

Final Report and Action Plan of the Columbus Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative – 2000-01

I. INTRODUCTION

Since October of 2000, the Managing Partners of twenty of Columbus, Ohio's law firms have convened with leaders of the Columbus Bar Association, the John Mercer Langston Bar Association, and the Deans of the Capital University Law School and The Ohio State University College of Law, in an effort to develop the most accurate assessment of diversity within the ranks of the law firms and to establish a baseline diversity measurement against which future efforts might be compared. The Columbus City Attorney, whose insights and participation are gratefully acknowledged, frequently joined the Managing Partners. The Managing Partners utilized these meetings as education and planning sessions out of which emerged several "best practices" for recruiting and retaining African-American/Black, Asian - Pacific American, Native American Indian, and Hispanic associates and partners in significantly higher numbers than in the past. All agreed that in order for the Columbus community to achieve appreciable changes in the demographic make-up of its major law firms, the members firm must, individually and collectively, commit to some new courses of action that will depart from previous practices.

While this action plan's objectives are directed to increasing racial diversity, we acknowledge that inclusion of diversity in its many facets, including, without limitation, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and differently-abled individuals, enriches us all.

II. HISTORY AND STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

We agreed to join together in this undertaking because it was apparent to each of us that, despite individual efforts and good intentions, we have been unsuccessful in achieving the level of diversity that we wanted to attain.

In 1999 the National Association of Law Placement Directors reported that in Columbus, as elsewhere, there is a substantial statistical disparity between the number of minority associates and partners and their white counterparts in law firm population. This disparity was confirmed in October 2000 by a Managing Partners' survey of the participating members' own firms (19 out of 24 firms responded to the survey). Of the 1,237 attorneys in those 19 Columbus law firms, only twenty-eight attorneys (2%) were African American, four attorneys (.3%) were Hispanic, twelve attorneys (.9%) were Asian American and two attorneys (.1%) were American Indian/Native American.

As attorneys, we understand better than most the meaning of the words "Equal Opportunity." Yet we are acutely aware that, in Columbus, as elsewhere, the legal profession has not achieved sufficient diversity. We are committed to increasing the number of attorneys of color recruited, hired, trained, retained, and invited to join the partnership ranks in Columbus' large, mid-sized and small majority-owned law firms.

We believe that Columbus' law firms must take a leadership role and make positive and determined efforts to achieve needed diversity. The firm's managing partner and/or executive committee, as well as high-level majority members of the firm's hierarchy should vigorously support these programs.

We recognize that individual member firms vary greatly in size, management style and resources. We expect, therefore, that the member firms will adopt different structures, different

programs, and different strategies to guide efforts to achieve the recruitment and hiring objectives enunciated in this plan.

We remain committed to recruiting, hiring, training, retaining, and inviting to partnership African-American/Black, Asian - Pacific American, Native American Indian, and Hispanic attorneys. We understand that the necessary changes will not be achieved by good intentions alone. In order to achieve meaningful, measurable and lasting progress toward greater inclusion of minority legal talent, it is necessary for us to not only commit philosophically to those goals, but also to commit resources, individually and collectively, towards activities that we as a group believe will have a positive impact.

III. STATEMENT OF GOALS AND ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1

The member firms will undertake to recruit, hire, train, and retain law students and/or attorneys of color who meet the requisite hiring and/or partnership admission criteria in an effort to significantly increase the number of attorneys of color recruited, hired, trained, retained, and invited to join the partnership ranks in every one of Columbus' small, mid-sized and large majority-owned law firms.

