NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Best Practices from the Section Diversity Challenge Champions

NYSBA

2012 President's Section Diversity Challenge

Working Together, Everything Fits

NYSBA

THE DIVERSITY CHALLENGE

The New York State Bar Association President's Section Diversity Challenge: In 2011, NYSBA President Vincent E. Doyle III challenged NYSBA Sections to develop and execute initiatives to increase the diversity of their membership, leadership and programs, and to evaluate the results. The Committees on Membership and Diversity and Inclusion were tasked with coordinating the initiative. The Challenge began in June 2011 and concluded in March 2012.

The primary objectives of the Challenge were for each initiative to be:

- Appropriate for the Section
- Executed well
- Evaluated

Secondary objectives were:

- To encourage communication, coordination and support between Sections, the Membership Committee and the Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- To establish a framework for continuing diversity efforts

Congratulations to all our Section Diversity Challenge Winners!!!!

1st Place Winners – Section Diversity Champions

Commercial and Federal Litigation | Corporate Counsel | Dispute Resolution | Entertainment, Arts and Sports Law | Environmental Law | Health Law | Labor and Employment Law | Torts, Insurance and Compensation Law | Trial Lawyers | Young Lawyers

2nd Place Winners – Section Diversity Leaders

Business Law | Criminal Justice | Family Law | Intellectual Property Law | International | Real Property Law | Tax Law | Trusts and Estates Law

3rd Place Winners – Section Diversity Supporters

Antitrust Law | Elder Law | Food, Drug and Cosmetic Law | General Practice | Judicial | Municipal Law | Senior Lawyers

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The President's Section Diversity Challenge Committee

Vincent E. Doyle III, President

Co-Chair Glenn Lau-Kee
Co-Chair Sherry Levin Wallach
Earamichia Brown
Kathryn Grant Madigan
Seymour W. James, Jr.
Betty Lugo
Ellen Makofsky
Patricia L. R. Rodriquez
Kenneth G. Standard

Staff Liaisons
Mark Wilson
Patricia K. Wood

Best Practices from the Section Diversity Champions

Selected excerpts from final Diversity Challenge reports

Torts, Insurance and Compensation Law (TICL)

Goals

The Torts, Insurance and Compensation Law ("TICL") Section put together an ambitious and comprehensive plan in response to the Bar Association's Diversity Challenge. The plan included (1) hosting a diversity reception; (2) executing several "Strength by Association: Mentoring for Diversity" seminars; (3) ensuring increased speaker diversity in all TICL-sponsored continuing legal education; (4) increasing membership recruitment and outreach; and (5) collaborating with minority bar associations on future projects.

Success

The "Strength by Association" Series is a continuing TICL conversation on diversity and mentoring that started at their Summer Meeting in Bar Harbor, Maine, in August 2011. In November 2011, TICL hosted another "Strength by Association" program, this time in Brooklyn, on "Mentoring and the Power of Diversity" which featured prominent minority jurists, an entire minority panel and offered free 1.5 MCLE hours. The "Strength by Association" series continued that important conversation again in January 2012 at NYSBA Annual Meeting with a discussion titled "Strength by Association – Recruitment and Retention of the Diverse Associate and Partner."

The Section also expanded its outreach to Upstate New York. A networking wine-tasting event was held in Albany, targeting diverse attorneys. In October, the Section co-sponsored a program with the Minority Bar Association of Western New York in Buffalo, inviting non-Section, diverse members. The Section actively participated in NYSBA law school events held at Albany, Brooklyn, New York Law, Cardozo, Buffalo, Syracuse and Pace.

What was the best part of the Challenge for the Section? The Challenge served as an opportunity for our Section to expand its horizons and add fresh blood (and perspective) to the Executive Committee. The NYSBA Section Diversity Challenge provided our Section with a revised platform to spread the TICL Section's message of inclusion. Because of the Challenge, we have several new members of the Executive Committee who have already proven invaluable to not just the Section's diversity efforts, but to our work as a whole.

Environmental Law

Goals

The Section set a goal of continuing to implement and re-evaluate its Diversity Plan (adopted in 2004). This had implications for this year as well as future years.

- Continuing to co-sponsor the Minority Fellowship Program in Environmental Law by co-sponsoring at least two minority fellows for the summer of 2012.
- Providing diverse speaker panels and ensuring that the planners of any program co-sponsored are supplied with the Section's guidelines for selecting speakers and diversity goals.
- Recruiting young lawyers and law students as part of encouraging age and experience level diversity as well as broader diversity.

