

**Graduate Student Assembly**  
**Proposal to Create a Student Legal Services Office**  
**DATE**

**Goal**

Yale creates a Student Legal Services Office to provide legal advice to all students. An attorney will be available to provide free initial consultations and referrals. The attorney will not provide individual students with representation.

**Proposal**

Yale students are in need of legal advice primarily related to auto, criminal, divorce, landlord/tenant, personal injury, taxes, and traffic cases. In the past, the university could count on students having access to basic legal services. However, the increased diversity and internationalization of Yale's student body means students do not universally have avenues to legal recourse. It is our view that the time has come for Yale to ensure that all students can access an attorney when necessary. This is especially so at a time when families may be suffering the adverse effects of the recession. The Graduate Student Association (GSA) thus proposes that Yale University provide these legal services to students by creating a Student Legal Services Office available to the entire student body.

**Environmental Scan**

There are three main types of legal service provided by peer institutions.

- *Referral.* Students simply identify the types of services they need and are referred outside of the institution. They do not receive consultation.
- *Consultation.* The University provides a program or a designated attorney from which students receive legal advice, including information on whether or not their cases are worth pursuing. When appropriate, students are referred outside to pursue further legal recourse. The attorney does not represent or advocate for individual students.
- *In-House Aid.* Students are able to work with an attorney or law students within the institution to receive legal advice as well as file and pursue a case. Outside referrals are occasionally made based on the type of case, but representation services are available within the institution.

Many institutions of higher education, including peer institutions, provide one of these three legal services to students. For purposes of comparison, this proposal surveys the services available within the Ivy League and the three top public universities in the United States

according to the 2011 *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. In every case, the services in question are provided to the entire student body.

- Ivy League

*Referral:* Columbia, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton

Princeton University's Office of the General Counsel maintains an online list of attorneys for referral purposes. The list includes attorneys for general representation and specific areas of law including copyright/intellectual property, technology and criminal issues. Princeton does not guarantee a free initial consultation, but notes that initial consultations are usually complimentary. Princeton encourages students to confirm this with the attorney prior to the consultation. The list of attorneys is intended only for Princeton University students.

Dartmouth College offers referral services. The Office of the General Counsel maintains a list of attorneys in the area. Students contact the Office of the Dean of the College to receive advice on which attorneys to contact in the region.

Harvard provides referral services. Students may call the Office of the General Counsel, which will provide a referral based on the type of legal service needed.

Columbia University's Office of the General Counsel will refer students to lawyers in the area.

*Consultation:* University of Pennsylvania

The University of Pennsylvania offers full time undergraduate and graduate students access to free legal advice. Students have access to a half-hour free consultation. The lawyer primarily does referrals but will take some criminal matters. The program operates under the auspices of the Undergraduate Assembly and Graduate and Profession Student Assembly (GAPSA). It is administered by the Undergraduate Assembly, which serves as a liaison between students and the attorneys.

*In House Aid:* Brown, Cornell

Brown University, through the Graduate Student Council and Undergraduate Council of Students, provides free legal aid services on site. An attorney is available two hours a week on campus and two hours a week for phone consultations. The attorney consults, takes cases and refers students to lawyers in the area who have expertise in the student's area of need.

Cornell provides legal service through the Cornell Law School which houses the Cornell Legal Aid Clinic. The Clinic provides legal services to Cornell Students

and to low income residents of the community in conjunction with a community legal aid provider called Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS).

- Public Universities

*Consultation:* University of California at Berkley

The University of California at Berkley's Student Legal Services department retains an Attorney for Students who provides consultations. The scope includes landlord/tenant, small criminal issues, filing actions in small claims court, debt, auto, family law and divorce. The Attorney for Students offers free half-hour consultations.

*In House Aid:* University of California-Los Angeles, University of Virginia

The University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) offers consultations as well as representation through its Student Legal Services department. SLS addresses landlord/tenant, personal injury, domestic violence and harassment, criminal, family law, financial, health care and employment cases. The Office also represents students in disputes with UCLA departments, for example over aid, housing, and ADA compliance. If representation and legal action is needed, Student Legal Services has established a User Fee Policy (see Appendix 1). Student Legal Services provides one-hour consultations for a \$10 fee during normal business hours.