To achieve meaningful progress toward increasing the number of attorneys of color who practice in Central Ohio law firms, in furtherance of Objective 1, the **member firms, bar association leaders and law school participants** commit, on an annual basis beginning from May 17, 2001, for each of the next five (5) years, to:

- Retain statistics (to the extent it is lawful to do so) concerning the number of law students and lawyers of color who are interviewed at their law firms, receive offers, are hired, and/or are promoted to partnership;
- Report statistical information to the Columbus Bar Association each February on a form substantially similar to the managing partners' October 2000 survey form, concerning the demographic make-up of the member firms, concerning the total number of law students and lawyers who received offers, were hired, and/or were promoted to partnership, as well as the number of law students and lawyers of color who received offers, were hired, and/or were promoted to partnership, and concerning other efforts undertaken by the member firm in furtherance of these objectives;
- Attend a half-day meeting during the month of May each year with other member firm managing partners, bar association leaders and law school deans to share information and experiences, evaluate and analyze results, address and correct shortcomings, and chart the progress made toward implementing the action plan to achieve these objectives; and
- Discuss whether individual firm or aggregate specific numerical interim objectives will be helpful to achieve the recruitment, hiring, retention or promotion objectives of this plan.

To increase the number of offers of employment extended to law students and attorneys of color in furtherance of Objective 1, the **member firms** commit to the following "best practices," whenever practicable:

- Adopt and publicize a commitment to racial and ethnic diversity within the member firms;
- Each firm agrees to evaluate criteria used to evaluate prospects (e.g. class rank requirements, law review membership) to determine whether such requirements serve to disproportionately screen out minority prospects.
- Each of the member firms shall participate in the CBA Minority Clerkship program.
- Each member firm shall endeavor to recruit at regional or national law schools with a significant number of minority law students.
- Identify and recruit students of color through law school placement administrators, faculty members, present or former summer clerks, organizations of law students.
- Recruit more attorneys of color as lateral hires.
- Creating an interfirm candidate referral network wherein law students or attorney applicants may be referred for consideration to other member firms, with the permission of the applicant.
- Explore creating and/or supporting Law Academy programs at the Columbus area secondary schools, collegiate chapters of the Academy for the Columbus area four-year colleges and universities, standardized test (SAT, ACT, LSAT) tutorial assistance, and programs staffed by attorney mentor/volunteers to provide minority students with intensive training in the kinds of research, speaking and writing skills needed in the law school environment.

To increase the number of offers of employment extended to law students and attorneys of color in furtherance of Objective 1, the **bar associations** commit to:

- Maintain, support, publicize, evaluate, and expand a summer employment program for African-American/Black, Asian - Pacific American, Native American Indian, and Hispanic law students at participating law firms, corporate law departments and government agencies.
- Establish, support, coordinate and publicize a sequential series of primary and secondary school law related education, employment and scholarship programs in conjunction with the Columbus Public Schools and suburban school systems to foster interest in careers in the law for students of color.
- Monitor, collect, evaluate and report, on an annual basis, statistics regarding the number of law students and attorneys of color recruited, hired, and promoted by the member law firms; provided, however, that the signatories view firm-specific information as sensitive and intend that data will be used in compilations and information reported in an aggregate fashion or by groups of law firms, so as to foster self-evaluation.
- Collaborate with Ohio State University College of Law, the Capital University Law School, and other interested law schools, to identify and recruit minority law students to the Columbus legal market through correspondence,

brochures, open houses, recruitment fairs directed to high school and college students of color, etc.

- Explore creating and/or supporting the National Institute for Diversity in the Law, Law Academy programs at the Columbus area secondary schools, collegiate chapters of the Academy for the Columbus area four-year colleges and universities, standardized test (SAT, ACT, LSAT) tutorial assistance, and programs staffed by attorney mentor/volunteers to provide minority students with intensive training in the kinds of research, speaking and writing skills used in the law school environment.

To increase the number of offers of employment extended to law students and attorneys of color in furtherance of Objective 1, the **participating law schools** commit to:

- Consistent with sound educational policy, maintain by concrete action a commitment to provide full opportunities for the study of law to students of color, including a special concern for determining the potential of these applicants through the admission process and special recruiting and retention efforts.
- Work with the Columbus Bar Association to recruit minority law students to Columbus through correspondence, brochures, open houses, recruitment fairs, and other organized student activities directed to high school and college students of color.
- Encourage Career Service Offices, law faculty members and administrators to help member firms identify promising law students of color.

