

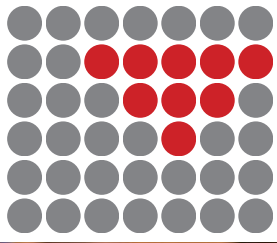
**2026**  
Public  
Interest  
Awards

Chicago-Kent College of Law

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**Public Interest Center**

April 22, 2026



# Welcome from the Director of the Public Interest Center



Dear friends,

Welcome to the 2026 Public Interest Awards - we are so glad you could join us this evening to celebrate another wonderful year of impactful pro bono work in the community. We hope you will find joy and inspiration tonight as you learn about the many ways Chicago-Kent students are making an impact. A special thank you to tonight's sponsor, the trial law firm of Passen Powell and Jenkins for supporting our work.

This has been an exciting year, with several new initiatives that are allowing us to expand our pro bono opportunities and engage more students.

In the fall semester, we began using Paladin, a new system that empowered Chicago-Kent law students to do more pro bono, more efficiently. Paladin centralizes pro bono opportunities, facilitates student volunteer matching, and enables students to track their progress towards completing 50 hours or more of pro bono. By using this system, we were able to determine the 2026 graduating class completed 10,182 hours of public service. The Class of 2026 has defined an important goal that we are excited to build upon in future years. Congratulations to the Class of 2026!

Over the winter break, we began a new partnership with Instituto Del Progreso Latino, with 16 Chicago-Kent students volunteering for a DACA Clinic hosted at their organization. Since then, students have volunteered monthly in Instituto's citizenship workshops. We are excited to celebrate student Gabriela Treviño-Gutiérrez and alumni Enrique Espinoza tonight who have made protecting immigrant communities a vital part of their work.

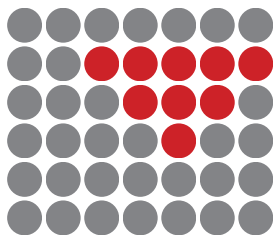
Our increased engagement with the Legal Aid Society began last year at the Chicago Bar Association/Chicago Bar Foundation Pro Bono Fair when the students' enthusiasm to volunteer with the Legal Aid Society's Elder Justice Initiative Power of Attorney Clinic resulted in our first-ever Spring Break Public Service Week. While last year we were proud to offer two opportunities, we are excited to share that this year we expanded Spring Break Public Service Week to offer support to five local non-profit organizations. For this reason and more, we are pleased to recognize the Legal Aid Society as this year's Ronald W. Staudt Public Interest Partner.

We are proud to be fulfilling our Mission to increase pro bono and community service and support careers in public interest law for Chicago-Kent students, while expanding access to justice in the community.

Thank you again for your support, and we hope you will join us every year for this annual celebration! Si se puede!

*Michelle Vodenik*

Michelle Vodenik  
Director, Public Interest Center



# Program

## **Welcome**

Jason Czarnezki, Dean and Professor of Law

## **Public Interest Center Highlights**

Michelle Vodenik, Director, Public Interest Center

## **Certificate in Public Interest Law**

Carolyn Shapiro, Director of Public Interest Certificate Program

## **Law Lab: Self Help Resource Center**

Alexander Rabanal '12, Associate Director, The Law Lab

## **Public Interest Center Certificate of Service**

### **Dean's Distinguished Public Service Award**

### **Dean's Exemplary Public Service Award**

Michelle Vodenik, Director, Public Interest Center

## **2026 Pro Bono Student Leader Award**

## **2026 Alumni Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award**

Jason Czarnezki, Dean and Professor of Law

## **Justice John Paul Stevens Public Interest Fellowship**

Nancy Marder, Director, Justice John Paul Stevens Jury Center

## **Patent Hub Volunteers**

Paul Holly, Director, Patent Hub

## **Constitutional Democracy Project Volunteers**

Dee Runaas, Project Director

## **Student Recognition**

Michelle Vodenik, Director, Public Interest Center

## **2026 Vivien C. Gross Pro Bono and Public Interest Leadership Award**

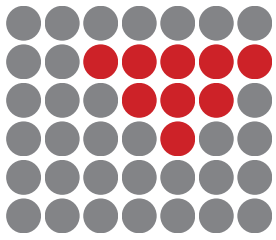
Jason Czarnezki, Dean and Professor of Law

