

Student Perspective: Teaming up with law school students to pitch a social enterprise

Vasco Bilbao-Bastida, a Wharton MBA/MA joint degree student, shares his experience working with law school students to pitch a social enterprise addressing access to justice as part of LawWithoutWalls.

Beyond its clear impact in congressional bills and Supreme Court cases, the rule of law also affects everyday aspects of modern society and business, such as setting up a corporation, applying for a patent, or founding a non-profit. Though a misconception exists that the legal profession is staid, it is actually very dynamic, continuously evolving to better respond to the needs of an increasingly complex world.

An aspect of the legal profession that could easily be overlooked is that its improvement and better use have the potential for positive social impact.

That is where LawWithoutWalls (LWOW) comes in. Founded and led by Michele DeStefano and coordinated by her team at the University of Miami School of Law, LWOW is described on its website as “a part-virtual, global, multi-disciplinary *collaboratory* that focuses on tackling the cutting edge issues at the intersection of law, business, technology, and innovation.”

LawWithoutWalls is a semester-long course in which law and business school students work in teams to develop Projects of Worth that address an assigned topic related to legal education and practice. The semester begins in January with team introductions at a two-day KickOff (previously held at the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland, IE University in Spain, and University College London; University College Dublin will host the 2015 KickOff), continues with weekly interactive virtual classes and team meetings involving students, mentors, advisors, and other community participants,, and ends with Project of Worth presentations at a ConPosium, held in April of every year at the University of Miami Law School.

[Insert group photo at ConPosium and brief tagline]

My team had three students: a third-year law school student from the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg; a second-year law school student from the University of Miami; and me. To help us develop our Project of Worth, our team was supported by academic, entrepreneur, and practitioner mentors and an alumni advisor. Our mentors, and even mentors from other teams, were eager to volunteer time to help us better understand our topics, make introductions to others, and help us develop our ideas.

Our topic was “Increasing Access to Justice and Creating New Models of Regulation: How Can the Two Go Hand-in-Hand?” With such a broad topic, we decided to narrow the scope to recently passed legislation in New York that requires bar applicants to complete 50 hours of pro

bono service. After weeks of research, interviews with experts, and various mock-ups, we pitched a social media platform that would allow users to seek pro bono opportunities, track and certify completed pro bono hours, and seek professional endorsements. By making the whole process easier, our idea would incentivize users go beyond the minimum pro bono requirement, increasing access to justice and encouraging a social media shift away from #selfie to #selfless.

[Insert brief tagline]

LawWithoutWalls brings together law and business school students from around the world, matches each team with committed mentors, and challenges them to devise ways to improve legal education and practice. LWOW appealed to me for the hands-on experience to pitch a social enterprise and the chance to join a vibrant community of smart, accomplished, and passionate people from diverse background. Students interested in applying can find more information at <http://www.lawwithoutwalls.org/>

[Include Vimeo link and brief description]

Vasco Bilbao-Bastida (WG'14, G'14) graduated with an MBA in Strategic Management and Social Impact from the Wharton School and an MA in International Studies from the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. Before Wharton, he taught English in Japan, worked in sales & trading in New York, and worked in environmental markets and conservation finance on projects in the U.S. and Latin America.