Success

- The Section amended its Diversity Plan to specifically identify sexual orientation as a diversity characteristic.
- The Section fulfilled its goal of co-sponsoring at least two minority fellows for the summer of 2012. This will be a standing goal of the Section in future years.
- The Section was successful in coordinating with program co-sponsors to ensure that planners of any program Section were provided with the Section's guidelines. The Section recognizes that increasing speaker panel diversity is an important area that it needs to continue working on. To that end, the Section appointed diversity liaisons to the Section's Cabinet, with the intention of continuing to institutionalize the necessary changes.
- The Section was successful in expanding its efforts with respect to law students. The Section provided for at least ten law students to attend its fall meeting free of charge and visited several law schools throughout the state. The Section also invited law students to its Environmental Law Update program and cocktail reception following the program on the Thursday evening of the Association's Annual Meeting. Provisions for law students to attend Section meetings will continue to be made in the future on a meeting-by-meeting basis. Law schools will also be targeted on an annual basis.

What was the best part of the Challenge for the Section? The Section appreciated being able to share its recent successes with the Association, and the ability to look to other Sections for quality advice on similar successes. We hope that this spirit of collaboration continues into the future, and we look forward to working with the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion.

Labor and Employment Law

Goals

- Further develop our existing Diversity Fellowship Program by scheduling events for current and former fellows and further integrating past fellows into the life of the Section.
- Establish a LGBT subcommittee of our existing EEO Committee to emphasize the Section's commitment to this diverse community.
- Update and expand our existing diverse speakers list and increase diversity of speakers at the Annual Meeting.
- Incorporate our focus on diversity into the newly approved mentoring program established by the Section, for example, by giving priority to diverse mentee candidates.
- Strengthen our Section's connections with law schools through better use of our law school liaisons and other appropriate measures.
- Increase the number of executive committee members from diverse backgrounds.
- Increase the number of chairs for our committees and subcommittees from diverse communities.

Success

- All goals accomplished, except for "strengthen law school connections." This goal continues.

What was the best part of the Challenge for the Section? Being able to change the demographics of our leadership and incorporating our fellows into Section activities and leadership to a greater extent than in the past.

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Corporate Counsel

Goals

- Establish and promote a Restricted Fund within the New York Bar Foundation with an initial contribution of $10,000 from our Section's surplus. The Fund will provide an annual grant to a non-profit organization to fund a law student for a summer internship with a $6,000 stipend. Raise an additional $10,000 in donations.
- Establish an active alumni group from the Section's existing Kenneth G. Standard Diversity Internship Program of 32 past interns. Establish a central database with the information available to all Section members; recruit a Diversity Internship Alumni Committee to maintain the database and oversee the program; work with the Alumni Committee to interview and/or survey our alumni on how to shape the alumni initiative; establish a program for alumni to act as mentors on an annual basis; establish a program for more senior Section members to mentor alumni; establish a program to provide free Section membership to all alumni for a two-year period to encourage their continued involvement with the Section; and create an alumni liaison position on the Section's executive committee.
- Conduct a survey to collect information on how our Section can better promote diversity.
- Establish a relationship with at least one other corporate counsel organization focusing on minority attorneys to create an ongoing partnership with networking and CLE opportunities.
- Amend our bylaws to include a diversity vision statement.

Success

All goals were accomplished except the raising of an additional $10k for the restricted fund; the official roll-out of the senior mentors for the past alumni and the establishment of a relationship with at least one other corporate counsel organization.

What was the best part of the Challenge for the Section? The appointment of one of our diversity alumni to the executive committee.

Trial Lawyers

Goals

- Implement programs to introduce, educate and recruit minority and diverse members.
- Mentor minority and diverse members to become active members with leadership potential in our Section.
- Outreach to minority bar associations, not-for-profit corporations and other diverse organizations to co-sponsor events relevant to our Section.

Success

We were successful in organizing an active and committed diversity committee; establishing an outreach to minority bar associations; granting 5 diversity scholarships to the Young Lawyers Section Trial Academy; and having minorities and women in our profession featured as pre-eminent guest speakers giving presentations and advice on professional conduct to law students and newly admitted attorneys. Trial Lawyers intend to continue to advance these developments and add to them over the years.

What was the best part of the Challenge for the Section? Research, education and information; Meeting and speaking with other members, judges and minority bar associations to encourage collaboration.

Entertainment, Arts and Sports Law

Goals

- Holding at least two joint CLE Events with minority bar associations followed by networking/member appreciation receptions, subject to budget.
- Establishing a mentoring program for diverse 2L law students, new lawyers, lawyers in transition and/or those who wish to shift areas of practice to entertainment, arts or sports law.
- Establishing a pro bono assistance/mentoring program.
- Working with the PGA East Veterans Initiative by providing speakers, and representatives for roundtable discussions.

Success

We accomplished holding two joint CLEs, and made excellent progress on the pro bono, mentoring and veteran's initiatives.

What was the best part of the Challenge for the Section? The best part is working closely with the members of our diversity committee, most of whom are not on our Section's executive committee. They are resourceful, energetic, hard-working and wonderful people. It has been fantastic for our Section to have them more involved.