## **2026 Ronald W. Staudt Public Interest Partner Award**

Jason Czarnezki, Dean and Professor of Law

## **Closing Remarks**

Jason Czarnezki, Dean and Professor of Law



# Public Interest Center Highlights

## # Pro Bono Pledge Takers:

Class of 2025: 121 students  
Class of 2027: 165 students  
Class of 2028: 180 students

Increase: 36%

Increase: 9%

## # Student Hours Logged:

2024-25: 5,564 hours

2025-26: 6,021 hours

Increase: 8.2%

## # of Student Volunteers:

2024-25: 284 student volunteers

2025-26: 311 student volunteers

Increase: 9.5%

**Class of 2026 Completed 10,182 Hours!**

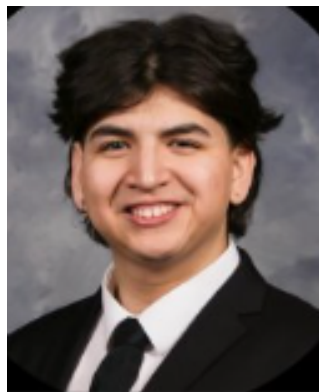
## Public Interest Center Student Workers

Gaby Treviño-Gutiérrez



Gaby

Felix Celestino

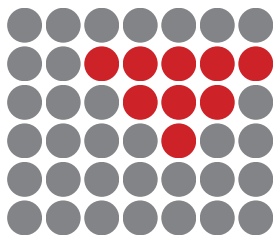


Felix

Alyvia Cantrell



Alyvia



# Student Public Interest Recognition

## Certificate in Public Interest Law, Class of 2026 Recipients

Marshan Allen  
Abigail Fraser  
Kylie Gava  
Mary Hester

Sanya Khan  
Cameron Kleen  
Sophie Matheny  
Julnasha Morehead

Abigail Steinberg  
Abigail Tellez  
Gabriela Treviño-Gutiérrez  
Anika Tylek  
Aneesa Zubair

