

SMU PRO BONO CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT 2020



PRO BONO CENTRE

SUPPORTED BY
RHT RAJAN MENON
FOUNDATION

SCHOOL OF LAW





SMU PRO BONO CENTRE



EXECUTIVE TRAINEE

Reuben Teng

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Ruby Lee

DIRECTOR

Chan Wing Cheong

SENIOR ASSISTANT MANAGER

Rebecca Teo

EXECUTIVE

Vincent Goh

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



2020 has been a tumultuous year. Law students were badly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic which reached our shores in the first quarter of 2020. All pro bono placements with physical interaction were cancelled during the circuit breaker from April to June, with many only restarting from July or August onwards. However, we are pleased to report that despite the disruption, the SMU Class of 2020 still managed to achieve the highest average number of approved pro bono hours completed per student in the last 4 years. The JD class of 2020 achieved a whopping 68.9 pro bono hours per student!

We acknowledge the 17 JD and 32 LLB students from the Class of 2020 who completed more than 50 and 80 hours of approved pro bono respectively, which is far more than the mandatory 20 pro bono hours required by SILE. We thank all our community partners for making this possible and mentoring the students during their placements.

During the circuit breaker, various new regulations and support schemes were announced by the government. SMU Law students tapped on their creative talents and legal expertise to provide the public with easy-to-understand Covid-19 related information using videos and FAQs on a dedicated website. The SMU Pro Bono Centre's contributions included hosting a free public webinar on Covid-19 (see Spotlight).

The SMU Pro Bono Centre website was also redesigned and launched at the end of May. It is now more user friendly with self-help features such as allowing legal clinic applicants to register for appointments directly. With the help of our trainee, Reuben Teng, Mandarin translations of information from the State Courts website on Magistrates Complaints, Small Claims Tribunal, Neighbour Disputes and POHA is now available on the website.

Despite the restrictions brought by Covid-19, the SMU PBC Legal Clinic continued to function by providing legal help to applicants through email instead of physical consultations. Students did the research and drafted the email replies under my supervision which were then vetted by volunteer lawyers. The legal clinic restarted physical consultations in August in view of the demand. As shown in the analysis of cases seen at the legal clinic in this report, Covid-19 issues now constitute a small but growing number.