The University of Virginia has maintained an office for Student Legal Services since 1972. The office is directed by an attorney who provides free initial consultations on cases related to consumer rights, contracts, criminal victims, criminal charges, debt collection, no-fault divorce, employment, expunging criminal charges, insurance, landlord/tenant, name change, student non-profit organizations, traffic violations, and wills. Representation is also available for a fee (see Appendix 2).

### **Current Resources and Availability**

Yale currently offers legal services through three institutions: Office of the Vice President and General Counsel (OGC), the Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization (JFLS), and the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS).

OGC provides a number of general interest documents on its website but does not provide any legal services for students. The office is dedicated to providing legal services to Yale employees and the institution.

JFLS is home to ten different legal clinics based at Yale Law School. In the main JFLS provides legal services to the New Haven community, particularly those who cannot afford to hire attorneys. JFLS's Supervising Attorney, Professor Stephen Wizner, has

indicated that the program is not intended to provide services to students. Due to the small size of YLS and the commitment of JFLS to low income members of the New Haven community, JFLS does not have the numbers or resources to provide legal aid to Yale students.

OISS provides referrals to international students and has developed a strong relationship with lawyers in the New Haven area. These attorneys primarily assist students with immigration issues, though OISS also provides international students with guidance on taxes. The proposed Student Legal Services Office would refer international students with immigration and tax issues to OISS.

Because of the limited scope of legal aid at Yale, most students find themselves with no institutional resources available. In a few exceptional cases JFLS has aided students but is not well known by the student body and cannot expand its services to become a regular institutional resource. International students can seek help from OISS, but no legal resources exist for areas of concern to students, including auto, landlord/tenant, and criminal issues.

### **Proposed Program**

As soon as possible the university should publish a referral list based on recommendations from OGC, JFLS, and OISS.

However, it is the view of the GSA that the diverse needs of the student body can only be met by implementing a “consultation” legal services model on campus. We therefore propose the creation of a Student Legal Services Office. Following the Penn program, the university would retain the services of a local attorney for four hours per week, two hours on campus and two hours by phone. Students would be entitled to free half-hour consultations. The attorney would be expected to advise students as to their legal options and refer them when appropriate.

Based on conversations with OISS, we believe students with immigration issues will be best served by continuing current practice. A future Student Legal Services Office will direct students with immigration issues to resources provided by the OISS office.

## APPENDIX

### 1. University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA) Fee List

#### 2010-2011 User Fee Policy

Service	Cost
Initial Consultation (one hour)	\$10
Ongoing assistance with follow up consultations and research (but no representation in dealing with other people/companies)	\$30
Ongoing assistance with follow up consultations, research, and representation in dealing with other people/companies (but not outside of the SLgS office)	\$50
Dissolution of Marriage (including a Marital Settlement Agreement)	\$330
Summary Dissolution of Marriage (including a Marital Settlement Agreement)	\$255
Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare	\$35
Will	\$180
Power of Attorney	\$50
Advance Health Care Directive	\$50
Name Change	\$80

\*The total fee *includes* the \$10 initial consultation fee (e.g., a client who wishes ongoing assistance without representation will be charged an additional fee of \$20, for a total of \$30)

#### Additional Fees

Description	Fee
No show/late cancellation	\$10
Demand Letter	\$30 per letter

Student Legal Services charges the \$10 “no show/late cancellation fee” if the student-client misses an appointment, is more than ten minutes late, or cancels less than twenty-four hours in advance of the appointment

All Student Legal Services fees are charged to the student-client’s SBAR account.

([www.studentlegal.ucla.edu/servicespolicies.php#currentuserfeepolicy](http://www.studentlegal.ucla.edu/servicespolicies.php#currentuserfeepolicy))

## 2. University of Virginia Fees:

## a. Initial Consultation - Free

## b. Ongoing - Fees

i. Student Organizations	\$20
1. Student organizations are legally not a part of the university.	
ii. Representation	\$20
iii. Ongoing Consultation	\$15
iv. Document Preparation	\$20-80
v. Divorce	\$200
vi. Name Change	\$80
vii. Civil Litigation	\$60-170
viii. Criminal	\$125-250
ix. (DUI)	\$125
x. Traffic	\$125
xi. Expungement	\$100
xii. Appeals	\$30-100
xiii. Collections	\$20-50

c. For more, visit <http://www.student.virginia.edu/~stud-leg/>