BROOKLYN LAW SCHOOL

PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS CEREMONY

Honoring Public Service at Brooklyn Law School and the Accomplishments of the Class of 2022

Tuesday, April 5, 2022
6:00 – 7:00 pm
Zoom
Public Service Awards Ceremony

6:00 Welcome
Dean Michael T. Cahill, President, Joseph Crea Dean, and Professor of Law

Presentation of Distinguished Commitment to Public Service Award to Hon. Margarita Lopez Torres, Tina Davis and Karen Lin ’95
Sarah Lorr, Assistant Professor of Clinical Law & Co-Director of the Disability and Civil Rights Clinic, and Prianka Nair, Assistant Professor of Clinical Law & Co-Director of the Disability and Civil Rights Clinic

Keynote Speaker
Hon. Margarita López Torres, Judge, Kings County Surrogate’s Court

Presentation of Faculty Award for Excellence in Public Service to Professor of Law, Debra Bechtel
David Reiss, Professor of Law

Presentation of Alumni Award for Excellence in Public Service to Claudia Connor
Elizabeth Schneider, Rose L Hoffer, Professor of Law

Presentation of Staff Award for Excellence in Public Service to Florence Attino
Dean Michael T. Cahill, President, Joseph Crea Dean, and Professor of Law

Presentation of Public Service Awards to the Class of 2022
Stacy Caplow, Associate Dean for Professional Legal Education

Presentation of Pro Bono Project Leadership & Access to Justice Awards
Danielle Sorken, Executive Director, Public Service Law Center

Closing Remarks
Danielle Sorken, Executive Director of the Public Service Law Center
Our Honorees

Members of the Class of 2022, who will pursue a wide array of careers, have performed exceptional pro bono and public service work at organizations ranging from The Legal Aid Society to the Brooklyn District Attorney’s Office and from the Mississippi Center for Justice to the National Labor Relations Board. Over the course of these students’ law school careers, they have devoted over 100,000 hours to assisting individuals including people who seeking unemployment benefits during the pandemic, immigrants, survivors of domestic violence, children, veterans, and others, as well as helping government agencies provide critical services to the public. The Pro Bono Scholars are devoting thousands of additional hours to working full-time at government agencies and nonprofit organizations. Our pro bono project leaders have dedicated their time and passion to running the Law School’s almost two dozen projects.

### STUDENTS WHO PERFORMED OUTSTANDING PUBLIC SERVICE

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<th>Gold - 1,000+ hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kacy Vance</td>
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<td>Youngran Chaey</td>
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<td>Ashlyn Dean</td>
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<td>Emily Ingraham</td>
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<td>Ravneet Dehal</td>
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<td>Matthew Boyd</td>
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SILVER – 500-999 hours

Shana Krauss  Khrystyna Sahin
Taylor Lupi Harpreet Kaur
Rachel Marc Daniel Brenner
Bianca Dilan Ru Hochen
Marissa Cunha Lydia Saltzbart
Augustus Ipsen Gabrielle Gorelik
Erin Naylon Alexa Ornelas
Allison Liu Thomas Pearce
Michael Cederblom John Guzman
Jillian McDonald Julia Cummings
Alec Vanek Alicia Nakhjavani
Kellie VanBeck Cameron Molyneaux
Olivia Mittman Alexa Cohn
Sydney Segal Kristin Kuraishi
Jacob Joseph Olivia Rose
Katherine Torres
James Sanderson

