

SMU PRO BONO CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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MEET THE TEAM



Director

Professor Chan Wing Cheong

Deputy Director

Ms Ruby Lee



Senior Assistant Manager

Mr Vincent Goh



Assistant Manager

Ms Lu Qingqing

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



By participating in pro bono work, SMU Law students are able to give back to the community at an early stage of their legal training. Equally important is that they learn important skills which will help them become better lawyers in the future. Mohamed Khairulnizam (Khai), winner of the Pro Bono Hero Award (JD), says that pro bono work has helped him to understand the challenges faced by different groups in our society and deepened his empathy and compassion towards others; and Gini Wong, winner of the Pro Bono Hero Award (LLB), tells me that taking part in pro bono projects has affirmed her conviction and passion to serve the community with her knowledge and skills.

In addition to the weekly free legal clinic held at SMU which provides assistance to around 200 applicants annually, SMU Law students gave more than 30 legal awareness talks, assisted volunteer lawyers in certifying over 100 Lasting Powers of Attorney, supported around 20 families to apply for deputyship orders via the Family Justice Courts' Integrated Family Application Management System (iFAMS), helped lawyers in about 20 pro bono criminal or family cases, and worked on about 25 Wills for Special Needs Trust Company beneficiaries this year.

In July 2023, the SMU Pro Bono Centre organised a 2-week overseas trip to Vientiane, Laos, to assist a law-related NGO to enhance legal education and access to justice. This is the very first overseas community service trip for SMU students devoted to legal work. We look forward to more opportunities where students can serve communities in Singapore and beyond.

The strong pro bono culture in SMU is exemplified by the number of pro bono hours served. As a graduating cohort, the Class of 2023 collectively contributed 7,762 pro bono hours, which averages 42 pro bono hours per student, more than double the 20 hours that is required of them. Furthermore, 10 JD and 12 LLB students went the extra mile to contribute over 50 and 80 pro bono hours respectively!

I am also proud that all four of the volunteer lawyers to be recognised at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner 2023 are our SMU Yong Pung How School of Law alumni:

- Alvin Ong is conferred the Spirit of Pro Bono Champion Award for having participated the most number of times in the PBC Legal Clinic this year;
- Matthew Teo, Christian Teo and Jasper Chan are conferred the Spirit of Pro Bono Bronze Award for having volunteered at the PBC Legal Clinic for at least five years.

Finally, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to all our valued community partners and volunteer lawyers (SMU and non-SMU alumni) for their generous support. They have provided SMU Law students with invaluable opportunities to hone their legal skills and nurture a strong sense of social responsibility.

SPOTLIGHT



MOHAMED KHAIRULNIZAM BIN ABDUL JAFFAR

SPIRIT OF PRO BONO HERO AWARD (JD)

I have often asked myself: "When I leave this world, what legacy do I want to leave behind?" Through pro bono work, I have gained a sense of purpose and fulfilment that extends beyond academics. I believe that collective effort can bring about meaningful change. Participating in pro bono work has shown me the importance of giving back and inspired me to continue seeking opportunities to contribute to society. All of us have a responsibility to give back to a world that has enabled us to flourish.



GINI WONG WEI WEN

SPIRIT OF PRO BONO HERO AWARD (LLB)

I have been fortunate and privileged to have received bursaries and scholarships in my education journey. I aspire to pay it forward by taking part in community service and pro bono activities. I advise my juniors to go into each pro bono activity with an open mind and a heart to learn. It is important to do pro bono with the appropriate attitude rather than see pro bono as a mere graduation requirement.

SPOTLIGHT



ALVIN ONG CHEE KEONG

SPIRIT OF PRO BONO CHAMPION AWARD

I am very proud to see SMU's pro bono activities grow from strength to strength as SMU students continue to give back to the community in so many different ways. To my younger colleagues and future learned friends, I hope all of you can try to give a little bit of your time, whether now or in the future, to help someone in need. Let us be members of an honourable profession who are not only known for our legal skills but also for our deep compassion towards others.



