

Action Plan of the Columbus Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative (2006–2010)

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Since 2000-2001, the Managing Partners of twenty-two of Columbus, Ohio's law firms, leaders of the Columbus Bar Association and the John Mercer Langston Bar Association, and the Deans of Capital University Law School and The Ohio State University College of Law have worked to impact diversity in a positive way within the Columbus legal community under the directive of the "Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative." In the Diversity Initiative's original five-year plan, all parties agreed that in order for the Columbus community to achieve appreciable changes in the demographic make-up of its member law firms, these firms must, individually and collectively, commit to a new course of action that is a departure from previous practices. As of January 2006, the Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative achieved the following results at participating firms:

- Since 2000, the number of attorneys of color has more than doubled, increasing from 46 to the current 102.
- The number of attorneys of color at the partnership level has increased from 14 to 28.
- Representation of attorneys of color has increased in firms of every size since 2000. Small firms increased from 1.3 to 7 percent (3 to 27); medium-sized firms increased from 5.8 to 7.12 percent (16 to 22); large law firms increased from 3.7 to 6.3 percent (27 to 53).

The 2006-2010 action plan builds on the success of the original plan while introducing strategies to both sustain and leverage the reported traction against recruitment and advancement. Based on the successful recruitment efforts of the member firms, the 2006- 2010 action plan realigns some of the strategic focus to retention, while maintaining that a keen focus on recruiting attorneys of color remains critical. To strategically and successfully impact retention, the 2006-2010 action plan recommends that, first, there is a need to focus on retaining attorneys of color; and, second, specific attention should be given to securing the partnership pipeline by retaining high performing mid-level attorneys of color. Recruitment is the first milestone and retention the second on the journey to achieve the original plan's commitment to recruit, hire, train, retain, and invite to partnership African-American/Black, Asian-Pacific American, Native American Indian, and Hispanic attorneys.¹ This action plan requires re-

¹ The plan maintains the ongoing commitment of the signatory members to recruit, hire, train, retain, and invite to partnership African-American/Black, Asian-Pacific American, Native American Indian, and Hispanic attorneys. While this action plan's objectives are directed toward increasing racial diversity, the member firms acknowledge that inclusion and diversity in its many facets include, without limitation, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and differently-abled individuals.

engagement by all parties to successfully “re-recruit” current attorneys of color to positively impact the second milestone – retention.

The specific best practices adopted by member firms should be modified to be firm-specific and tailored to meet the particular needs of the firm. All objectives should include a component for measuring success and tracking progress. These measures will need to be firm-specific. While accountability will ultimately be an individual firm, law school, and bar association undertaking of the strategic initiatives, there is a powerful impact that can collectively be made on the City of Columbus being perceived as a “diverse community of lawyers.” Through collective efforts that are aligned with the same overarching commitment, Columbus can market itself as a community of lawyers that understands and leverages the concepts of diversity and inclusion.

The main areas of focus for the 2006-2010 Action Plan will include: Retention, Recruitment, Law Firm Culture, and Infrastructure for Inclusion.

II. STATEMENT OF GOALS AND ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

A. Retention

The 2000-2005 Diversity Initiative was a success in that the representation of minority attorneys increased across member firms. Although firms need to continue to focus on increasing the number of minorities hired, the challenge and goal now becomes retaining those minority attorneys who were recently hired, as well as securing the minority partnership pipeline. Retaining talent is a function of understanding the drivers of attrition and the reasons for “regretted-losses” (voluntary departures of attorneys the firm would have liked to retain) and then creating strategies to eliminate them. Retention strategies must be focused on the new and current associate as well as the mid-level associate who is beginning an ascent into the pipeline for partnership. Retention should be viewed as an ongoing “re-recruitment” of associates. Member firms should establish internal benchmarks to track attrition and retention. Some recommended actions with regard to this strategic focus on retention involve providing robust feedback, encouraging effective mentoring relationships (formal and informal), increasing a high level of trust, consistent “re-recruitment” and “re-engagement”.

Objective 1: Continue to Retain New and More Experienced Attorneys of Color

Objective 2: Increase Retention of High Potential Mid-Level Attorneys of Color to Secure the Partnership Pipeline

B. Recruitment

Recruiting minority lawyers should continue to be an important goal and area of strategic focus for the Columbus Bar Association and the member law firms. Member firms

should continue to participate in the Minority Clerkship program and continue to build the skills and competencies of those involved in their recruiting efforts. Additionally, it will be critical for member firms to attract candidates by selling the firm and the City of Columbus, as a “diverse community of lawyers.” This will need to be a collective effort on behalf of the bar associations, the member firms, and the law school signatories.