PRO BONO AWARD – 100-499 hours

Cole Jaeger Hasan Tariq
Carl Wu Crystal Liu
Eun Bi Kim Sumayyah Siddiqui
Jamie Gewurz Justin Peralta
Sharmeena Khan Colleen Cummings
Barbara Vega Jake Wohl
Hadel Alfagir Katherine Knoepker
Matthew Kasner Benjamin McDermott
Sari Kreutzer Nicole Moccio
Shauna Shalvey Andrew Lefkowitz
Shanni Lynch Casey McIntyre
Francesca Esposito Moriah Son
Derek Knight Brandee McDermott
Sarah Kenny Mary Berfield
Amanda Yang Michelle Lepkofker
Student-led projects are at the heart of the BLS pro bono experience. They offer unique leadership and practical opportunities while helping underserved populations. This celebration, in part, is to honor those graduating students who displayed outstanding student leadership in the school’s pro bono projects. These students founded projects, revived and revitalized dormant projects, and took over other projects requiring sophisticated oversight. For all your hard work, we thank you, graduating pro bono project leaders:

- Alessandro Nardi
- Gavi Fried
- Jack Herrick
- Erica Baker
- Cameron Molyneaux
- Ashlyn Dean
- Zachery Penzone
- Eric Green
- Michelle Verkhoglaz
- Katherine Torres
- Cole Jaeger
- Meghan Johnke
- Emily Ingraham
- Jake Wohl
- Bianca Dilan
- Amal Alzendani
- Octavia Ewart
- Arianna Rappy
- Jahi Liburd
- Ellaree Miller

**ACCESS TO JUSTICE AWARD**

**Pro Bono Scholars**

BLS’s Pro Bono Scholars are spending their final semester providing direct legal services to low-income individuals:

- Sumayyah Siddiqui
- Amal Alzendani
- Cameron Molyneaux
- Luc Figueiredo Miler
- Shana Krauss
- Cohl Love
Hon. Margarita López Torres  
*Judge, Kings County Surrogate’s Court*  
*Public Service Awards Ceremony 2022 Keynote Speaker*  
*Distinguished Commitment to Public Service Award*

Judge Margarita López Torres was born in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, and was raised in the Brownsville and East New York sections of the Great Republic of Brooklyn. She began her legal career as an attorney, and later as a managing attorney, with various community-based legal services programs, where she represented clients in the area of family, housing, and immigration law. She has served as an Assistant Corporation Counsel with the New York City Law Department and later went on to become the Deputy General Counsel for the New York City Child Welfare Administration. In 1992, Judge López Torres became the first Latina ever elected to the Civil Court, and served in the Civil, Family, Criminal, and Housing Courts. In 2005, she became the first Latinx ever elected to Surrogate’s Court in New York State, and the first woman elected to that court in Kings County. She was the first judge to institute the use of gender neutral language as a local court rule and the first to institute video hearings. As a member of the Office of Court Administration Surrogate’s Advisory Committee, Margarita was a member of a subcommittee that authored a proposed Article 17-A statute, which provides for greater rights for persons asserted to be in need of a guardian.

**Tina Davis**  
*Principal Surrogate’s Court Clerk and Supervisor of the Guardianship and Adoptions Department, Kings County Surrogate’s Court*  
*Distinguished Commitment to Public Service Award*

Tina Davis is a Principal Surrogate’s Court Clerk and Supervisor of the Guardianship and Adoptions Department in the Kings County Surrogate’s Court. Ms. Davis brings 28 years of experience in the court system to serve the people and families in Brooklyn. She previously served in the guardianship department in New York County Surrogate’s Court as an office assistant, administrative service clerk, and court analyst. Her vast knowledge, experience, and compassion are evident daily as she assists individuals and families, most of whom are unrepresented by counsel, with their petitions, liaises with state agencies, trains and supervises court staff, manages the adoptions and guardianship case load, issues citations, facilitates hearings and court calendars, and develops protocol for the department.
Karen Lin, BLS’95  
Court Attorney-Referee, Kings County Surrogate’s Court  
Distinguished Commitment to Public Service Award

