



The State Bar of California Council on Access & Fairness

Achieving Diversity in the Legal Profession

"a view into the pipeline"

Dear Friends:

Season's Greetings and Happy New Year on behalf of the State Bar of California Council on Access & Fairness! We want to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support and contributions to the Elimination of Bias Fund through the payment of your annual attorney dues. Your donations and volunteer support have enabled us to continue our successful statewide efforts to increase diversity along the pipeline into the legal profession.

We need your support now, more than ever.

When you receive your State Bar Dues Statement for 2017, you will notice that the format is different from prior years. The notice is in electronic format and the required dues are at a lower rate. As you may know, because the State Legislature did not approve a Dues Bill for 2017, the State Bar was not able to send out its regular notice. The State Bar had to petition the Supreme Court for authorization to request collection of dues, and the dues for 2017 could only cover discipline-related programs. Our Elimination of Bias Fund was **not** included in this amount, so the Board approved including Elimination of Bias as an add-on in the amount of \$10.

Many of you and your law firms have supported our work and have contributed to the Elimination of Bias Fund on an ongoing basis to help us continue our diversity, access and fairness initiatives. **We ask that you add the \$10 to your 2017 dues.** With your support, we have created a number of programs designed to increase diversity in the legal profession along the full diversity pipeline. Some of these programs include:

High School Law Academies: Eight years ago, we partnered with the California Department of Education to create 6 California Partnership Law Academies, providing a three-year high school curriculum, including a dedicated law class and integrating legal concepts into the other core curriculum. We have grown to 17 high school academies statewide (and are adding new partners every year), with over 1200 attorney and judicial volunteers supporting their local programs. Starting in 2010 with our first graduating seniors, we now estimate over 500 graduates each year educated about the judicial system and legal profession and on the pathway to higher education.

2+2+3 Pathway to Law: Three years ago we created the "2+2+3" Pathway to Law program, a partnership between 29 community colleges, 6 law schools and their undergraduate counterparts. A required law curriculum is offered in the 29 community colleges, and graduates receive a special acknowledgement on their transcripts indicating their completion of the Pathway-to-Law curriculum and their focused studies related to substantive and skills-based courses as preparation for law school and practice. With the first graduating classes among our initial community college partners, we anticipate over 400 community college graduates each year moving along the pathway to a 4-year university and law school.

Implicit Bias Curriculum: We worked with Kimberly Papillon and Rod Fong to create professional development workshops for high school teachers and community college faculty to identify and recognize instances of bias in the classroom and to raise the awareness of and address the issues with their students. As part of the training, the faculty members were assisted with incorporating the materials into their lesson plans so the issues could be part of their regular classroom curriculum.

Shultz Curriculum: We recently received a grant from the California Bar Foundation to develop curriculum for the Community College partners in the 2+2+3 Pathway to Law program tracking the key skill sets identified in the Shultz/Zedek Effective Lawyering study. We will provide interactive lesson plans to help develop the "soft skills" students will need to become effective lawyers.

Mentoring: We are in the process of developing a pilot Mentoring Program for new/young lawyers partnering with local and minority bar associations. The program will enhance the local programs by providing a central technology platform that can be accessed by the local programs to facilitate their administrative and programmatic oversight and development of the programs.

Bar Passage: We are working with a research team comprised of Stanford and Indiana University experts to introduce psychological interventions in the bar exam process to address implicit bias, stereotype threat and other factors impacting the performance on the bar exam by students of color. The team has had success at the undergraduate and high school levels improving performance on standardized tests and is confident that they can also improve bar passage using the same techniques. We will be supporting the pilot bar passage program being implemented through the Bar Foundation and will also be working with law schools to identify ways to enhance their programs to prepare students for the bar exam.

Corporate Roundtable: We will be convening in-house counsel to discuss ways they can help to improve diversity among the law firms they employ, as well as diversity in their own practices.

Judicial Appointments: We continue to provide judicial appointment workshops statewide demystifying the judicial appointments process, as well as mentoring programs providing one-to-one review by former JNE Commissioners and sitting judges and feedback on draft judicial appointments applications.

Judicial Diversity Summit: We convened our third Judicial Summit, which was originally presented in 2006 and followed in 2011. The summit is convened every five years to evaluate the status of diversity among the California judiciary, challenges to increasing diversity and to develop and implement a 5-year action plan to address the challenges. This year, we incorporated an online process called "wind tunneling" to include a broader group of stakeholders to weigh in on these issues. Participation was voluntary and comments were anonymous to encourage candid discussion of the key issues impact judicial diversity. A report and recommendations will be available in 2017.

"Know Your Rights": With the assistance from members of the National Bar Association and our own COAF members, we have presented and will continue to provide programs at the high school law academies focusing on how to respond and interact when detained by the police.

"Walk the Walk": We worked with award-winning filmmaker Abby Ginzberg to produce an elimination-of-bias video that contains various vignettes of actual instances of bias in the workplace. The video includes a packet of materials to provide information on programs that can be created or expanded to address diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Diversity and Education Pipeline Awards: We solicit nominations and provide awards each year to acknowledge entities that provide sustained, exemplary efforts toward increasing diversity in the legal profession, as well as educating students about the justice system and careers in the law.

These are highlights of our ongoing diversity efforts. We are completing our annual strategic planning process and will be updating our three-year plan. We hope you will agree that these are important initiatives deserving of your adding \$10 to your dues payment, so we can continue these programs and others.

If you have any questions or would like to help with further outreach, please feel free to contact Robin Pearson, COAF Chair, at rpearson@pearsonschachterlaw.com or Patricia Lee, Managing Director for Diversity Outreach, at patricia.lee@calbar.ca.gov.

Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,

Robin Pearson

Robin Pearson, Chair
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