MATTHEW TEO HEE ANN

SPIRIT OF PRO BONO BRONZE AWARD

I started volunteering to help make access to legal advice a reality to the general public, especially for those who are less privileged. I started volunteering with the pro bono legal clinic at SMU even before the SMU Pro Bono Centre was established and continued until now. As lawyers, we have a specific skill set which can help many people; our service only requires one investment – time. Time is precious, but also fleeting – make the best use of it.

SPOTLIGHT



CHRISTIAN TEO HEE SHENG

SPIRIT OF PRO BONO BRONZE AWARD

Most people who come to the PBC Legal Clinic are essentially the ones who are being bullied – they face unreasonable demands being imposed on them, they are trapped in unfair contracts, or are simply being exploited by the asymmetry in access to legal services. As lawyers, the legal knowledge that we have can make a significant difference in people’s lives. Where we can, we should try to alleviate the burdens and worries of others.



JASPER HAYDEN CHAN MUN JUN

SPIRIT OF PRO BONO BRONZE AWARD

My advice to those who have not yet started doing pro bono work is: Don’t think too much! A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Take the plunge, try it out, and who knows - it may be the start of a long journey of volunteerism and satisfaction in touching people’s lives.

WHAT PARTNER AGENCIES & STUDENTS SAY

Your students have left an indelible mark of professionalism and compassion in your service to our clients. SNTC is truly fortunate and immensely grateful for your services.

Esther Tan

Special Needs Trust Company Ltd

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with the SMU Pro Bono Centre on various pro bono events. These activities have given our in-house lawyers a meaningful avenue to contribute to the community. We look forward to many more years of working together.

Goh Kheng Huang

JP Morgan Singapore Legal Department

I wish to commend Angela Wong for her dedication when assisting in the LPA certification at the Singapore Association for the Deaf. She stayed past the scheduled time by more than 2 hours in order to complete the LPA certification for a family of 4 (3 of whom were deaf and one was 80+ years old). She greatly surpassed my expectations!

Jaryl Lim

Volunteer Lawyer

Thank you to the SMU team for assisting CPAS caregivers apply for simplified deputyship orders via iFAMS. Through your help, they were finally able to open bank accounts for their loved ones who do not have mental capacity. The caregivers found the process seamless and felt supported throughout the entire journey.

Leng Yen Li

Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore

WHAT PARTNER AGENCIES & STUDENTS SAY

I am constantly amazed by the effort and lengths that the students go to explain the Deputyship process to our caregivers of the differently-abled!

Joel Chia
SUN-DAC

Through pro bono, I learnt how useful our legal education can be in helping others and I realised that I was very privileged to be studying law.

Gini Wong
LLB Class of 2023

Our students gave very positive feedback about the legal awareness talk by the SMU Law students. They felt that it was the highlight of our entire programme. Thank you!

Deborah Fernandez
NJC Teacher

The PBC Mediation Clinic session was professionally run by the student volunteers. The environment was very conducive for mediation. The mediator gave good guidance and we managed to resolve the heart of the issue.

Beneficiary who wanted to remain anonymous

Participating in the weekly PBC Legal Clinic and Project Ageing has made a strong impression on me as I have witnessed how the less privileged have benefitted from these programmes.

Ivan Tang
LLB Class of 2024

Engaging in pro bono has shown me the importance of giving back and inspired me to continue to seek opportunities to contribute positively to society.