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Health Law

Goals

- To contact seven minority bar associations by December 31, 2011.
- To develop a collaborative educational program with the Public Health Network for April 2012.
- To collaborate with *Public Health Journal* and write an article for the spring 2011 issue.
- To develop a Diversity Health Law Program Internship for the summer 2012 by March 15, 2012.
- To collaborate with PALS to develop students programs to encourage students to seek health care as a career choice.
- Develop marketing materials for the Health Law Section Diversity Action Plan by September 30, 2011.
- These materials can be included in collaboration letters to diversity bar associations.
- Encourage NYSBA Sections to have more diverse speakers at bar association programs.

Success

Contact made with minority bar associations, inviting them to coordinate events. The outreach for a collaborative program at Fordham did not produce any interest, but nonetheless, contact will continue in the future. Published the article in *Public Health Network*. Budget for law student internships approved, and in process of building up fund of $10,000 over several years. PALS efforts underway. Marketing material for Health Law Diversity Action Plan completed. Encouragement of Sections to have more diverse speakers underway. Identification of a team to develop a minority attorney leadership program underway.

What was the best part of the Challenge for the Section? The opportunity to ensure that we are maximizing our efforts to reach out and meet the needs of our minority colleagues.

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Commercial and Federal Litigation

Goals

- Targeting and expanding the Section's mentoring program, to attract more mentors and mentees.
- Continuing the annual, highly acclaimed "Smooth Moves for Litigators of Color" program, and encouraging participation within the Section by attendees from this event.
- Establishing a Minority Moot Court program at each New York law school, designed to attract minority college students to consider law school.
- Annual summer internship/fellowships for minority law students who are placed with Commercial Division judges.

Success

The Section's mentoring program is a long-term goal. Significant progress has been made in coordinating efforts with the Section's diversity committee, and active work continues to identify mentors of color to participate.

The Smooth Moves program now enters its 6th year of operation. For 2012, the Section invited participation from other NYSBA Sections, and eight Sections are serving as co-sponsors. It has been seen as a very successful, well-attended annual event.

The Moot Court project experienced limited success, in that the process of producing these events varies according to individual law school. Interest and the availability of resources differs per campus. An event will take place at the University of Buffalo campus in late April. Progress has been made at Albany Law, Brooklyn and New York Law. Two more law schools are expected to participate in 2012-2013.

What was the best part of the Challenge for the Section? That the Bar president was committed to supporting our ambitious plans.

Young Lawyers

Goals

The Section took the position that many diversity-based initiatives were already present at the outset, and utilized the Challenge as a way to refocus efforts and enhance diversity within the Section. The blueprint contained three (3) focus points:

- A commitment to diversity in membership and leadership.
- Utilize existing programs, complemented with new programs, to promote diversity.
- Prioritize aspects of diversity in outreach initiatives both within and outside of the legal profession.

Other Goals

- Integrate diversity committee mission into overall Section initiatives (i.e., collaboration with Section programs, committees, executive committee, etc.)
- Enhance diversity in existing programs (i.e., joint programs with diverse groups, diverse speakers, diversity topics, etc.)
- Offer diversity scholarship to 2012 YLS Trial Academy.

Success

The Section's Diversity Challenge Team found the Challenge, both for the Section and the Association as a whole, to be worthwhile and beneficial to carrying out the Section's mission of serving the needs of its members. Goals as laid out in all three (3) focus points of the blueprint were fulfilled, while the blueprint itself will be beneficial in laying the foundation for ongoing and future diversity efforts.

What was the best part of the Challenge for the Section? Enhancing an existing Section strength.

Dispute Resolution

Goals

- To have a minimum of three members representing minority groups on the Executive Committee.
- To produce CLE programs that include significant discussion of diversity issues, and co-sponsor such programs with minority bars.
- To compile a resource list for newly-trained women and minority neutrals on how to start careers as mediators.
- To communicate with all NYSBA minority attorneys interested in ADR and invite them to join the Section.
- To promote the hiring of minority attorneys as both advocates and neutrals by New York-based corporations.
- To have dialogs with other Sections and coordinate efforts.
- To develop a program to mentor new mediators, including women and minorities.
- To include articles on diversity in Section journal.
- To coordinate with ABA efforts to promote the selection of more women for arbitration and mediation panels.

Success

We have taken each of the planned steps and gone beyond them. The only goal not accomplished was the intended, personal outreach to minority attorneys interested in ADR, given the sizable number, we were only able to communicate via e-mail.

The Best Part of the Diversity Challenge for the Section? It addresses a significant problem that plagues ADR. Diversity is badly needed.

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These "Best Practices from the Section Diversity Champions" are selected excerpts from Diversity Challenge final reports. To see these reports, and others, please visit www.nysba.org/diversitychallenge.

"It is important to recognize it's not up to one event or person to meet such an important goal as diversity. Diversity is a continuous and ceaseless effort and should be part of all Section activity."

Torts, Insurance and Compensation Law Section

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NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
One Elk Street, Albany, NY 12207
518.487.5577 • www.nysba.org