

Law Students Team Up to Help Artists

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With musicians working 24 hours a day and other creative artists flocking to the city, Tulane University law students are finding New Orleans a great locale in which to become versed in entertainment law. Second- and third-year law students have the opportunity to help Louisiana's low-income artists and musicians through the Entertainment Law Legal Assistance (ELLA) project, part of the law school's Pro Bono Program.



Tulane Law School students involved in the Entertainment Law Legal Assistance project meet to plan strategies for their pro bono clients. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

In recognition of the project's accomplishments, ELLA received the 2008 Governor's Arts Award for Cultural Economy Development.

"ELLA has played an increasingly important role in providing legal assistance to artists, musicians and other performing artists, who otherwise could not afford assistance," says Julie Jackson, assistant dean for public-interest programs at the law school. "It has also benefited the community at large by helping keep an important

component of New Orleans' cultural economy strong and viable while contributing to the reduction of unfair trade practices.”

Copyright, trademark and tax issues are common concerns of ELLA clients. Other legal issues that these clients face include the formation of limited liability corporations, housing concerns and contract preparation and review. Since ELLA's creation in 2005, Tulane law students have assisted approximately 650 clients with a 90 percent case-resolution rate, says Ashlye Keaton, supervising attorney to the project. Keaton is a 2003 graduate of Tulane Law School.

“We are the only program in the country that does this,” says Keaton. “We have been contacted by foundations and even former students who are interested in replicating the program, but it's very difficult to do unless you have all the necessary players including attorneys knowledgeable in entertainment law and adequate funding.”

Each semester, about 25 [student volunteers](#) assist in the project. Participating Tulane law students are required to complete a prerequisite course in intellectual property or otherwise demonstrate knowledge of intellectual-property law.

The ELLA project is co-sponsored by the Arts Council of New Orleans and the Tipitina Foundation.

Artists interested in receiving legal assistance may contact Gene Meneray, director of business programs at the New Orleans Arts Council, 504-523-1465. The ELLA group provides assistance every Friday from 9 a.m. until noon at the arts council, 818 Howard Ave., and at Tipitina's Music Co-op, 4040 Tulane Ave., suite 8000, from 1:30 until 4:30 p.m. Assistance is provided by appointment only.