Mohamed Khairulnizam
JD Class of 2023

SERVICE AWARD & CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION RECIPIENTS

Spirit of Pro Bono Hero Award – Class of 2023 (JD)

Mohamed Khairulnizam bin Abdul Jaffar

Spirit of Pro Bono Hero Award – Class of 2023 (LLB)

Gini Wong Wei Wen

Spirit of Pro Bono Champion Award

Alvin Ong Chee Keong

Spirit of Pro Bono Bronze Award

Matthew Teo Hee Ann

Christian Teo Hee Sheng

Jasper Hayden Chan Mun Jun

JD graduates from Class of 2023 who completed 50 or more approved pro bono hours

LLB graduates from Class of 2023 who completed 80 or more approved pro bono hours

Lawyers who volunteered at the SMU PBC Legal Clinic in 2023

Clarissa Chern Xin Yi
Jonathan Ong Hee Jun
Lee Chaeun
Meredith Soh Yu Xuan
Phua Zai Liang
Sreya Sobti
Tay Chin Kang Johan
Wayne Hwang Zi Yao
Zhao, Bingying

Alexis Loy
Alston Poh Shi Wei
Benjamin Ng Chong Wei
Goh Lilin Claire
Grace Anastasia Lim Si Min
Kenneth Teng Jin Wei
Tang Jia Bei Jeanette
Tan Choon Hwa Lenvin
Tang Jia Ding, Justin
Thaddeus Tan Zhi En
Vera Quah Li Qi

Alvin Ong Chee Keong⁺
Anita Kaur Gill
Charlotte Tan Guan Ling⁺
Chen Lixin⁺
Christian Teo Hee Sheng⁺
Dominic Liew
Edwin Neo Xuan Hao⁺
Elycia Lu Yanrong⁺
Heather Huey Yen Hoong
Jasper Hayden Chan Mun Jun⁺
Jolie Giouw Rong Zhen⁺
Kong Zi-Xie
Li Jiabao⁺
Lin Yun-Yi@Abby Lin⁺
Lushna Neena Godhia⁺
Matthew Teo Hee Ann⁺
Nguyen Sinh Vuong⁺
Richard Tan Ming Kirk
Ruby Lee Yen Kee
Tan E-Fang
Violet Lee Chiu Mei
Yong Li Yuan⁺
Yong Zhixin, Esther⁺
Zheng Pei⁺

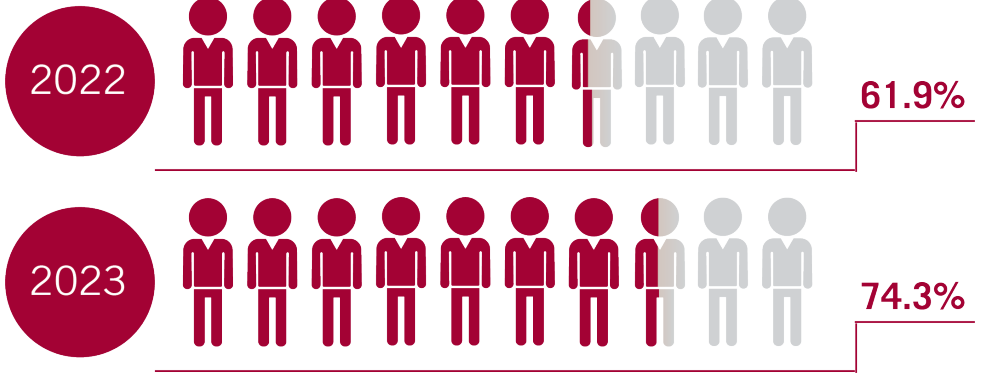
⁺ SMU Law Alumni

REPORT OF THE SMU PRO BONO CENTRE LEGAL CLINIC

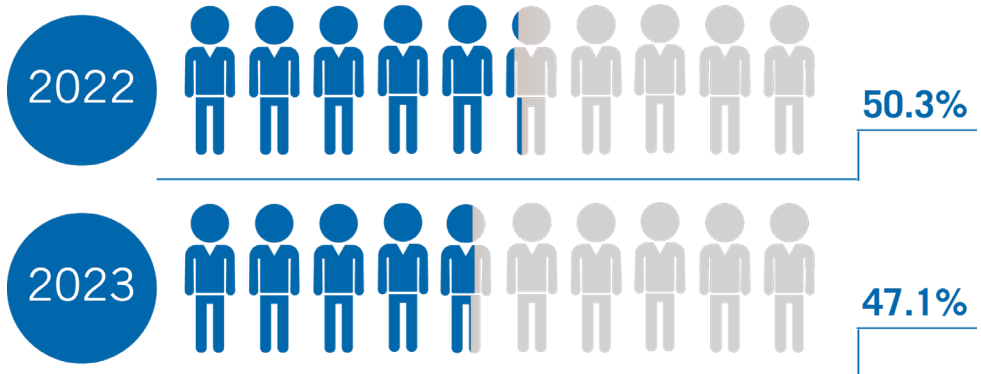
The legal clinic provided assistance to a total of 140 applicants from January to September 2023