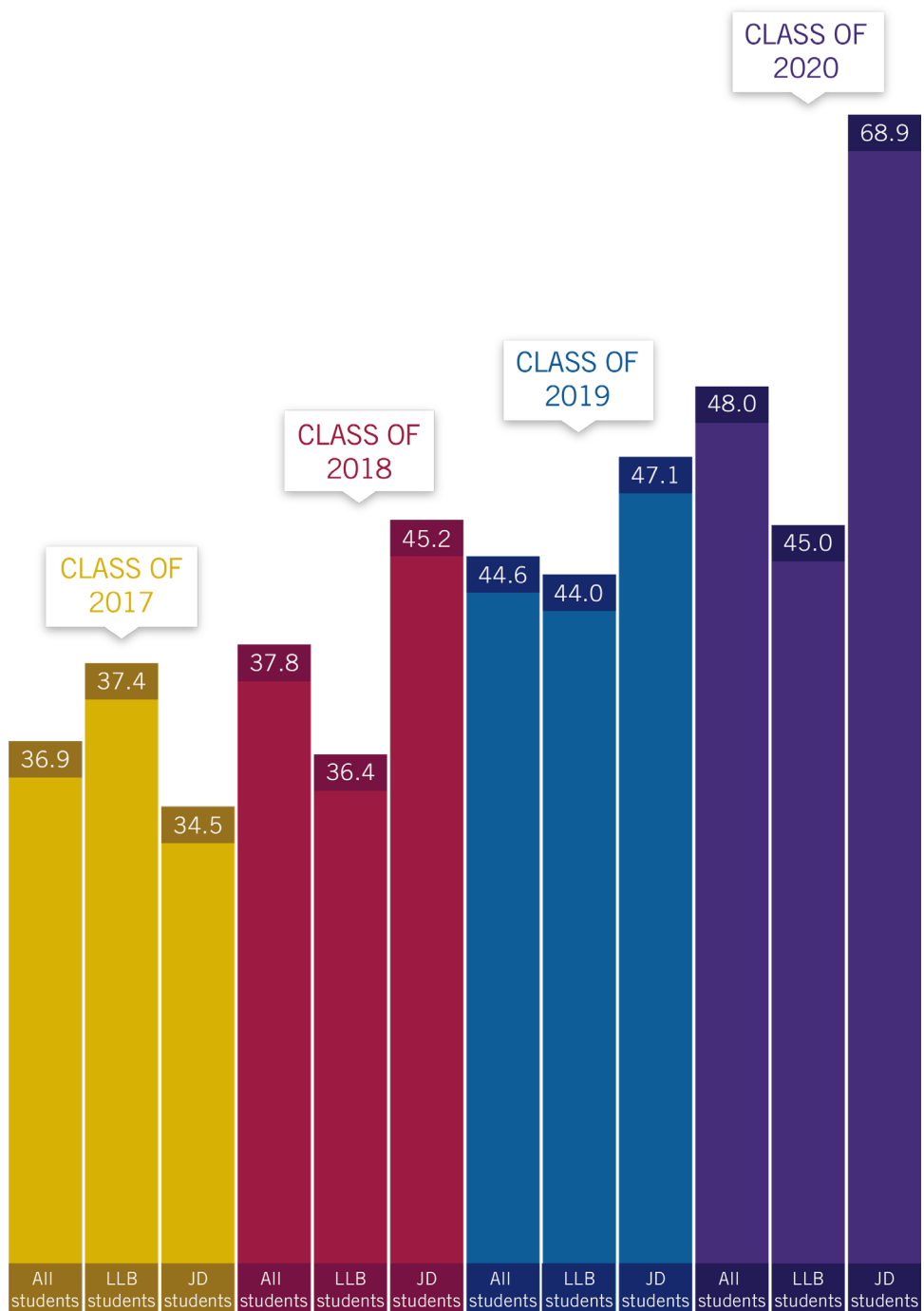
Finally, there are two very happy events that I wish to announce. First, we warmly welcome Ms Ruby Lee as our new Deputy Director who joined the Pro Bono Centre in September.

Secondly, we are pleased to announce that the winner of the RHT Rajan Menon Foundation Pro Bono Challenge Competition is the SMU Mediation and Negotiation Club. The competition was launched last year to tap on the creativity of students to come up with new ideas as well as to get them more involved in the pro bono scene. The SMU Mediation and Negotiation Club not only proposed but also worked with various organisations over many months to develop the processes for a Pro Bono Mediation Clinic which is planned to commence operation in 2021.

I wish everyone a healthy and Covid-free 2021!

Professor Chan Wing Cheong
Director, SMU Pro Bono Centre

AVERAGE NUMBER OF APPROVED PRO BONO HOURS COMPLETED PER STUDENT





SPOTLIGHT

BASIC CONVERSATIONAL MANDARIN FOR LAW STUDENTS

More than 50 students signed up for at least one of the 10 lessons on Basic Conversational Mandarin for Law students taught by Ms Avis Yeo, a certified interpreter. The lessons included the names of courts and court personnel, terms used in civil, criminal and family law proceedings as well as in the small claims and employment claims tribunal proceedings. The aim of this initiative is to enable students to communicate with confidence in Mandarin so that they can be better lawyers in the future as well as to connect with the Mandarin speaking community during their pro bono placements.

Certificates were given out to students who completed all 5 lessons in each semester. Although most students admitted that they have not used Mandarin for years, they found the lessons engaging and wished that there could be more of such opportunities to practise their knowledge of legal terms in Mandarin!



COVID-19 WEBSITE

<https://pbc.smu.edu.sg/covid-19>

An information resource dedicated to providing accurate legal information to the layman on the various Covid-19 measures was set up at the end of May. It is a contribution by the faculty, alumni and students by pooling our collective expertise and legal knowledge. The portal contains videos, FAQs and links to legal and non-legal resources to enable the general public to learn about the regulations that have been introduced as a result of the virus outbreak.

