

Historic Managing Partners Diversity Initiative Extended Through 2010

Reporting twice as many minority attorneys in Columbus law firms since 2000, the Columbus Bar announced a new five year commitment - and a host of new strategies - for area law firms, law schools and the Columbus Bar to continue their historic public pledge to build a more diverse legal community in Central Ohio.

"For five years the Columbus legal community has powered a comprehensive effort to recruit, retain and promote talented minority attorneys, an effort reflected in firms of every size from twice the number of minority partners to twice the minority summer clerks," said Sally Bloomfield, president of the Columbus Bar. "This is the signal year we get to leverage the passion of the original Managing Partner's Diversity Initiative with superior knowledge about how to improve in the next five years, specifically, retainment efforts and continued changes in firm culture."

The Columbus Bar's effort is seen as a model program for bar associations across the country, and has been recognized locally, statewide and nationally, including the 2003 "Diversity Champion" award from United Way, the 2005 "Achievement Award" from the Ohio Society of Association Executives, and the 2003 "Partnership Award" from the American Bar Association.

Annual survey results from the 24 participating law firms show significant increases in attorneys of color at every level compared to 2000, the first year statistics were collected. From 2000 to 2006:

- Minority partners increased 100 percent, from 14 to 28
- Minority associates increased 119 percent from 31 to 68;
- Minority summer associates increased 100 percent from 19 to 38;
- Minority attorneys overall increased 117 percent from 47 to 102;
- Small firms increased minority attorney representation from 1.3 percent to 7 percent (3 to 27);
- Medium-sized firms from 5.8 percent to 7.12 percent (16 to 22);
- Large law firms from 3.8 percent to 6.8 percent (27 to 53).
- Of the 229 attorneys hired in Columbus since 2000, 24 percent were lawyers of color.

"Minority representation in our firms is clearly much better in 2006 than 2000, but the reality is we've also seen some excellent minority attorneys choose to leave this year. Recruitment is a vital step - and we've gotten good at it - but long-term diversity also requires building an environment for success and satisfaction that keeps minority attorneys wanting to stay," said George Hairston, managing partner of Baker & Hostetler and chairman of the Diversity Initiative Advisory Board.

"The new initiative continues our areas of success, but directs us to new strategies for making law firms happier and healthier for all attorneys," Hairston said.

Today's recommitment includes twenty four law firms, the John Mercer Langston Bar Association (comprised primarily of African American attorneys), The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, Capital University Law School, and the Columbus Bar.

The 2006-10 action plan restates the commitment to recruit, hire, train, retain and invite to partnership attorneys who are African-American/Black, Asian-Pacific American, Native American

Indian and Hispanic. It sets forth a menu of best practices that emphasizes four areas: retention, recruitment, law firm culture and infrastructure for inclusion. Each participating organization agrees to write a diversity plan with measurable results based on the best practices that meets its specific needs. Those plans will be reported to and supported by the Columbus Bar. The participants also agree to create and promote an image of Columbus as a "diverse community of lawyers." Examples of best practices include:

- Conduct "regretted loss" study (voluntary departures of associates the firm would have liked to retain) and implement actions to reduce regretted loss;
- Create focused development plans for high-performing attorneys of color on partnership track;
- Measure and analyze the utilization of attorneys of color by designated clients;
- Link effective mentor participation to performance and incentive compensation;
- Recruit attorneys of color to present at CLEs;
- Establish a winter clerkship position for law students of color;
- Develop marketing tools that highlight Columbus's "diverse community of lawyers" as tools that law schools and law firms can use in recruitment efforts;
- Reward participation in leadership roles in the firm's ongoing diversity initiative with billable hour credit as appropriate.

"We've made a great start at institutionalizing diversity and inclusion in the Columbus legal community, but it is just that - a promising start - in a continuing challenge we are deeply committed to," Hairston said.

Participants in the 2006-10 Managing Partners' Diversity Initiative are Bailey Cavalieri, Baker & Hostetler, Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff, Blaugrund Herbert & Martin, Bricker & Eckler, Buckingham Doolittle & Burroughs, Carlile Patchen & Murphy, Carpenter & Lipps, Chester Willcox & Saxbe, Crabbe Brown & James, Hahn Loeser & Parks, Isaac Brant Ledman & Teetor, Jones Day, Kegler Brown Hill & Ritter, Lane Alton & Horst, Luper Neidenthal & Logan, Maguire & Schneider, Porter Wright Morris & Arthur, Reminger & Reminger, Schottenstein Zox & Dunn, Squire Sanders & Dempsey, Thompson Hine, Vorys Sater Seymour and Pease, and Wiles Boyle Burkholder & Bringardner. Additional participants include: Capital University Law School, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law and the John Mercer Langston Bar Association.