OBJECTIVE 2

Each member firm shall establish at least one (1) substantial minority hiring initiative, e.g., a minority law student summer employment program designed to attract and retain minority law graduates for the member firms.

To increase the number of offers of employment extended to law students and attorneys of color in furtherance of Objective 2, the **member firms** commit to select from among the following “best practices:”

- Establish or contribute to, as their respective sizes and abilities permit, a minority law student(s) scholarship program (a) at the law school of the member firm’s choice, (b) at the Columbus Bar Association, or (c) at the Columbus Bar Foundation;
- Establish or maintain a program that awards a paid summer clerkship at the firm following the first year as well as a cash scholarship at the beginning of the second year;
- Establish or maintain, where feasible, a winter clerkship position for a second or third year law student of color, for no more than 15 hours per week;
- Participate in the CBA Minority Clerkship Program, if the member firm is a new participant after May 2001.

OBJECTIVE 3

Each member firm will establish an effective intrafirm associate mentoring program designed to promote retention of all associates, and particularly associates of color, and to facilitate promotion of successful law firm careers. Each member firm will also encourage associates, and particularly their minority associates, to participate in bar association or community mentoring and leadership training programs.

To increase retention and promotion rates for law clerks and attorneys of color in furtherance of Objective 3, **the member firms** commit to implement the following “best practices,” whenever practicable:

- Each member firm shall promote greater sensitivity to the value of racial and ethnic diversity at all levels within the firm.
- Each member firm should develop, monitor and periodically evaluate mentoring programs for minority associates, which programs must go beyond pairing a new minority associate with a more senior associate or partner. The mentoring must be consistent and detailed, covering all aspects of firm culture and life, including, but not limited to:
 - Assist each newly hired attorneys (regardless of race or level) in learning the firm's culture, history, practices and procedures;
 - Ensure that the work environment and work-related social activities with clients are as hospitable and congenial for, and as inclusive of, attorneys of color as they are for all other attorneys;
 - Include all new attorneys in programs that enhance their understanding of business concepts, client relations, client satisfaction, and their confidence in dealing with client matters;
 - Ensure that law clerks and attorneys of color have the same opportunity to (a) perform significant work assignments for important clients, (b) receive interesting and challenging legal work, and (c) receive training, guidance, mentoring, client contact, performance feedback, and other opportunities to grow and succeed; and
 - Adopt mechanisms to monitor progress and compliance with these commitments, including, e.g., internal surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and other appropriate means for identifying problems and/or areas for improvement.
- The member firms will encourage attorney mentors to take on the assignment with the same commitment and vigor as other assignments with evaluation ramifications.
- The member firms will encourage associates, and particularly their minority associates, to participate in bar association or community mentoring, networking and leadership training programs developed in conjunction with minority attorney associations.

To increase the retention and promotion rates for law clerks and attorneys of color in furtherance of Objective 3, the **bar associations** commit to adopt the following “best practices,” whenever practicable:

- Recruit attorneys of color to participate as presenters at bar association sponsored CLE programs, as participants in leadership training programs such as the Barrister Leader Program, as members and chairs of committees, task forces and special projects, and as chairpersons and officers in their leadership structures.
- To make racial and ethnic diversity and inclusiveness an objective as part of their long range plans.
- Cooperate with the member firms in the presentation of an annual fall program for all area law students of color on employment opportunities in the area, followed by a reception and the subsequent scheduling of law firm informational visits by law students of color.
- Create and support bar association or community mentoring, networking and leadership training programs for attorneys of color developed in conjunction with interested professional associations.

OBJECTIVE 4

Each member firm will work to create and/or support a mechanism as part of their firm management structure, whose focus shall be to promote the member firms' diversity efforts.

