Real Property Law Section Diversity Challenge:

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The Real Property Law Section leadership has recognized for several years that we have a "graying" Section profile and that the demographics of the legal profession are more diverse amongst those who have more recently graduated from law school. Hence we are focusing our energies upon actively seeking out ways to entice newer members of the profession and students who are still in law school.

Some of these efforts may be summarized as follows

1. Section Membership and Diversity Committees

Our New Co-Chair for Membership Downstate is not only a recipient of the Brooklyn Bar Association Distinguished Service Award, but also heads their Association's Young Lawyers Committee and is very well networked with young lawyer groups

Secondly, we have made all District Representatives members of our Membership Committee. Although not exclusively younger lawyers, historically the DRs have had a higher percentage of non-partners than those who have Co-Chaired substantive Committees where more experience may have been vital to obtaining recognition in the profession. As part of this effort we have asked all DRs to contact their local bar associations and enter into dialogues with any Young Lawyer Chairs of local bars.

We also have created a Diversity Committee composed of both Membership Co-Chairs, the Section Chair, the Secretary (who is also a former Membership Co-Chair) and other active members of our Executive Committee. A primary goal is to establish contact with and attend programs of local Minority Bar Associations

2. Law Schools

Historically the Section has had a strong relationship with St John's University Law School, and members of that School's Real Property Law Society have served as the student editors of our Section's Journal. 2 professors from the Law School serve on the Section's Executive Committee where they actively participate as Co-Chairs of substantive committees [(i)Bankruptcy and Workouts and (ii) our Journal]

Last year we added a professor at Pace Law School (we had had a DR from the PLS faculty a few years ago) and held an event for Pace LS students in NYC as part of the NYSBA January 2010 Annual Meeting.

This year for our Biennial Taxation for Real Estate Lawyers CLE program we named a Professor from Brooklyn Law School as Co-Chair, and he has used his contacts with other law schools to locate Professors from Hofstra, Albany and Buffalo Law Schools to present the ethics portion. In addition, the Brooklyn Law Professor advises that 3 of his colleagues and he would like further interaction with our Section: an overture we intend to aggressively pursue.

In addition, we are actively working with Brooklyn and Pace Law Schools to create a Real Property Law Section Student Internship Program We are very pleased that many firms that have agreed to host law student interns and hope to make this a statewide program to encourage young lawyers from across the state to join our Section.

We believe strongly that being identified with law schools and their will enhance the credibility and positive image of the Section, and will help us identify people for both membership and leadership positions within the Section.

3 . Contacts with Local Bar Associations

Again we have asked our District Representatives (and suggested to all members of the Executive Committee) that they be actively involved with the Real Property Committees of their local Bar Associations

4. Public Interest Lawyers

For the past 5 years we have had a Public Interest Committee which has had Co-Chairs from the Empire Justice Center, Hudson Valley Legal Services and Legal Services for NYC. The Committee members offer exposure to what are clearly different or substantive law viewpoints from those traditionally associated with our Executive Committee and afford additional networking exposure. For example: one of the lawyers, formerly with the Western New York Law Center where she was in charge of the Mayor of Buffalo's Anti-Flipping Task Force is now with the US Attorney's Office in WNY where she is leads the civil component of a new mortgage fraud program in WNY . Also, we find that many of the staff attorneys employed by legal services organizations are young, and in some instance their employer will pay for Bar Association membership.

5. NYSBA related activities

We have consistently enthusiastically participated in NYSBA sponsored initiatives. In the past we established a scholarship through the Bar Foundation to support minority interns with Public Interest law organizations , as well as participating with the efforts of multiple Association Presidents with their boat rides on the Hudson for young lawyers , and the Diversity Reception which is part of the January Annual meeting

Also, in the past few weeks we have actively canvassed our Executive Committee members to provide coverage for the NYSBA recently arranged "nights" at multiple law schools.

6. Lorraine Power Tharp Scholarship

This is a scholarship awarded by our section annually to a second or third year law student who best exemplifies the core values important to Lorraine Power Tharp – academic excellence, a demonstrated interest in public service, high integrity, and if possible, an interest in real property law. The recipient receives the award at the annual meeting and is invited to attend our meetings which we hope will foster an interest in becoming an active member of the Section.