## Law Lab

### 2025-2026 Self-Help Resource Center Student Volunteers

Supervising Manager: Andrea Lawson

Resources Manager: Kylie Gava

Associate Manager: Ava Treviño

Training Manager: Isabella Courts

Paige Abbatacola

Vincent Abruzzo

Finn Andersen

Kaitlyn Bartels

Katie Bassett

Sahil Bathija

Glen Batista

Mary Beaulieu

Musa Bouderdaben

Alex Campbell

Sean Cartier

Luke Colwell

Emma Covino

Gracie Fuhrman

Grace Glenn

Madison Gonzalez

Max Gozalez

Abigail Hagan

Rick Hamer

Joey Handel

Mary Hester

Sam Horwood

Grafton Houser

Abigail Iannuzzelli

Chloe Johnson

Claire Johnson

Tiara Kane

Sharan Kaur

Isabella Kifer

Mariia Kliachko

Bernadette Kornberger

Caitlyn Kranz

Max Kueppers

Paige Lannerd

Amalia Laskaris

Katelyn Lent

Michael Lindermann

Stela Lito

Olivia Martin

Charlie Massie

Melissa McCollum

Misha Mikhalev

Andrew Miller

Aryana Mithwani

Adam Mohammad

Rohan Nigam

Robert Osiol

Lili Pangborn

Michael Pannitto

Isha Patel

Huxley Fullington Patten

Zachary Perna

Michael Plevin

Ulan Radmir

Skylar Radz

Alberto Sanchez

Sara Schlecht

Elizabeth Sokol

Alec Stevens

Carson Stout

Haiden Strother

Oleksandra Taratunska

Tyanna Thomas

Jillian Thompson

Anna Thrush

Elise Tompkins

Raquel Torres

Jorge Trujillo

Ditty Joy Varughese

Iris Vinal

Shikha Vinodanandan

Caleb Wang

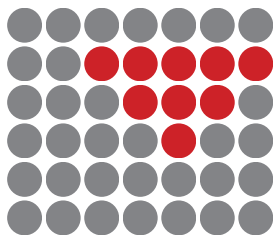
Hunter Wood

David Yoon

Anna Yurkova

Yasmine Zavala

Emma Zurek



# Student Public Interest Recognition

## Public Interest Center (PIC)

### Certificate of Service

Awarded to students who have volunteered 50 or more hours over the last academic year.

Riley Allan, 76.8	Isabel González, 72	Erika Pogorzelska, 52
Marshan Allen, 54	Nicole Hentges, 60	Frances Ramirez, 113
Katie Bassett, 64.5	Mary Hester, 50	Ivylisse Ramirez, 53
Benjamin Bildsten, 138.3	Grafton Houser, 93.5	Ruth Renberg, 115
Musa Bouderdaben, 84.5	BJ Huls, 68	Andrés Rizo, 109.5
Anika Carlson, 53	Daniel Kassl, 411	Qwanzo Rodriguez, 276
Ámbar Casas, 50.5	Sanya Khan, 83	Vanesa Simic, 58
Dakota Chisholm, 59.4	Rachel Lehmann, 104.5	Abigail Steinberg, 220
Benjamin Christensen, 414***	Sara Magid, 106	Ciara Sullivan, 68.5
Carter Christiansen, 50	Olivia Martin, 51.5	Anika Tylek, 170
Casey Ciulla, 90	Sophie Matheny, 55	Charlotte Wagner, 150.5
Emma Covino, 79	Adelle Menedoht, 54.5	Emily Walters, 90
Sloan Drechsel, 52	Tiffany Montiel, 134	Hattie Wiesbrook, 114
Abigail Fraser, 189	Sara Moradi, 56	Abinaya Wiggins, 52
Lydia Fritter, 250**	Brittany Ochoa, 412	Aneesa Zubair, 52
Kylie Gava, 262**	Dhruvi Patel, 50	

*\*Receiving multiple awards*

## Dean's Distinguished Public Service Award

Awarded to students who have volunteered 250 or more hours over the last academic year.

Azlynn Brandenburg, 3L, 296 hours	Melissa McCollum, 3L, 306.5
Benjamin Christensen, 2L, 414 hours***	Brittany Ochoa, 2L, 412***
Lydia Fritter, 2L, 250 hours**	Qwanzo Rodriguez, 3L, 276 hours**
Kylie Gava, 3L, 262 hours	Sylvia Tolczyk, 3L, 274 hours
Daniel Kassl, 2L, 411 hours***	Ava Treviño, 2L, 361 hours
Cameron Kleen, 3L, 504 hours**	

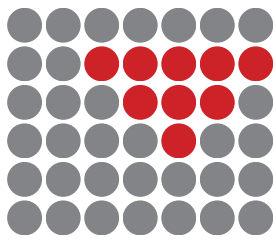
*\*Receiving multiple awards*

## Dean's Exemplary Public Service Award

Awarded to students who have volunteered 400 or more hours over the last academic year.

Benjamin Christensen, 2L, 414 hours***	Cameron Kleen, 3L, 504 hours**
Allison Elli, 3L, 629 hours	Willem de Koning, 3L, 635 hours
Tashi Gordillo, 3L, 687.5 hours	Brittany Ochoa, 2L, 412 hours***
Daniel Kassl, 2L, 411 hours***	Gaby Treviño-Gutiérrez, 3L, 404 hours

*\*Receiving multiple awards*



## 2026 Public Interest Center Pro Bono Student Leader Award



**Tashi Gordillo, 3L,  
687.5 hours of service**

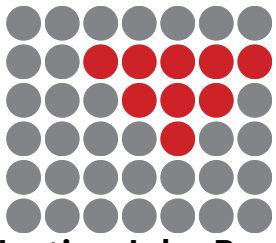
Tashi Gordillo completed 687.5 hours with the Illinois Prison Project, Chinese Martial Arts and Wellness Center, National Lawyers Guild, Ascend Justice, and the Women's Justice Institute. They are a strong advocate for the rights of the incarcerated. Congratulations!