To increase retention and promotion rates for law clerks and attorneys of color in furtherance of Objective 4, the **member firms** commit to adopt the following "best practices," whenever practicable:

- Each member firm should create a mechanism for promoting diversity within the firm, such as the creation of a standing Diversity Committee which will meet regularly throughout the year for the purposes of devising, promoting and guiding the firm's diversity programs. In the absence of a formal diversity committee, the managing partner should actively promote the firm's diversity effort within the firm; in firms with a formal diversity committee, the committee should be diverse and the managing partner should serve and be active on the committee.
- Each member firm should implement and participate in programs, including, but not limited to, the CBA Minority Clerkship Program, socials and/or luncheons with minority law student groups, recruiting visits to Ohio law schools, development of an intrafirm strategic plan intended to increase minority representation within the member firm, and various diversity publications.
- Each member firm should seek to include minority representation on the hiring and associate evaluation committees.

OBJECTIVE 5

Each member firm should create at least one prominent and several small-scale marketing and/or recruiting pieces highlighting the firm's concern for and commitment to diversity and soliciting applications from law students and practitioners of color.

To communicate the member firms' commitment to diversity, and to raise awareness of the member firms' efforts both within and outside the Columbus legal community in furtherance of Objective 5, the **member firms** commit to adopt the following "best practices," to the extent practicable:

- Those member firms with minority associates and/or partners will make concerted efforts to publicize the presence of their minority personnel in the member firms' recruiting and marketing materials, and, where appropriate to the message, the materials may express a commitment to diversity.
- The member firms shall explore creating a navigation link on their respective web sites which discusses the firm's efforts at increasing diversity, highlight the accomplishments of their minority associates and partners, and actively solicit the resumes of minority law students and practitioners.
- The recruiting coordinator for each member firm may contact the leaders of the minority law student organizations at law schools where the firms recruit to inform them of the member firm's efforts toward increasing diversity, to invite minority law students to submit resumes, and to identify and, where appropriate, to interview selected applicants.
- Each member firm will review its marketing and recruiting materials and discuss its diversity efforts and its commitment to increasing diversity within the firm in its marketing and recruiting materials.

To communicate the bar association's concern for and commitment to diversity, and to raise awareness of the member firms' efforts both within and outside the Columbus legal community in furtherance of Objective 5, the **bar associations** commit to:

- The Columbus Bar Association will create an internet feature on its website. The proposed link will include a minority law students resume bank and will post job openings at the area member firms.
- The member firms will assist the CBA in producing a short videotape or CD to be distributed to Ohio and select non-Ohio law schools from which member firms recruit. These videos should be housed in the law schools' career services offices and will focus on the Columbus community and Columbus' efforts at increasing diversity during the past year.

OBJECTIVE 6

Each member firm's leadership shall participate, and its partners and associates should be encouraged to participate, in racial and ethnic/cultural sensitivity and diversity training programs.

To demonstrate the **member firms'** concern for and commitment to greater racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion in furtherance of Objective 6, the member firms commit to, whenever practicable:

- Before March 1, 2002, each member firm should arrange a diversity training seminar/program conducted by an outside consultant for the management group attorneys and committee chairs.

- Each member firm should encourage its attorneys and legal professionals to attend diversity training seminars and/or continuing legal education programs on the topics of racial and ethnic sensitivity and diversity.

To demonstrate the **bar associations'** concern for and commitment to greater racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion in furtherance of Objective 6, the bar associations commit to:

- Before March 1, 2002, the officers and leadership of the CBA and JMLBA should work together to arrange a diversity training seminar/program conducted by an outside consultant for the officers, board members, committee chairs and executive staff members.
- Include diversity and/or sensitivity training in continuing legal education offerings as part of the association's programming for professionalism.
- Seek and identify attorney search firms operated by lawyers of color and attorney search firms with success in the recruitment and placement of lawyers of color.
- Seek to identify diversity training/seminar consultants with success in conducting such training, for the benefit of member firms.

