

Sample Professional Identity Assignments



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Developing Your Professional Identity

A. Introduction

Students,

One of the most important learning objectives in law school is to develop your professional identity. Your professional identity includes how to bring your personal values into your profession so that you don't lose your sense of self. Thus, it is important to create your professional identity early, often, and actively rather than letting experiences and reactions to experiences define you.

In addition to bringing your own belief system into your professional identity, part of the law school learning objectives is to learn and embrace the values of the profession. In fact, adhering to the values of the profession are so important, Professional Responsibility is one of only two courses specifically required by our accrediting body. (The other course is legal writing because, yes, it is *that* important.) You will have at least one course on Professional Responsibility in law school.

Before you can sit for the bar exam, most states require you to take a test called the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination. In addition, even if you pass the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination, graduate from law school, and pass the bar examination, states still require you to pass a character and fitness process to ensure that you have demonstrated moral fitness in both your professional and personal life.

Thus, it is important to both bring your own values into the profession *and* embrace the values of the profession. These values include abiding by the law, candor (truthfulness), being prepared, zealous advocacy, and promoting equal access to justice. The exercises in this chapter will help you explicitly identify your own values as well as begin to have you think about the values of the profession.

This semester, you must complete * assignments as part of your Property course.

B. Professional Identity Letter to Self

Professional Identity Letters



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Learning Objectives

- To identify the core values you have as you enter the legal profession.
- To solidify the commitments you want to make to yourself as to how to the type of person and type of lawyer you want to be.
- To begin to establish a professional identity.
- To begin to foster the types of relationships you want to have with the legal community.
- To reinforce the importance of following directions.

Assignment Description

Read the two articles on Professional Identity that are posted on D2L.

Write a letter to yourself. Your letter should be no more than 350 words. It should fit on one page.

The letter should describe what core values are most important to you. You may explain why those core values are important to you, if that will motivate you in the future.

The letter should explain how you want to incorporate those core values into your professional identity as a lawyer. You can do this by identifying the change you want to cause through your practice of law, the way you want to treat your clients, the way you want to interact with other members of your profession, or anything else that will help you identify how you will honor your core values within your practice of law. They letter may also identify why you wanted to become a lawyer or what motivated you, if that is relevant to how you will incorporate your core values.

The letter should also identify what type of reputation you want to create in the legal community. How do you want your clients to know you? How do you want your colleagues to know you? How do you want opposing counsel to know you? How do you want general members of the legal profession to know you?

Submission Guidelines

You will turn in four copies of this letter before class on the day the letters are due. You may turn in your letters early.

The first copy will be typed and signed. On this copy, you must attach a photograph of yourself to the letter.

The second, third, and fourth copies should all be placed in separate envelopes. Each envelope should contain your permanent mailing address (many people use a relative's address) and a stamp. Put a rubber band around your three envelopes.

The open letter and three sealed copies must be turned in by the beginning of class on the due date.



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Grading

You will receive full credit for turning in a good faith effort of this assignment on or before the due date. If you fail to follow these instructions precisely, I reserve the right to deduct partial or full points.

C. Engaging in Pro Bono Service

"If there is any fundamental proposition of government on which all would agree, it is that one of the highest goals of society must be to achieve and maintain equality before the law. Yet this ideal remains an empty form of words unless the legal profession is ready to provide adequate representation for those unable to pay the usual fees." *Professional Representation: Report of the Joint Conference*, 44 A.B.A.J. 1159, 1216 (1958).

Objectives:

- Apply the legal discourse, organization, and analysis skills in a practitioner environment to identify the practical applications of our academic skills lessons.
- Serve the underserved through pro bono opportunities.
- Embrace the values of the profession that provide justice for all despite economic means.
- Learn practitioner-ready skills in a legal context of your choosing.
- Meet practicing attorneys and begin to build your legal network.

One of the values of the profession is to give back to the community. While lawyers need to charge for their services and earn a living, lawyers also realize that justice is limited to those who can afford lawyers. Thus, one of the deepest values in the profession is to engage in pro bono activities. It is so deeply engrained in our profession that you cannot graduate, or sit for the bar in many states, unless you've engaged in a certain number of pro bono hours.

The dilemma is, when are you supposed to find the time for pro bono when classes pull you away from it? Unfortunately, too many students find themselves in their sixth semester, scrambling to engage in pro bono activities in order to graduate on time. That's not a good plan. One solution is to make it an optional part of the class, just like many law firms make pro bono service a required part of your billable hours. Thus, for every two hours of pro bono training or pro bono work that you engage in, you can



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earn one professional identity exercise. If you engage in 2-3 hours, you can earn 1 practitioner exercise. If you engage in 4-5, you can earn two.

