

## Attracting the Best Talent: Diversity Recruiting Strategies

New York City is blessed with one of the most diverse populations in the world and it attracts a diverse array of talented lawyers as well. Nevertheless, legal employers compete heavily for the best talent and to ensure a diverse incoming class. The February 10th Diversity Working Session, “Attracting and Hiring Diverse Talent,” featured Elaine Arabatzis, Diversity/Pro Bono Counsel Dickstein Shapiro Morin & Oshinsky LLP; June Eichbaum, Partner at Heidrick & Struggles; and Leisa Smith, Partner at Fitzpatrick, Cella, Harper & Scinto. There are concrete actions legal employers can take to ensure the recruitment of diverse attorneys at all levels as well as mechanisms to inject even more diversity into the legal profession in the future.

### Recruiting Research

- ❖ **Talent pool:** 49.2% of the 2003 law school graduates were women and 21.1% were racial/ethnic minorities (NALP, 2003)
- ❖ **Diversity over time:** Law school enrollment for women has steadily increased over time from 26% in 1976 to 40% in 1985. For racial and ethnic minorities the percentage has grown more slowly from 8% in the 1976 to 10% in 1985. (NALP, 2000)
- ❖ **Myth of Meritocracy:** 83% of minority partners graduated from a top 10 law school compared to 48% of all partners. (MCCA, 2003)

### Diversity Recruiting Strategies

1. **Attract Diverse Talent.** First, start by convening a diverse hiring committee to design an effective strategy. Your hiring committee, as well as diversity networking groups, can forge external relationships, such as hosting events with law school student groups and minority bar associations throughout the year. Develop and publicize diversity efforts through your website, brochures, and recruiting presentations. In addition, offer opportunities to meet with diverse array of attorneys during the interviewing process.
2. **Examine Recruiting Criteria.** Examine conscious and unconscious hiring criteria which may exclude diverse talent. To that end, assess characteristics and background of current partnership to understand what it really takes to be successful in your firm. Expand feeder schools to include those with more diverse student populations such as smaller local schools and historically Black colleges. Finally, be sure to examine where diverse talent ends up in the firm to ensure they are not just clustered in a few practice areas.
3. **Recruit to Retain.** It is natural to want to hire the “best,” but it is also essential to hire those that fit within your organization’s culture and are aligned with your organization’s values. In addition, firms are also starting to re-examine their summer programs to ensure they provide a realistic preview of associate life. While many firms publicize their diversity efforts, savvy job seekers can see through diversity

programs that are all talk and no action. And if they don't, you will lose them pretty quickly once they realize the true nature of the work environment.

4. ***Look at Laterals.*** Are you replacing the diversity of the talent you are losing? Broaden recruiting networks by forging partnerships with minority bar associations, leveraging individual relationships of diverse attorneys, and maintaining contacts with alumni. Select search firms based on track record of diverse placements, and ensure they are providing you with a diverse candidate slate.
5. ***Strengthen the Pipeline.*** While there is certainly a great deal of diversity already in the legal profession, more can be done to bring additional racial/ethnic and socio-economic diversity into the profession. Associations, such as ABCNY, sponsor internships and scholarships to expose minority with high school and college aged students to the legal profession. Individual employers have also forged ties and built name recognition by sponsoring their own fellowships and mentoring programs.

#### **Filling The Pipeline: New York City Bar Programs**

##### ***The Thurgood Marshall Summer Law Internship Program (High School)***

Sponsored by the Association's Committee on the Thurgood Marshall Summer Law Internship Program, this program provides inner-city high school students with summer employment in law firms and corporate legal departments. The main purpose of the internship is to give inner-city students the opportunity to work in a legal environment. Students also participate in related programs during the summer to enhance their knowledge of the justice system.

##### ***The Minority Fellowship Program (1L)***

Sponsored by the Association's Committee on Recruitment and Retention of Lawyers, this program provides paid summer employment for first year minority law students from New York City area law schools. For more than ten years students who show strong leadership skills, strong academic records, a willingness to work hard and a genuine interest in law are matched with participating law firms and corporate legal departments. Students placed through the program receive the same compensation and assignments as other summer associates.

Certainly recruiting diverse talent is not enough, legal employers must focus on retention as well. Luckily, the same programs and policies that aid retention ultimately lead to the hiring of more diverse talent as minority law students and lateral hires see a critical mass of lawyers like them throughout the organization. Bringing diversity in is just the beginning, and the New York City Bar is here to help your organization on its diversity journey.

To learn more about diversity recruiting practices or upcoming diversity working sessions, please see our website at [www.abcny.org](http://www.abcny.org) or contact Meredith Moore, Director of ABCNY's Office for Diversity at [mmoore@abcny.org](mailto:mmoore@abcny.org).