## 2026 Alumni Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award



**Enrique Espinoza, Class of '21  
Staff Attorney, Chicago-Kent Immigration Clinic**

Enrique Espinoza represents clients in Asylum, Removal Defense, and Family Immigration cases. Enrique recently traveled to the US/Mexico border as the pro bono supervisor for Chicago-Kent's Immigration Law Society Spring break trip. There, he supported a group of students as they visited clients in detention centers. Additionally, Enrique is extremely engaged in the community – serving as part of the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois' Rapid Response Network – a team of attorney's ready to mobilize in an instant across Chicago to protect the rights of immigrants. Congratulations, Enrique!



# Student Public Interest Recognition

## Justice John Paul Stevens Public Interest Fellowship Recipients

The Stevens Public Interest Summer Fellowship at Chicago-Kent seeks to promote the public interest and social justice values that characterized Justice John Paul Stevens' work throughout his long career. The Stevens Fellowship at Chicago-Kent was established in 2011 and is awarded to two outstanding law students who have obtained unpaid summer positions at public interest organizations. Stevens Fellows are selected based on their commitment to public service and their potential for excellence throughout their legal careers. Stevens Fellows at Chicago-Kent are part of a large network of Stevens Fellows throughout the country.

**Ella Robinson '28,  
Impact for Equity**



**Sara Schlecht '28,  
Illinois Human Rights Commission**

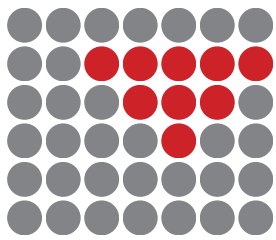


## 2025-2026 Chicago-Kent Patent Hub Student Volunteers

Beatriz Fernanda  
Anthony Flowers  
Salvatore Galluzzo  
Daniel Greenblatt  
Miodrag Krstovic  
Chaeun Lee

Molly Lusk  
Aidan O'Grady  
Chema Ouasti  
Sydney Robinson  
Medina Rodríguez  
Angela Roman

Kevin Thompson  
Olivia Villamagna  
Lee Weir  
Elyse Wiese  
Abby Wong



# Student Public Interest Recognition

## Constitutional Democracy Project Volunteers

### You(th) Decide

Sahil Bathija\*  
Alyvia Cantrell\*  
Ben Christensen  
Emma Covino  
Abigail Fraser  
Wajeeha Kamal\*  
Cameron Kleen  
Joshua Melton  
Emily Michaux\*  
Cassiepea Stith  
Anna Yurkova

Ambar Casas  
Wajeeha Kamal  
Cameron Kleen  
Emily Michaux  
Tagwa Shammet  
Tyanna Thomas

Anna Freedenfeld  
Maxwell Gonzalez  
Wajeeha Kamal  
Daniel Kassl  
Alyssa Lavroff  
Musa Ndhlovu  
Gabriella Pettijohn  
Luke Rose  
Marissa Smith  
Blake Stockman  
Gabriela Treviño

### We the People Judges

Julien Kasten  
Luigi Laudano

### Equal Justice Under Law

Sahil Bathija  
Elise Bourgeois  
Elizabeth Cooper  
Chloe Fleeman

\*Volunteered for multiple projects

### Youth Summit

Keegan Brown  
Alyvia Cantrell

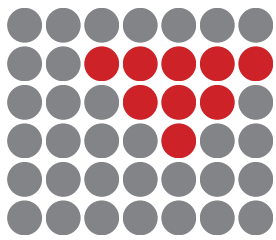
## Public Interest Law Initiative: Leadership



**Ivana Bailey-Munoz, '26**  
PILI Alumni Network  
Leadership Council



**Molly Levinson, '27**  
PILI Board of Directors,  
Student Intern Representative



# Public Interest Leadership Award

## 2026 Vivien C. Gross Pro Bono & Public Interest Leadership Award



The Vivien C. Gross Pro Bono & Public Interest Leadership Award recognizes a graduating law student who has made outstanding contributions to public interest law through their pro bono contributions as well as leadership. The award, formerly known as the "Pro Bono & Community Service Leadership Award" has been renamed this year to honor Professor Gross for her significant contributions to public interest law.