Many pro bono activities require training, especially for non-licensed students. To ensure the greatest possible flexibility, I am allowing you to earn credit for your pro bono training in addition to your actual pro bono work.

At Charlotte Law, Sean Lew (slew@charlottelaw.edu, 704.971.8590) helps students coordinate pro bono activities. You can reach out to Professor Lew for more information about pro bono opportunities at Charlotte Law.

To earn credit for this assignment, you must submit the following reflection paper to the drop box by the deadline.

At the top of your submission, you must put your name, the total number of hours you engaged in pro bono, and the number of professional identity exercises you are claiming.

For each different pro bono activity or training, you must fill out this form.

- 1 What was the title of the activity?
- 2 When and where was the activity held?
- 3 How many hours and minutes did you spend engaged in the activity? (Transportation, arriving early, and staying late do not count.)
- 4 Summarize the activity. (Minimum 50 words.)
- 5 How did this experience help you build your legal knowledge, skills, and values? (Minimum 200 words.)
- 6 How did this experience help you build your resume? (Minimum 200 words.)
- 7 How did this experience help the community? (Minimum 300 words.)
- 8 What did you learn about the population you served? What are their legal struggles? How does the justice system help or hinder them? (Minimum 300 words.)

Some students are really moved by the pro bono work they do and want to write longer reflection papers. I welcome them. Just make sure you balance the reflection paper with your other



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responsibilities.

D. Engaging in Community Service

One of the values of the profession is to give back to the community. Many lawyers do that with pro bono activities and some lawyers also engage in non-legal community service.

For this assignment, you can pick any activity that gives back to the community at large or the community at Charlotte Law. For example, you could volunteer at a soup kitchen or coach a little league team or read at your child's school. You could attend a public event at CSL. If you are an ambassador, your ambassador duties this semester will count toward community service.

I'm defining community service very liberally to give you the most flexibility. Any event where you give back to the community or participate in an educational public event (outside of your required courses) can count. If you have any questions about whether your community activity counts, please just ask.

To meet the community service requirement, you must spend at least 4 hours at one activity or accumulate a total of 4 hours at multiple activities. If you engage in 4-7 hours, you can earn credit for 1 practitioner preparation exercise. If you engage in 8 or more hours, you can earn points for 2 practitioner exercises.

At the top of your submission, you must put your name, the total number of hours you engaged in community service, and the number of professional identity exercises you are claiming.

For each activity, you must fill out the following form:

- What is your name?
- What was the title of the activity?
- When and where was the activity held?
- How many hours and minutes did you spend engaged in the activity? (Transportation, arriving early, and staying late do not count.)
- Summarize the activity. (Minimum 50 words.)
- What did you learn through engaging in the activity? (Minimum 200 words.)



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- How did this experience help you build your legal knowledge, skills, and values? (Minimum 200 words.)
- How did this experience help you build your resume? (Minimum 200 words.)
- How did this experience help the community? (Minimum 300 words.)

Upload your finished reflection paper to the D2L drop box.

E. Access to Justice & Implicit Bias

One of the values of the profession is equal access to and administration of justice, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical differences, economic differences, or any other distinguishing characteristic. We also have constitutional provisions and many laws that forbid discrimination in the legal system, in the public sector, and even in the private sector.

Unfortunately, discrimination can derive from implicit bias. Everyone has implicit bias. Part of our job as a member of the legal profession is to identify where the system harbors unequal justice derived from implicit bias. We then have a legal and professional obligation to work to improve the legal system. Additionally, we have a professional obligation to identify our own implicit biases so that we can limit the amount these biases impact the legal system, equal access to justice, and equal administration of justice.

For this assignment, identify how implicit bias can create a discriminatory society, unequal access to justice, or an unequal administration of justice. Please make sure that your topic relates to an area of Property transactions or law. For example, you could discuss:

1. Implicit Bias in Landlord Tenant Situations
2. Implicit Bias in the Transfers of Land
3. Implicit Bias in Covenants OR
4. Implicit Bias in Ownership (Co-Tenancy)



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To receive credit, you must discuss the topic of implicit bias in Property law and transactions. Your discussion must be at least 500 words long (approximately 2 double spaced pages).



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