



Media Release

SMU Pro Bono Centre Legal Clinic sees 2.6% increase in Covid-19 related cases from January to September 2021

Record average number of hours served by law students this year

Singapore, 24 November (Wednesday), 2021 – In the latest Annual Report (January – September 2021) released by Singapore Management University’s [Pro Bono Centre](#) (PBC), the percentage of cases seen at the Centre’s legal clinic which were related to Covid-19 issues was 11.1%, compared to 8.5% during the same period last year. The majority of the Covid-19 issues were associated with the Covid-19 Act and raised by small and medium businesses on matters arising from tenancy issues with landlords.

Total applicants seen at the PBC Legal Clinic for the nine months was 135, a slight decrease from 199 in 2020, due to the suspension of the clinic as a result of Covid-19 restrictions imposed during various periods in 2021.

The type of cases and proportion to total numbers for 2021 and 2020 are as follows:

	2021	2020
Family	18.5%	18.6%
Employment	6.7%	13.1%
Criminal	10.4%	7%
Tenancy	12.6%	8%
Covid-19	11.1%	8.5%

The **total number of pro bono hours** accumulated by the class of 2021 was 9,750.6, a **12.3%** increase from 8,680.8 hours in 2020. The **average number of pro bono hours** served by LLB students in 2021 was higher at 51.3 hours (compared to 45 hours in 2020).

The full **Annual Report** can be viewed [here](#).

Several individuals were recognised for their outstanding pro bono efforts at the annual SMU PBC Awards recently:

Spirit of Pro Bono Award – Class of 2021 (JD): Lokman Hakim bin Mohamed Rafi
Spirit of Pro Bono Award – Class of 2021 (LLB): Farahna Alam
Volunteer Lawyer: Richard Tan Ming Kirk
Long service award (5 years): Zheng Pei

**Profiles of award recipients can be found in Annex 1*

The Spirit of Pro Bono Award 2021 recipients exceeded last year's winners exceptionally. **Lokman Hakim** (JD winner) completed **460.5** pro bono hours, while **Farahna Alam** (LLB winner) completed **258.6** pro bono hours. For the class of 2020, the highest number of pro bono hours by a JD student was 424.5 hours and 138.8 hours by an LLB student.

Volunteer lawyer **Mr Richard Tan** was lauded for the third year running, for participating the most times this year at the SMU Pro Bono Centre Legal Clinic. The Centre also recognised the commitment of **Ms Zheng Pei** for serving more than five years as a volunteer lawyer at the Centre's Legal Clinic.

Certificates of appreciation were also presented to 6 JD graduates and 43 LLB graduates from the Class of 2021 who completed all of their university community service requirement in approved pro bono work; as well as to 17 volunteer lawyers in recognition of their participation at the Centre's Legal Clinic in 2021.

Professor of Law, Chan Wing Cheong, Director of the SMU Pro Bono Centre, said, "Despite several Covid-19 restriction periods this year, the Class of 2021 surpassed last year's cohort by a 12.3% increase in total pro bono hours, and the average pro bono hours per student also rose by 6.9%. I am proud that the pandemic situation has not affected the SMU Law students' spirit to contribute to the community. The Covid-19 measures have affected many local businesses tremendously, and we are glad to be in a position to lend a helping hand towards resolving some of their many troubles during this difficult period.

I would also like to thank all our partners for entrusting our students with the invaluable opportunity to utilise their legal knowledge to give back to society meaningfully. According to our records, only slightly more than half of pro bono legal clinic applicants have diploma or higher education, and 40% earn less than \$4,000 a month. Our survey found that more than 8 in 10 applicants were 'very satisfied' or 'quite satisfied' with the service they received, and more than 9 in 10 indicated that they will return to the Clinic if they have new legal issues and will also recommend it to others".

-End-

Enclosures:

Annex 1: Profiles and photos of Pro Bono Award recipients

Annex 2: Fact sheet – Community service and pro bono contribution by SMU law students

About Singapore Management University

Established in 2000, Singapore Management University (SMU) is recognised for its disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research that address issues of global relevance, impacting business, government, and society. Its distinctive education, incorporating innovative experiential learning, aims to nurture global citizens, entrepreneurs and change agents. With more than 11,000 students, SMU offers a wide range of bachelors, masters and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with the six schools - Accountancy, Business, Economics, Computing, Law and Social Sciences. It also offers a growing number of executive development and continuing education programmes. Through its city campus, SMU focuses on making meaningful impact on Singapore and beyond through its partnerships with industry, policy makers and academic institutions.

www.smu.edu.sg

About SMU Pro Bono Centre

The SMU Pro Bono Centre was established in 2013 in recognition of the Yong Pung How School of Law's strong commitment to pro bono. Supported by the RHT Rajan Menon Foundation, it manages all pro bono activities and is responsible for running legal clinics at SMU and organising programmes to raise pro bono consciousness. It is the vision of the Centre to develop conception of the practice of law as a service vocation by instilling in students a desire to serve the community, thereby making them more likely to continue doing pro bono work later in their professional lives. Through pro bono work, students experience how the law works in real life, apply what they learn in law school, and develop the knowledge, skills, ethics and professionalism to become better lawyers from training and professional development opportunities.

www.pbc.smu.edu.sg