NYSBA - Family Law Section Diversity Plan

Proposed Diversity Initiatives

- **Panel Discussion and Networking Social – Fall 2011**
  1. We will host an interactive panel discussion along with a cocktail reception and networking event in Manhattan.
  2. Panelists:
     a. Panelists will consist of a diverse group of practicing family law attorneys (and judges or referees) representing diverse ethnic/racial backgrounds, who work as a solo practitioner or at a law firm, who focus on divergent areas of family law, and with various years of experience.
     b. The panelists will focus on the following issues:
        i. What are the various areas that make-up Family Law?
        ii. How does a new lawyer get started in the area of Family Law?
        iii. What challenges do family law practitioners face?
  3. Attendance:
     a. We anticipate 30 – 50 attendees.
     b. Our target attendees will be minority judges from the five boroughs, Westchester and Long Island; minority lawyers and young lawyers; and third year law students.
     c. Outreach will be targeted to other minority bar associations and minority law student groups such as BALSA, LALSA, SALSA and APALSA.
  4. Membership Goals
     a. We hope to get 5- 7 new section memberships from this event.

- **Executive Committee Diversity Seats**
  1. It is proposed that the following Diversity Seats be created on the Executive Committee
     a. 2 from under-represented minority groups
     b. 1 under age 35 (in addition to the Young Lawyer Liaison)
     c. 2 whose practices consist primarily of work in the Family Courts
  2. This is not intended to directly draw in new members of the section, but to increase the diversity on the Executive Committee and promote continuing diversity in future years.

- **CLE Roadshow – Spring/Summer/Fall 2012**
  1. Our CLE committee will develop a CLE Roadshow intended to serve as a practical resource for those attorneys who cannot regularly attend our large CLE programs due to location and/or cost.
  2. These CLEs will be hosted at a local bar association, library or law firm and will involve a small group seminar type session that will target specific areas of family law, provide nuts and bolts information and trouble shoot issues presented by the attendees.

3. The CLE Roadshows may be presented by only one attorney or up to three attorneys on a volunteer basis. It is intended to be low cost, highly interactive and practical and will target remote or highly diverse areas of the state.

- **Family Law Internship/Fellowship** – Fall 2012
  1. We propose the creation of a Family Law Internship or Fellowship that would allow recent law graduates or current second or third year law students to work for a semester in a matrimonial/family law firm or the matrimonial department of a law firm. It is often difficult for recent graduates to gain experience in the family law area directly from experienced practitioners. They are often left to learn on their own by working on pro bono cases or through their own trial and error. An internship or fellowship program would provide a great opportunity for a new lawyer to learn the area of law, and provide a sponsoring firm with assistance on their matters at little additional cost.
  2. Interns/Fellows would receive a modest stipend of $5,000 (more if sponsors can be secured; or if sponsoring firms are willing to match funds)
  3. There should be 2 interns/fellows selected from downstate and 2 from upstate.
  4. This type of program would add high visibility to the Family Law Section amongst law students and would entice more to join the section. In fact, application to the Program can require that the applicant join the section.
  5. The program would target those law schools with high minority student populations.

- **Summer Meeting Scholarships**

  We propose that the Family Law Section offer scholarships to allow first time attendees or new lawyers (defined as being admitted in NY for 5 years or less) to attend the summer meeting. Scholarships would cover registration fees and 50% of basic accommodations.

- **Mentor Program**
  1. We propose the creation of a Mentor Program within the Family Law Section target towards newly admitted attorneys with up to five years of experience.
  2. This was an idea that was echoed by several other sections and we propose working together to create a sustainable Mentor Program .

Diversity Committee Co-Chairs
Sharon T. Hoskins
Peter Cedeno