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New York Law School

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Tiffany Sabal 3L Evening

Grace Agalo-os 3L Evening

Professor Lisa Grumet

Two New York Law School (NYLS) students—**Grace Agalo-os 3L Evening** and **Tiffany Sabal 3L Evening**—have been awarded the AT&T Pro Bono Excellence Scholarship, a \$2,500 scholarship to honor their exemplary pro bono service to those most in need. Assistant Vice President – Senior Legal Counsel of AT&T **Susan McHale-McGahan '90**, who is the former National Chair of AT&T's Pro Bono Committee and currently serves as Co-Chair of AT&T's Northeast Pro Bono Region, reached out to NYLS to award the scholarship to law students “developing a strong commitment to pro bono legal service while in law school” with a goal of fostering a lasting commitment to pro bono service in their future professional practice.”

Working with a committee of NYLS faculty, McHale-McGahan and AT&T identified Agalo-os and Sabal as the 2021–22 recipients for this distinction based on the students' commendable work on behalf of the Marriage License Project. Through the Project, a program of the [Diane Abbey Law Institute for Children and Families](https://www.nyls.edu/academics/specialty-areas/centers-and-institutes/impact-center-for-public-interest-law/diane-abbey-law-institute-for-children-and-families/) (part of the [Wilf Impact Center for Public Interest Law](https://www.nyls.edu/academics/specialty-areas/centers-and-institutes/impact-center-for-public-interest-law/diane-abbey-law-institute-for-children-and-families/)) and The Plumeri Center: New York Law School Legal Services, students provide free legal services to individuals who have been denied a marriage license because they are the victims of identity theft. In these cases, someone else fraudulently used the

individual's name to get married. The Project is overseen by Professor **[Lisa Grumet](https://www.nyls.edu/faculty/lisa-f-grumet/)** (<https://www.nyls.edu/faculty/lisa-f-grumet/>), and was previously managed by **Jarienn James '17** in her former role as Assistant Director of the Wilf Impact Center.

The cases are administrative law proceedings, and typically are decided based on written submissions. However, in this matter, the judge requested a hearing. As students in NYLS's Evening Division, Agalo-os and Sabal work hard to balance their full-time employment during the day with their legal studies at night, and they dedicated many hours to building a successful case for their client. With faculty supervision and support from Professor Grumet and James, the students worked extensively with the client, researched and prepared exhibits, and conducted opening and closing statements as well as direct examinations for three witnesses. They presented the case at a virtual hearing before Judge Joan R. Salzman of New York City's Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings. Judge Salzman ruled from the bench in favor of the students' client, and she praised Agalo-os and Sabal's performance in service of their client.

Professor Grumet also praised the students' work. "I'm proud of the dedication and diligence that Grace and Tiffany showed in this case. They developed a wonderful rapport with their client and the witnesses, stepped up to the challenges, and demonstrated their strong legal skills through every step of the preparation and the hearing. They did an excellent job, and they deserve this recognition for their hard work," she said.

Agalo-os called the experience an invaluable hands-on learning opportunity. She said, "Marriage seems to be an underrepresented topic when it comes to pro bono work, but this case really reminded me of how deeply legal issues can impact someone's life and how important it is for an individual to get fair representation. With Professor Grumet and Jarienn's support throughout the process, I feel that I was able to grow in my skills and knowledge as a future attorney, and I'm proud that we were able to succeed for our client."

For Sabal, the experience was also eye-opening and reinforced her desire to use her legal career to aid individuals and families. She said, "It was a privilege to be a part of this case. This was my first time doing direct examinations and arguing before a judge, and I appreciated the opportunity to gain firsthand, practical knowledge of the hard work and discipline that goes into the preparation for each case. Helping our client and witnessing the tremendous impact we have as advocates strengthened my interest in family law."

As part of the School's longstanding commitment to serving the community, NYLS continues to support law students using their legal education to best serve clients in need through the [Office of Public Interest and Pro Bono Initiatives](https://www.nyls.edu/careers/for-students/public-interest-and-pro-bono/) (<https://www.nyls.edu/careers/for-students/public-interest-and-pro-bono/>).

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