To this end, member firms should continue to recruit and hire law students and/or attorneys of color in an effort to significantly increase the representation of this talent across the ranks (including partnership) in every one of Columbus’ small, mid-sized, and large majority-owned law firms. The member law schools should continue to undertake efforts to recruit a diverse student population in order to increase the number of offers of employment extended to law students and attorneys of color. The bar associations should continue efforts to build the brand image of the City of Columbus as a “diverse community of lawyers” collectively invested in the success of all its members (among and between law firms/schools). (Please note that the “diverse community of lawyers” recommendation is detailed in Objective 8.)

Objective 3: Continue to Improve Recruitment and Hiring Practices for Attorneys of Color (Law Firms)

Objective 4: Continue to Recruit a Diverse Student Population (Law Schools)

Objective 5: Impact and Support the Recruitment of Law Students and Attorneys of Color (Bar Associations)

C. Law Firm Culture

The traction created by past and current recruitment efforts will be maximized through the firms’ ability to consistently have a welcoming environment. Member firms must commit to creating and maintaining a work environment that allows attorneys of color to thrive and advance their legal careers. The perceptions of the environment are driven by the actions and behaviors of the people within the environment. To this end, the actions and behaviors of all must be consistent with the firms’ policies on diversity and inclusion in order to foster open and trusting relationships.

Managing Partner involvement is a critical success factor for this initiative. Recommendations to member firms include continued managing partner involvement, providing education and training that focus on building diversity competence and skill, encouraging professional relationships that are built upon a high level of trust, and ensure firm-wide involvement in the diversity and inclusion efforts.

Objective 6: Foster a diverse and inclusive firm culture

D. Infrastructure for Inclusion

The Columbus Bar Association and member firms will coordinate efforts to establish consistent processes for sustaining collective progress against the Initiative's diversity/inclusion objectives, including, but not limited to the following:

- Create a tailored individual diversity and inclusion strategic plan that includes measurable actions. The strategies should align with the 2006-2010 Action Plan while including each firm's own distinctive goals around diversity and inclusion.
- Actively participate in the ongoing advisory committee comprised of representatives from several firms and from the bar association leadership.
- Track and report annually relevant demographic information to the Columbus Bar Association in order to better understand both individual areas of opportunity as well as those of the aggregate Columbus legal community.
- Sustain and continue to build the Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative through appropriate financial support related to program implementation.
- Attend a half-day meeting each year with other member firm managing partners, bar association leaders, and law school deans to share information and experiences, evaluate and analyze results, monitor progress, and celebrate successes.

And finally, the signatory bar associations, member firms, and law schools agree to create and promote a brand image that conveys the investment all interested parties have in Columbus as a "diverse community of lawyers." Marketing efforts focused on diversity/inclusion will impact the recruitment of law students, law clerks, and attorneys of color, build goodwill throughout the legal community, and enhance new business development. To this end, collective success hinges on the appeal of the overall community.

Objective 7: Continue efforts to create an infrastructure for ownership and accountability

Objective 8: Align efforts to ensure Columbus is viewed as a "diverse community of lawyers"

III. COMMITMENT BY SIGNATURE

The undersigned have signed this 2006-2010 Columbus Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative Action Plan the 23rd day of May, 2006, to evidence their continued commitment to the diversity objectives and the steps for meeting those objectives as set forth herein.



COLUMBUS BAR ASSOCIATION

Signatories for the Columbus Bar Association's
Managing Partners Diversity Initiative
2006 - 2010

Bailey Cavaliere LLC
Baker & Hostetler LLP
Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff LLP
Bricker & Eckler LLP
Buckingham Doolittle & Burroughs, LLP
Carlile Patchen & Murphy LLP
Carpenter & Lipps LLP
Chester Willcox & Saxbe LLP
Crabbe Brown & James LLP
Hahn Loeser + Parks LLP
Isaac Brant Ledman & Teetor LLP
Jones Day
Kegler Brown Hill & Ritter
Lane Alton & Horst, LLC
Luper Neidenthal & Logan LPA
Maguire & Schneider LLP
Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP
Reminger & Reminger Co., LPA
Schottenstein Zox & Dunn Co., LPA
Squire Sanders & Dempsey LLP
Thompson Hine LLP
Vorys Sater Seymour and Pease LLP
Wiles Boyle Burkholder & Bringardner Co., LPA
Capital University Law School
Columbus Bar Association
John Mercer Langston Bar Association
Ohio State University Moritz College of Law
Columbus City Attorney