Profile of the applicants

SINGAPOREAN 2022 vs 2023



AGE UNDER 40 YEARS-OLD 2022 vs 2023



REPORT OF THE SMU PRO BONO CENTRE LEGAL CLINIC

HAVE DIPLOMA EDUCATION & ABOVE 2022 vs 2023



EARN LESS THAN \$4,000/MONTH 2022 vs 2023



REPORT OF THE SMU PRO BONO CENTRE LEGAL CLINIC

Legal issues presented at the SMU Pro Bono Centre Legal Clinic



FAMILY ISSUES
19.3%



CIVIL CLAIMS
15.7%



EMPLOYMENT ISSUES
12.9%



TENANCY ISSUES
11.4%

REPORT OF THE SMU PRO BONO CENTRE LEGAL CLINIC

Applicants found out about the SMU Pro Bono Centre Legal Clinic through



ONLINE
RESOURCES

2022 **40.0%**

2023 **37.8%**



FAMILY &
FRIENDS

2022 **24.8%**

2023 **10.4%**

Satisfaction with the SMU Pro Bono Centre Legal Clinic in 2023



MORE THAN 8 IN 10
APPLICANTS WERE 'VERY
SATISFIED' OR 'QUITE
SATISFIED' WITH

- The legal clinic staff's helpfulness and efficiency
- Venue & operating hours of the legal clinic
- Length of session and helpfulness of the volunteer lawyer



MORE THAN 9 IN 10
APPLICANTS WOULD

- Return to the legal clinic if they had new legal issues
- Recommend the legal clinic to others

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

Aileen Chua Siew Ling
Alvin Ong Chee Keong
Anita Kaur Gill
Chen Lixin
Chooi Jing Yen
Elyica Lu Yanrong
Erik Widjaja
Giouw Rong Zhen Jolie
Grace Ang Ger Ean
Jasper Hayden Chan Mun Jun
Khong Zi-Xie
Lee Chiu Mei Violet
Li Jiabao
Liew Dominic Junior
Lim Yong Sheng
Lin Yun Yi@Abby Lin
Loh Yu Wei Junie
Lushna Neena Godhia
Marissa Daisy Decruz
Neo Xuan Hao, Edwin
Nguyen Sinh Vuong
Sia Dewei, Alvin
Sim Puay Jain Edwin
Soon Peck Khim Tess
Tan E-Fang
Tan Guan Ling, Charlotte
Tan Ming Kirk Richard
Tan Wei Liang
Tay Tze Choong
Teo Hee Ann Matthew
Teo Hee Sheng Christian
Tien Shin-Yi, Christina
Toh Wei Ming Nicholas
Yong Li Yuan
Zheng Pei

Aaksaraa Arya Ayub
Ada Chua
Adrian Tan
Ahmad Nizam Abbas
Aikjoo Tay
Allen Sng
Alicia Lim
Alvin Cheng
Ang Wei Yun
Angeline Yeoh
Asoka Markandu
Audrey Tan
Avis Yeo
Barry Koh
Benjmain Mui
Bestlyn Loo
Bruce Lasky
Cai Chengying

