Pro Bono/PD Corner:

Pro Bono as Professional Development for Seasoned Lawyers

from the NALP Pro Bono and Professional Development Task Force

Many seasoned lawyers have engaged in pro bono work throughout their careers out of a sense of professional obligation and a deep-felt commitment to justice. Other lawyers have practiced for decades without taking on a significant pro bono matter. These lawyers, in particular, can gain significant professional development opportunities (and personal satisfaction) through new engagement in pro bono service. Pro bono work offers experienced lawyers the chance to learn a new area of the law, and perhaps expand their practice base, while lending their expertise to a worthy cause and learning about interesting and compelling social issues. Significantly, more seasoned lawyers in danger of burnout have the opportunity to see how valued their work is beyond a billing statement, which often reignites a flagging passion for their day-to-day work. Consider the following:

- Ask seasoned lawyers to supervise an interesting pro bono matter, which may allow them to connect with pro bono without making too large a time commitment.

- Appeal to seasoned lawyers to get involved in pro bono matters where their particular expertise is needed. They may be more willing to take on a matter where their individual skills are needed, and a positive experience will provide professional satisfaction and may lead to more pro bono service.

- Ask seasoned lawyers whether there is a particular area of law, type of matter, or population that they might be interested in working with, then match them with an appropriate pro bono opportunity.