Karen Lin serves as Court Attorney-Referee in Kings County Surrogate’s Court, which adjudicates guardianships, adoptions, probate and estate administration proceedings, including conducting SCPA Article 17A guardianship hearings. Ms. Lin immigrated to the United States when she was three years old and was raised in Queens, which she has happily never left. Educated in the New York City public school system and a graduate of the State University of New York at Buffalo, Ms. Lin has worked in the public sector for over twenty years. She has served as a Judge in the New York City Housing Court. Prior to her appointment to the bench, she served as Principal Court Attorney in New York County Supreme Court, in trial, general IAS, medical malpractice, and city parts. Before that, Ms. Lin was a litigation associate at a civil rights litigation firm, practicing family law and representing parents embroiled in the child welfare system. She has also served in the New York State Senate as District Counsel and Chief of Staff to the late Senator Catherine Abate. She has served as a pro bono attorney at the Center of Constitutional Rights, where she participated in the Ella Baker Internship Program. Ms. Lin has also taught litigation, legal research and writing at CUNY Queens College as an adjunct instructor. She volunteers as Co-Chair of the Pro Bono and Community Service Committee of the Asian American Bar Association of New York. She is a proud alumna of Brooklyn Law, where she was a BLSPI Fellow and President of APALSA.

Claudia Connor ’88  
Alumni Award for Excellence in Public Service

Claudia has over 30 years of experience working on behalf of marginalized people, fighting for social justice and social change. She is currently the Managing Director of Strategic Development Priorities with Save the Children. She previously worked with the International Rescue Committee, the Women’s Refugee Commission, and was the President & CEO of the Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants, a social justice nonprofit serving refugees and immigrants. From 1998-2008, Claudia lived in Mozambique, Malawi, and Myanmar where she was a consultant with UNICEF, the Carter Center, and Population Services International among other organizations, and worked on human rights issues including child trafficking, child soldiers, women’s rights, and the impact of HIV/AIDS. Before moving overseas, Claudia was a senior trial attorney for The Legal
Debra Bechtel
*Faculty Award for Excellence in Public Service*

Debra Bechtel is one of New York City’s foremost legal experts in low-income cooperatives. She has been teaching at Brooklyn Law School since 1997 when she founded the Corporate and Real Estate Clinic. The Clinic provides representation for these low-income co-ops and each semester enrolls approximately six to ten students. Dozens of low-income cooperatives in three boroughs have been preserved in part because of the students’ assistance with loan closings, real estate tax arrears, shareholder meetings and other challenges. She also developed a real estate externship program and teaches the Real Estate and Community Development externship seminar. In 2014, she was appointed as Deputy Director of the Center for Urban Business Entrepreneurship, which trains students to represent entrepreneurs and involves them, along with faculty, in housing and economic development policy issues. Prior to teaching, Professor Bechtel was the Director of the Community Development Legal Assistance Center, a project of what is now Lawyers Alliance for New York, and a staff attorney with the Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago. Professor Bechtel has been active in the New York State Bar Association’s Real Property Section, serving on the Executive Committee for the past two years and as the Co-Chair of the Legislation Committee and the Student Affairs Committee. She has published:


“Forming Entities to Negotiate Community Benefits Agreements” in the *Journal of Affordable Housing and Community Development Law.*

Florence Attino
*Staff Award for Excellence in Public Service*

After a 30-year career at all levels and types of education, Florence Attino began her most fulfilling job to date at Brooklyn Law School in 2005, working
with law students and directing the Public Service Grant and the Loan Repayment Assistance programs. Making it financially possible for BLS students to work in unpaid public interest internships, helping students navigate the confusing financial aid process and then helping BLS alumni get assistance with their loan repayment because they choose to stay in public interest is the most rewarding position Ms. Attino has ever held. She can never imagine retiring. BLS students who choose careers in public interest truly make a difference in our world, and she is honored to be a part of this unique population. On a personal note, Ms. Attino has been blessed with John, her husband of 46 years; remarkable children, Natalie, Thomas, and son in-law Brian; and most recently, Aria, her granddaughter, whom she loves more than words can express and is the joy and sunshine in her heart.