FREE PUBLIC WEBINAR ON COVID-19 CHALLENGES



A free webinar was held on 2 September featuring Minister Edwin Tong, Mr Gregory Vijayendran, Prof Lee Pey Woan and Ms Jermaine Quek. The various speakers presented their perspectives on the impact of the pandemic on individuals and their families, and offered guidance on what we can do to not only survive but to thrive in the new environment. A lively discussion followed between the panellists. The webinar recording can be viewed on the Pro Bono Centre's Covid-19 website.





SERVICE AWARD & CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION RECIPIENTS

Spirit of Pro Bono Award – Class of 2020 (JD)

Shim Eunkyung

Spirit of Pro Bono Award – Class of 2020 (LLB)

Ong Jia Xin Abigail

Volunteer Lawyer (participated most times at the SMU PBC Legal Clinic)

Richard Tan Ming Kirk

Volunteer Lawyer (5 year long service award)

Alvin Ong Chee Keong

JD graduates from Class of 2020 who completed more than 50 approved pro bono hours

LLB graduates from Class of 2020 who completed more than 80 approved pro bono hours

Volunteer lawyers who participated in the SMU PBC Legal Clinic in 2020

Antje Wong Szu Hsuean
Chew Siu Farn
Chin En-Ying, Grace
Daniel Yeap Zhu Chuean
Goh Shan, Shane
Hon Jane Hing Kam
Huo Jionggrui
Javier Luis Reyes Rara
Jewel Bosok Seo
Ken Teo Chuanzhong
Khalisah Binte Ishak
Khoo Hui-Hui, Joyce
Kieran Martin Singh Dhaliwal
N Anirtha
Shim Eunkyung
Siew Wei Ying, Silas
Tan Bae Huey

Beh Wei Quan
Bonnita Leman
Chan Kit Ho, Kit
Chern Yeh Jia
Chiang Ian
Foung Han Peow
Gavin Chua Song Yuan
Heidi Ngo Jie Xi
Jayakumar Suryanarayanan
Jesslyn Koh J-Ting
Joanna Lim Hui En
Lam Yiting Joelle
Loh Song-En, Samuel
Low Yan Lin
Mak Hui Yao, Samuel
Nechie Than Lwin
Nur Halimatul Syafheqah
Binte Rosman
Ong Jia Xin Abigail
S Lingesh Kumar
See Too Hui Min
Tai Mun Chien
Tan Shu Min, Emily
Tay Jia Yi, Pesdy
Tay Yuan Xiang
Teo Jim Yang
Tham Xue Yi Fiona
Timothy Ashby Straughan
Tong Ning, Ashley
Yap San Zhi
Ye Zhichun
Yeow Ye Xi, Lydia
Zakrie Bin Abdul Manap

Ada Chua+
Aileen Chua+
Alvin Ong+
Alvin Sia+
Averill Chow+
Charlotte Tan+
David Lim+
Derek Tay+
Erik Widjaja
Gabriel Lee+
Glen Koh
Jasper Chan+
Jolie Giouw+
Joshua Tong+
Lee Kai Lin, Kelyn+
Lim Yuan Jing+
Lisa Ho+
Marissa Zhao
Melissa Kor+
Merace Tan+
Persis Hoo+
Priscilla Chia+
Richard Tan Ming Kirk
Shermin Teo Sher Min+
Spencer Tan
Tan E-Fang
Tess Soon+
Zheng Pei+

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REPORT OF THE SMU PRO BONO CENTRE LEGAL CLINIC

PROFILE OF THE APPLICANTS

A total of **287** and **291** applicants were seen as the legal clinic in 2018 and 2019. From January to September 2020, a total of **199** applicants were seen.



