IN-HOUSE PRO BONO IN PRACTICE PROFILE: UNITED AIRLINES, INC.
September 2018

United Airlines' pro bono program was implemented in 2012 at the direction of its general counsel, Brett Hart, two years after United became a **Corporate Pro Bono Challenge®** signatory in 2010. In only a few years, United has built a thriving pro bono program. A key reason for the success and growth of the program is the active support of its general counsel. As Mr. Hart stated:

> As a company, United supports and promotes volunteerism and investment in our communities by giving back and helping those in need while building pride in the workplace. As an extension of that principle, United's Legal Department uses their professional skills to improve access to justice for those who either cannot afford it or otherwise do not have access to it. I'm proud to work for a company that believes in these causes and to lead lawyers and legal professionals who believe that everyone is entitled to the justice they deserve and not just that which they can afford.

The legal department has successfully developed partnerships and programs with legal aid organizations working on a wide variety of legal issues involving seniors, the disabled, the homeless, and individuals escaping persecution in foreign countries. In 2017, 72% of the legal department participated in pro bono, volunteering a total of 1,785 hours and serving 424 clients. United is striving to attain 100% participation in at least one pro bono program on a regular basis.

Members of the legal department have realized personal and workplace benefits by participating in pro bono, including building teamwork, cultivating pride in their company, developing personal skills, and enhancing the unique sense of accomplishment and meaning in using their skills to contribute to the community.

General Program Information	
Offices with Legal Staff	HQ: Chicago, IL; Other U.S. office: Houston, Texas. International office: Sao Paulo, Brazil.
Size of Legal Department	43 attorneys and 27 non-attorney legal professionals
Pro Bono Leadership Structure	The Pro Bono & Community Service ("PBCS") Committee is comprised of both attorneys and legal professionals. The PBCS Committee is co-chaired by one attorney and one legal professional. Each Committee member is encouraged to lead a program and to

	participate in one or more programs regularly. There are no specific term limits, but approximately every two years the co-chairs rotate.
Pro Bono Policy	The PBCS Policy, adopted in 2012, addresses issues such as the mission statement, pro bono participation, the leadership structure, administration of the program, conflict screening, malpractice insurance, multijurisdictional practice, and working with law firm partners. For example, the policy addresses: • **Participation**: Employee participation in the pro bono program is encouraged, not only because doing pro bono benefits the community, but also because helping others enhances professional development and increases personal satisfaction. • **Conflict Checking**: Pro bono matters must be screened for conflicts. For any pro bono matter that is not referred by a pre-approved legal services organization, the PBCS Committee must screen and approve the matter. • **Ethical Considerations**: United attorneys who are not licensed to practice in the state in which they are located must consult the ethical rules governing whether they may engage in pro bono practice. Non-locally licensed attorneys may also team up with an attorney who is licensed in the jurisdiction, or file a motion to appear *pro hac vice*. • **Use of Company Equipment and Resources**: Employees may hold meetings related to pro bono matters in company offices, and seek assistance from other legal professionals and legal assistants at the company, so long as doing so does not interfere with other company business. • **Supervision and Teamwork**: Employees should seek approval from their direct supervisors before engaging in pro bono activities. Employees should seek guidance from supervisory attorneys or mentors knowledgeable in the area of law related to their pro bono cases. Employees are encouraged to work in teams if appropriate for the matter.
Mandatory Pro Bono	Pro bono is "encouraged." It is commonly raised in performance review discussions, but pro bono is not mandatory.
Communications	The PBCS Committee uses an intranet site to communicate pro bono opportunities, trainings, and policies.

Recognitions/Awards	The Legal Department regularly recognizes participants in pro bono. Recognition of pro bono participation is a standing agenda item at the Department's quarterly meetings. Pro bono accomplishments are also occasionally published in a company-wide internal news briefing. United also has a volunteer impact grant program, which provides a modest cash grant to an organization of a volunteer's choice if the volunteer logs more than 40 hours of pro bono in a calendar year. Pro bono participation also can be a positive factor in one's evaluation.
Tracking Pro Bono	Employees log pro bono hours using the Community Affairs intranet site that tracks all corporate civic volunteerism by employees. Individual program leaders also collect participation data for their programs.
Partnerships	United routinely partners with legal services organizations that refer pro bono matters to Department employees. Representative projects are listed below. United engages in the majority of its pro bono work without a law firm partner, but in appropriate circumstances will also partner with law firms. For example, United and Seyfarth Shaw* co-sponsored an Equal Justice Works fellow who launched a civil asset forfeiture defense project at Cabrini Green Legal Aid representing low-income individuals whose motor vehicles have been seized by the police. United attorneys have successfully represented clients in several civil asset forfeiture cases through this project.
Professional Liability	The PBCS Policy addresses malpractice insurance. Generally pro bono attorneys are covered by the malpractice insurance of the pre-approved legal services organizations who refer the pro bono matters. The Legal Department also purchased its own pro bono malpractice insurance policy through the National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA).
Non-Lawyer Involvement	Non-lawyer legal professionals routinely participate in pro bono. One of the co-chairs of the PBCS Committee is a non-lawyer.
Representative Pro Bono Projects	
Immigration	United partners with National Immigrant Justice Center to provide pro bono legal services to undocumented individuals who have been tortured and persecuted in their country of origin. United also assists individuals obtaining protection from deportation who are eligible under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

Criminal Justice	Working with Cabrini Green Legal Aid, United provides pro bono legal services to individuals adversely impacted by the collateral consequences of involvement in the criminal justice system by helping individuals expunge and seal criminal records to facilitate obtaining employment, housing and other resources they would otherwise be denied access, allowing them to reintegrate productively in their communities.
Elderly	United provides pro bono legal estate planning services to low-income seniors, in partnership with the Center for Disability & Elder Law.
Veterans	United worked with the Illinois Access to Civil Justice Council and Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network (IL-AFLAN) to implement a legal hotline and network of legal assistance to help active duty, Reserve, National Guard, retired service members, veterans and military families in need throughout the state.
Disabled youth	United partners with Equip for Equality to provide pro bono legal advice to parents of disabled children to help them access the educational services their children are entitled to under the law.
Homelessness	In partnership with The Law Project of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and the law firm Baker McKenzie*, United developed and is currently helping to update a state-wide Homeless Youth Handbook of legal issues and options to be used by and for homeless teens, shelters, high schools and other aid organizations.
Vulnerable communities	United provides pro bono legal services to victims of sexual abuse who are referred by the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation.
Taxes	United partners with Ladder Up to provide pro bono tax preparation services to low income individuals who need assistance to file their own returns, facilitating receipt of IRS refunds for eligible filers.
Legal clinics	United provides pro bono legal services to low-income individuals through a West Garfield Park neighborhood legal clinic run by Chicago Volunteer Legal Services.
Lessons Learned	
Engagement is key.	Pro bono program success is realized each time a new individual becomes engaged.

Personal satisfaction is an effective recruitment tool.	Experiencing the rewards of helping a vulnerable client achieve a result he or she could not have obtained without pro bono assistance is the most persuasive recruitment tool.
Teamwork alleviates concerns about pro bono work.	Working in small teams builds collegiality, allows for shared responsibilities, and helps volunteers overcome their apprehensions relating to insufficient skills or time.
Develop supportive partnerships.	Partnerships with legal aid organizations who can offer support for pro bono volunteers are invaluable.
Small investment for large returns.	A relatively small contribution of time, talent and money toward pro bono can have a huge return on investment.

*denotes a **Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge**® Signatory

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