## 2026 Vivien C. Gross Pro Bono & Public Interest Award: Gabriela Treviño-Gutiérrez

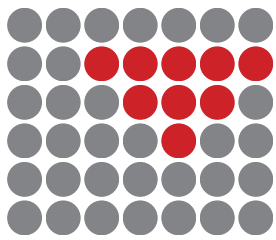


This year's winner of the Vivien C. Gross Pro Bono and Public Interest Leadership Award is Gabriela Treviño-Gutiérrez. Gaby is deeply committed to Public Interest Law and Pro Bono as demonstrated by the copious amount of pro bono engagement, public interest internships, and leadership roles she has had throughout law school.

Gaby has volunteered 403 hours with a stunning **24 different community organizations** in law school - with the majority of those hours spent at Ascend Justice, New Mexico Immigrant Rights Center, Pilsen Food Pantry, the Children's Legal Center, National Lawyers Guild, the Self-Help Resource Center, Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois, the Immigration Law Clinic, and Legal Aid Chicago.

Gaby is also a leader at Chicago-Kent, serving as president of the Hispanic Latinx Law Student Association; and on the board of the National Lawyers Guild, and Immigration Law Society. In addition, Gaby began working in the Public Interest Center during her second year of law school – providing almost all of the support for the success of last year's Public Service Day - and has organized countless pro bono projects for her peers.

Gaby will graduate with the Public Interest and Labor/Employment Law Certificates. As a dedicated Public Interest Leader and advocate; she has a bright future.



# Public Interest Partner Award

## 2026 Ronald W. Staudt Public Interest Partner Award



The Ronald W. Staudt Public Interest Partner Award at Chicago-Kent College of Law recognizes organizations that make outstanding contributions to public interest law and provide opportunities for Chicago-Kent students to gain meaningful experience in public interest practice. In 2017, we changed the name of the award to the Ronald W. Staudt Public Interest Partner Award in honor of Professor Staudt's retirement and his dedication to public interest.

## 2026 Ronald W. Staudt Public Interest Partner Award: Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Family Services



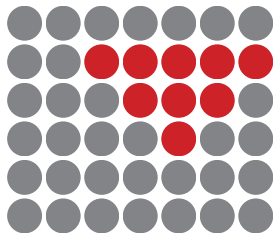
This year's recipient of the Ronald W. Staudt Public Interest Partner Award is the Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Family Services. This award will be accepted by alumni Loren Gutierrez.

We are proud to celebrate the Legal Aid Society, the oldest provider of legal aid in Illinois - founded in 1886. We have shared legacies. Chicago-Kent, then known as Chicago College of Law, was established in 1888 - providing legal training to working men and women who sought to become attorneys.

The Legal Aid Society was nominated and selected because of their important work providing equal access to justice for all - with a particular focus on the most vulnerable communities, including those who are impoverished, the elderly, and victims of violence & crimes. Throughout the years, many students have served as legal interns at their organization, where they have had exceptional experiences serving the most vulnerable - and some have joined their team as attorneys.

Over the past two years in particular, our engagement has deepened, with clinics during our Spring Break Public Service Week. Recently, thanks to Paladin as a tool to help us connect, we have students volunteering with Legal Aid Society clinics on a regular basis throughout the year.

We are pleased to celebrate the Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Family Services. Congratulations.



## Sponsor Recognition



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Thank you to Passen Powell Jenkins and other generous donors for supporting the work of the Public Interest Center. If you would like to donate to the work of the Public Interest Center, please scan the QR code below, click “Give to the Public Interest Center,” and select “Public Interest Center” in the drop-down menu.