SINGAPOREAN

2018 | 70.7%

2020 | 67.7%

2020 | 74.4%



UNDER 40 YEARS-OLD

2018 | 52.6%

2020 | 58.1%

2020 | 51.3%



HAVE DIPLOMA EDUCATION & ABOVE

2018 | 65.5%

2020 | 63.2%

2020 | 64.8%



EARNED LESS THAN \$4,000/MONTH[#]

2018 | 46.7%

2020 | 49.8%

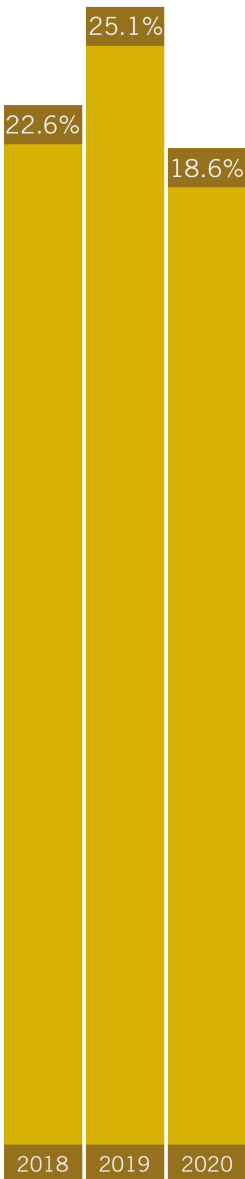
2020 | 41.2%

[#] The median gross monthly income of full-time employed residents in Singapore (excluding employer CPF contributions) was \$4,000 in 2019 (Labour Force in Singapore 2019).