OBJECTIVE 7

The member firms and bar associations will explore creating a Diversity Initiative Development Coordinator position, either housed at the Columbus Bar Association or at a free-standing foundation, whose purpose shall be, *inter alia*, to (1) attract talented minority secondary school, college and law students and law graduates to the Columbus legal market; (2) monitor, analyze and report progress by member firms on an annual basis; (3) collect, study, maintain and disseminate information about evolving "best practices" aimed at recruitment, hiring, retention and promotion of diverse and inclusive legal talent; (4) consult, individually or collectively, and to work with managing partners, hiring and evaluation committees on diversity initiatives; and (5) create, maintain and share with member firms a resume bank and data base of minority law students and attorneys.

Once developed and approved by a majority of the member firms, we anticipate that member firms will be asked to contribute annually for five years toward the hiring and retention of the Diversity Coordinator (DC).¹

The DC's primary responsibility will be to work closely with the Columbus legal community, bar associations, law schools and other interested parties, to enhance Columbus' image as a diverse and inclusive legal community. The DC would act as the liaison between the bar associations, member firms, the Chamber of Commerce, community-based organizations and law schools, assisting in the development and execution of their law-related diversity programs. The DC's responsibilities would include, but not be limited to the following:

¹ The member law firms and the bar association should explore alternative approaches to fund the DC position from law firm, corporate, bar association and foundation sources. Nonetheless, based upon their size and ability, we anticipate that each member firm should make a pledge of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 per year. Firm size should be the dominant influence in the size of the financial pledge.

- Establish recruiting networks with other metro and state bar associations.
- Create partnerships with minority attorney bar associations.
- Travel to nationally ranked law schools to recruit minority students to Columbus law firms
- Develop new alliances and partnerships with area educational institutions, businesses and community associations to promote the diversity message
- Host visiting minority law students in Columbus for interviews
- The member firms anticipate that the DC shall be available to mentors and associates in the mentoring programs as an outside contact, confidant and advisor.
- Organize social programs and events for young minority professionals working in the Columbus area
- Serve as a professional development counselor and networking conductor for minority associates already working in Columbus
- Organize social programs and events for young minority professionals in the Columbus area

IV. ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Managing Partners have agreed that, in order to facilitate future meetings and activities in furtherance of these objectives, it might be helpful to designate an advisory committee comprised of representatives from several firms and from the bar association leadership. Ben Zox, Richard Simpson, Mike Zatezalo, Mike Carpenter, Steve Bahls, and Carl Smallwood shall serve as members of the advisory committee for one year. Thereafter, in May of each year, the Managing Partners shall determine who will serve on the advisory committee, giving due regard to including representatives from different sized law firms.

V. CONCLUSION

The undersigned have signed this Final Report and Action Plan of the Columbus Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative this 17th day of May, 2001, to evidence their commitment to the diversity objectives and to the steps to meet those objectives, as are set forth herein.

Arter & Hadden LLP

Baker & Hostetler LLP

By: _____

By: _____

Blaugrund Herbert & Martin, Inc.

Buckingham Doolittle & Burroughs, LLP

By: _____

By: _____

Bricker & Eckler LLP

By: _____

Chester Willcox & Saxbe LLP

By: _____

Isaac Brant Ledman & Teetor

By: _____

Kegler Brown Hill & Ritter

By: _____

Luper Sheriff & Neidenthal

By: _____

Porter Wright Morris & Arthur, LLP

By: _____

Schottenstein Zox & Dunn

By: _____

Vorys Sater Seymour and Pease LLP

By: _____

Carlile Patchen & Murphy, LLP

By: _____

Crabbe Brown & James

By: _____

Jones Day Reavis & Pogue

By: _____

Lane Alton & Horst LLC

By: _____

Maguire & Schneider LLP

By: _____

Squire Sanders & Dempsey LLP

By: _____

Thompson Hine LLP

By: _____

Zeiger & Carpenter

By: _____

Wiles Boyle Burkholder &
Bringardner Co., LPA

By: _____

Columbus Bar Association

By: _____

John Mercer Langston Bar Association

By: _____

Capital University Law School

By: _____

Ohio State University College of Law

By: _____