensures that the Office is focused on areas of interest to students, and leverages the talents and energy of committed students to expand the offerings of the Office. Hundreds of students have made their mark on the development of public interest and pro bono at Duke Law School to build it to what it has become today.