Chan Hian Young
Cheah Su-Ann
Cheong Jun Jie
Chew Siew Kheng
Chia Lyn Lynn
Chong Cheh Hoon
Chua Xue Li
Claudine Tan
Clement Cheong
Colin Tan
Damien Chng
Danial Hakim
Daniel Law
Darren Chan
David Quark
Devi
Diana Chua
Dorcas Chang
Dorcas Quek
Douglas Maclean
Dr Bhavani Sriram
Dr Chen Shi Ling
Eleanor Wong
Ellis See
Emilyn Teo
Emma Chen
Esther Tan
Ezra Lim Pin
Foo Chee Chang
Foo Yuet Min
Frank Wong
Geethanjali Chandra
Gerald Tan
Geraldine Kuah
Goh Kheng Huang
Goh Qian Hui
Goh Wheeki
Greg Tan
Gregory Vijayaendran
Ho Soh Li
Ho Soo Wee
Huang Peiling
Ignatius Chia
Ijechi Nazirah
Irina Nechifor
Isalyn Chew
Jacqueline Tan
Janice Jiang
Jaryl Lim
Jazreel Tay
Jessie Tan
Joanna Yap
Jocelyn Tan
Joel Chia

Joel Tay
Jonathan Kao
Jordan Chia
Joseph Lim
Justice Tan Siong Thye
Kathleen Chong
Kelvin Lim
Kenny Chng
Kwok Kaylee
Kwok-Chern Yew Tee
Lee Eng Hong
Lee Soo Kwan
Leng Yen Li
Lenny Azuree binte Ismail
Leonard Foster
Leonard Lee
Leonie Lee
Liaw Hin Hao
Lim Hui Min
Lim Lei Theng
Lim Tanguy
Lim Weixiang
Lin Huiyu
Ling Jiating
Liu Siew Rong
Low Sau Wai
Lynette Seah
Marianne Tan
Marshall Lim
Melinda Louis
Melisa Wong
Mervyn Cheong
Michael Chen
Ng Bin Hong
Ng Pei Xin
Ng Wei Chern
Ng Xiao Yan
Nicole Chua
Ong Lay Hoon
Pamelia Chen
Pauline Straughan
Peggy Yee
Phua Shi Lin
Priscilla Chia
Quek You Zhen
Rachel Chan
Rachel Tan
Rajan Menon
Ranald Or
Ravi Kumaran
Rebecca Chew
Regina Chang
Richard Siaw
Roderick Ng

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Tan Kah Wai
Tan Shi Hua
Tan Yuh Sheng
Toh Ding Jun
Vickneswary Jeraman
Wang Ying Shuang
Wendy Koh
Wendy Morrish
Wong Chia Lee
Yang Eu Jin
Yap Xuan Wei
Yip Man
Yusuf Hamid
Yvonne Cheah

Agency for Integrated Care
Allen & Gledhill LLP
Anitha & Asoka LLC
Aurora Law
Babes Pregnancy Crisis Support Ltd
Babseacle
Bird & Bird ATMD
Braddell Heights Community Legal
Clinic
Catholic Lawyers Guild Legal Clinic
Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore
Chong Pang CC Legal Clinic
Church of Christ the King Legal
Clinic
Community Justice & Tribunals
Division
Community Justice Centre
Drew & Napier LLC
Frontier CC Legal Clinics
HCSA - Single Parents Informed,
Involved Included
JP Morgan
Jurong Spring Legal Clinic
Justice Without Borders
Kebun Baru Link RC Legal Clinic
Kembangan-Chai Chee Community
Legal Clinic
Legal Aid Bureau
MINDS
Ministry of Law
Ministry of Manpower
Ministry of Social and Family
Development (Office of Public
Guardian)
Moey & Yuen
Mustard Tree
NTUC LawWorks
NUS Centre for Pro Bono and
Clinical Legal Education
Potter's Place Community Services
Society Legal Clinic
Pro Bono SG
Providence Law Asia
Rajah and Tann Foundation
Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP
Seng Pang Tua Peng Kong Keng
SG Assist
Shah Eigen LLC
Singapore Council of Women's
Organisations
Special Needs Trust Company Ltd

St. Margaret's Ex-Students
Association
SUN-DAC
Singapore University of Social
Sciences
Vamos Photography LLP
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