Crucial Help in the Appeals Process

UB Law Forum
a legal services job and not have to wait on taking the bar,” Cereo says.

Her supervisor at the Center for Elder Law and Justice, pro bono coordinator Nicole Komin ’15, says the organization made good use of Cereo’s talents. “Most of our student interns are in the summer straight out of their first year of law school,” Komin says. “They’re still new to research and writing; they’re not familiar with talking to clients. When you get a pro bono scholar, it’s much different. One of the biggest differences is their writing and the level of research and the efficiency with which they can get things done.

“Researching is a science and a skill, especially when you get into more high-level research, and that’s definitely a very strong skill that Beth has.”

Jason Gunning ’18 spent his pro bono scholar workweeks with the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo’s Criminal Defense Unit. One of his major responsibilities was to interview prisoners at the Erie County Holding Center, listen to their stories, and work with the attorneys to devise an appropriate court strategy for each.

“Everybody’s got a story,” Gunning says, “and hearing them puts into perspective the underlying causes of criminal behavior. Especially in Buffalo, with the opioid and drug treatment courts, plenty of people seem to be receptive to trying to change. When I talked to people at the Center, many seemed genuine about it, and I could tell the attorney that this person is open to getting treatment.”

Gunning, a Long Island native, starts in September as an assistant district attorney in the Brooklyn District Attorney’s Office – “going over to the dark side,” as his boss at Legal Aid, Chief Attorney Kevin Stadelmaier, jokingly puts it.

“Jason is obviously a very bright, talented and dedicated young lawyer,” Stadelmaier says. “We’ve had interns in the past who were not self-starters, constantly asking, ‘What should I do now?’ It wasn’t like that with Jason. He had a schedule that he kept to, and when he was done with that work, he consulted with the other lawyers and helped them with research and writing. He had a lot of enthusiasm.”

Our other 2018 Pro Bono Scholars and their spring placements included Senovia Cuevas ’18, Bar Association of Erie County’s Volunteer Lawyers Project; Samuel Dolce ’18, Western New York Law Center; Allyson Kehl ’18, Monroe County Public Defender’s Office; and Emily Stoufer Quinn ’18, Legal Assistance of Western New York.

## Crucial help in the APPEALS PROCESS

A major effort to give civil litigants the representation they need in New York’s appellate courts is now part of the UB School of Law umbrella.

As part of its commitment to ensuring equal access to the justice system, the School of Law’s Clinical Legal Education Program will administer the Pro Bono Appeals Program for the Fourth Judicial Department, which comprises 22 counties in Western and Central New York.

The program connects volunteer attorneys with litigants who are filing or defending a civil case on appeal. It’s designed for those who earn too much to be eligible for court-assigned counsel but cannot afford to hire their own attorney. The program includes litigants who earn up to 250 percent of the federal poverty guidelines; in a four-person household, for example, the program’s upper income limit is $62,750.

The litigants’ cases range from shelter and housing issues to subsistence income and benefits, health and education, personal safety and family stability. The law school’s partners in the initiative are the New York Bar Foundation and the New York State Bar Association’s Committee on Courts of Appellate Jurisdiction.

“We are thrilled to have this partnership with UB Law and its excellent staff,” says Timothy P. Murphy, co-chair of the program and chief attorney in the appeals and post-conviction unit at the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo. “This program will enable the indigent appellant to have another place to reach out to in the Fourth Judicial Department.”

The Clinical Legal Education Program’s contribution to the effort is to provide pro bono expertise, outreach to the community, extensive administrative support, and Continuing Legal Education training in appellate advocacy for attorney volunteers.

“It is an honor to add this pro bono service opportunity to our multifaceted clinical programmatic offerings and our other experiential learning options,” says Kim Diana Connolly, director of the clinical legal education program. “We look forward to working with the NYSBA and the excellent volunteer lawyers to provide service-learning for our students while simultaneously offering legal assistance to those who need access to justice.”

Attorneys may volunteer for the program by emailing law-pbap@buffalo.edu.