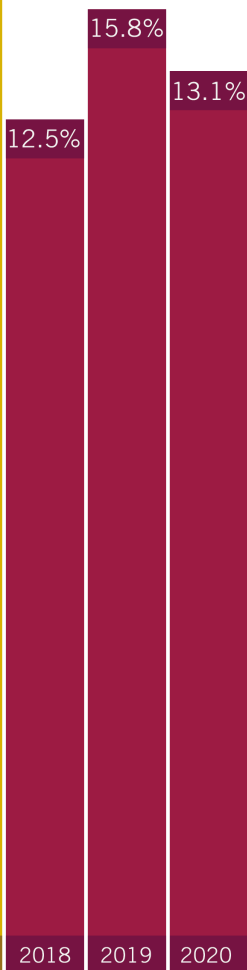
LEGAL ISSUES PRESENTED AT THE SMU PBC LEGAL CLINIC



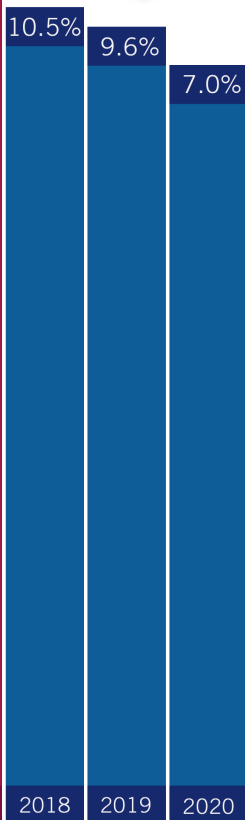
FAMILY



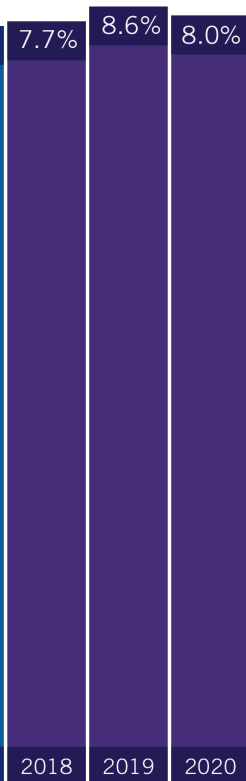
EMPLOYMENT



CRIMINAL



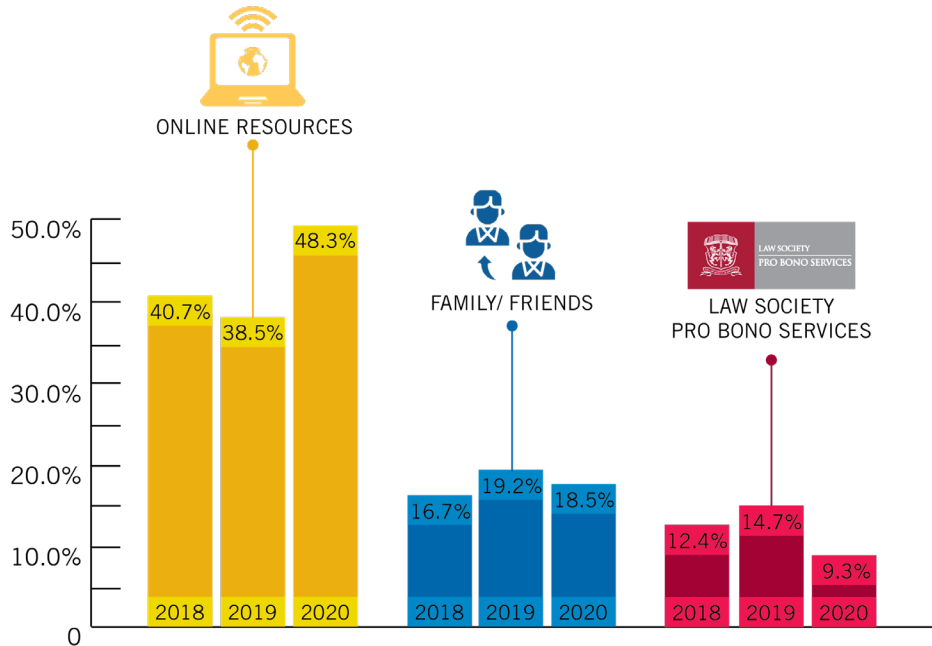
TENANCY



COVID-19



APPLICANTS FOUND OUT ABOUT THE SMU PBC LEGAL CLINIC THROUGH:



SATISFACTION WITH THE SMU PBC LEGAL CLINIC IN 2020:



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish thank the following volunteer lawyers, partners and stakeholders for supporting the SMU Pro Bono Centre:

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Christina Tien
Cindy Cham
Colleen Lim
David Lim
Derek Tay
Edwin Sim
Erik Widjaja
Eugene Neo
Evelyn Tham
Felicia Ang
Gabriel Lee
Glen Koh
Grace Morgan
Ho Jun Yi
Hoo Ann Qi, Persis
Jasper Chan
Jolie Giouw
Joshua Tong
Junie Loh
Kelyn Lee
Lim Yuan Jing
Lisa Farrah Ho
Marissa Zhao
Mary-Anne Chua
Matthew Teo
Melissa Kor
Mohamed Arshad Bin Mohamed
Tahir
Priscilla Chia Wen Qi
Richard Tan Ming Kirk
Sarah Chiang
Shermin Teo Sher Min
Spencer Tan
Tan E-Fang
Tan Merace Yuri
Tess Soon
Violet Lee
Zheng Pei

Abigail Elizabeth Gabriel
Allen Sng Kiat Peng
Ang Wei Yun
Avis Yeo
Belinda Chng
Benjamin Mui

Benny Tan Zhi Peng
Brenda Ho
Cacy Tan
Christine Low
Claudine Tan
Cosmas Stephen Gomez
Danial Hakim
Daniel Ho
DJ Wong Li Tein
Douglas MacLean
Edwin Sim
Eleanor Wong
Ellis See
Elsie Tjoeng
Emma Chen
Foo Siew Fong
Gerald Tan
Ho Soh Li
Ignatius Chia
Jacqueline Choy
Jasmine Yong
Jason Dendroff
Jennifer Lee
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Wendy Ng
Yvonne Cheah

Agency for Integrated Care
Braddell Heights Community Legal
Clinic
Catholic Lawyers Guild Legal
Clinic
Chong Pang CC Legal Clinic
Church of Christ the King Legal
Clinic
Community Justice & Tribunals
Division
Community Justice Centre
Community Mediation Centre
Daughters of Tomorrow
Jurong Spring Legal Clinic
Justice Without Borders
Kebun Baru Link RC Legal Clinic
Kembangan-Chai Chee Community
Legal Clinic
Law Society Pro Bono Services
Legal Aid Bureau
Ministry of Law
NTUC LawWorks
NUS Centre for Pro Bono and
Clinical Legal Education
Potter's Place Community Services
Society Legal Clinic
SG Assist
Singapore Council of Women's
Organisations
SUN-DAC



Pro Bono Centre

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