



Community Spirit Award

Honoring a graduate for notable community, public, or humanitarian service work

Bobbin Singh '11

“Bobbin Singh’s work for the Oregon Justice Resource Center [OJRC] directly involves law students with the legal community, leveraging their enthusiasm for a good cause and connecting them to practicing lawyers and mentors,” says Holly Rudolph ’10, member of the Recent Graduate Council. “He has dedicated himself to encouraging students to do pro bono work and providing the resources to make it happen.”

Singh is executive director of OJRC, a nonprofit organization he established with Erin McKee ’11 that is dedicated to civil rights. Entering its third year, OJRC facilitates opportunities for law students to work with nonprofits in three key areas of the law: death penalty, indigent defense, and immigration. Singh provides structure and skills for students to work with busy nonprofits that might be unable to manage as many legal interns as they need. “Nonprofit organizations are overstressed and underfunded,” Singh says, “and they don’t always have the time to supervise students to be as effective as possible.” OJRC assumes that supervising role, allowing organizations to provide more opportunities to more students. It is currently organizing students to work with the Oregon Capital Resource Center through its Death Penalty Project, with the Metropolitan Public Defender through its Indigent Defense Project, and with Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees Immigration Legal Services through its Immigrant Rights Project.

It is student interest that has made OJRC successful, says Singh. “People want to work on these issues. It is validating to know there exists such a great demand for the resources we are providing students and that students are so committed to this work.” He says all of the students are working pro bono. Many don’t even earn academic credit for their work.

Singh grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. “As a person of color, I was naturally attracted to the civil rights movement and continue to be fascinated by those who were courageous enough to say something when everyone else was quiet,” he says. “While my personal experiences of confronting discrimination and prejudice have been different, that feeling of being unwanted and marginalized is the same—and I don’t think anyone should ever have to experience it.”

As a student, Singh helped recharter the ACLU student group in 2009 and worked to organize a number of events, including the first ACLU Northwest Civil Liberties Conference. OJRC is now a sponsor of the annual conference.

Singh currently serves as the director of the ACLU of Oregon chapter. He is also a member of the American Constitution Society, National Lawyers Guild, and the Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association.

Singh says he will continue to develop OJRC and provide opportunities to students. “We are only scratching the surface of the work we can achieve.”