



NEW YORK
CITY BAR

Expanding the Pipeline to the Legal Profession for Diverse College Students & Recent Graduates

Post-Conference Report

Committee on Diversity Pipeline Initiatives, January 2013



BEST PRACTICES FOR BUILDING AND SUPPORTING THE PIPELINE
COMMITTEE ON DIVERSITY PIPELINE INITIATIVES
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Introduction

In 2011, the New York City Bar (the “City Bar”) Diversity Pipeline Initiatives Committee (“the Committee”) presented its inaugural conference on Best Practices for Building and Supporting the Pipeline to the Legal Profession which was co-sponsored by more than a dozen regional pipeline organizations. The conference attendees included employers, educators, and diversity professionals who discussed strategies and tactics to support diverse students aspiring to pursue legal careers.

The Committee noted that while there has been a significant increase in the number of legal career preparation programs developed for high school students and diverse law students, too few programs of this nature target undergraduates. High school and law school pipeline efforts have been successful, but there is a “leak” in the pipeline for college students and recent graduates. It is this “leak” which likely contributes to the recent drop in diverse students taking the LSAT and enrolling in law school.¹

In 2012, the Committee created a follow-up forum to specifically address the challenges impacting college students and recent graduates pursuing legal careers. Attendees were tasked with identifying effective undergraduate legal career preparation programs, additional programs and resources needed, and specific action items that would accomplish the Committee’s goal of expanding and supporting undergraduate diversity pipelines.

The Committee identified four key areas:

1. Academic Support & Preparation for Law School
2. Career Exploration: Exposure to the Profession, Practice Areas, Diverse Career Opportunities
3. Professional & Substantive Skill Development
4. Networking/Mentoring Opportunities

¹ "LSAC Resources - Applicants by Ethnic and Gender Group." *LSAC: Data*. Law School Admissions Council, Inc., 2012. Web. 20 June 2012. <<http://www.lsac.org/lscresources/data/vs-ethnic-gender-applicants.asp>>.

One key point that all attendees discussed was the lack of legal internship opportunities for undergraduate students. Firms and organizations provide fewer structured internship programs for undergraduates than they do for high school and law students. Typically, cost, space, and staff support make undergraduate internships difficult to provide. Therefore, a significant portion of the forum focused on identifying alternative opportunities by which firms, corporations, and public interest organizations could support undergraduate professional development, and how to increase such opportunities.

The City Bar plans to incorporate the recommendations offered at the program into future programming and encourages organizations and individuals to do the same. This report outlines the specific strategies that were discussed and serves as a guide for employers and others to generate opportunities for diverse undergraduates and recent graduates. We hope that by building momentum at an early age, staying engaged through the students' education, and enhancing placement options and retention, we can fix the leak in the pipeline and fulfill our collective goal of increasing the number of diverse candidates in the legal profession. The following summary outlines the range of ideas presented.

Academic Support & Preparation for Law School

Prospective law students need to understand the importance of academic achievement and the rigor of law school, and work to develop strong writing, research, analytical and time-management skills.

The Law School Admission Test ("LSAT") is the first indicator of readiness for law school and proves to be one of the most significant deterrents for diverse students. Diverse students, many of whom have demonstrated the necessary skills to be successful in law school, tend to score lower than non-minority students on the LSAT.

One of the major obstacles that many diverse students face is the financial component of enrolling in a LSAT preparation course. Investing in adequate LSAT preparation is simply not feasible for many students. This is an issue that needs to be addressed by providing as many free and low-cost preparation opportunities for students as possible. Making LSAT preparation accessible and affordable must be a key focus of pipeline diversity initiatives in order to ensure that diverse students can be competitive applicants to law school.

In addition to the LSAT, the law school admissions process can be overwhelming for diverse and/or first-generation students. Programs that educate students about the process and support applicants will help eliminate this potential barrier. Prospective law students would also benefit from workshops and programs that help develop the skills they need to be academically successful in law school.

The following are recommendations for academic support and law school preparation programs.

LSAT Preparation

LSAT preparation providers should:

- Work with undergraduate institutions and partners to provide access to in-depth LSAT preparation provider information so students can compare providers and assess which course caters to their specific needs and learning styles;
- Expand preparation course offerings to include strategies that address test anxiety. Students' comfort levels should be increased by exposing them to test day environments and developing alternative techniques to reduce anxiety;
- Develop strong online courses to ensure that students with financial responsibilities or time constraints can receive quality LSAT preparation;
- Make LSAT prep courses accessible to all, regardless of economic status. Provide scholarship assistance to help cover the cost of LSAT preparation courses, and payment plans to students who need assistance.

In addition, employers and educators should:

Law School Application/ Admissions Process Workshops

Host regular workshops to educate students on the law school admissions process at which admissions officers deconstruct the admissions process and discuss deadlines, fee waivers, personal statements, and recommendation letters. Forums during which students can obtain assistance with law school selection should also be provided.

Law School Tours & Class Visits

Organize groups of diverse students to visit law schools and/or coordinate a week for area law schools to host tours and allow students to observe first-year classes so prospective students can familiarize themselves with the law school environment and get a sense of the culture. Law students should be present to provide information on journals, moot court, and other law school activities.

Mock Law Class

Offer students mock law classes in which they would be assigned a case prior to the class, and are taught basic case briefing and note-taking skills. Prospective students would participate in class discussions and case analysis and be asked about reasoning used in the exercise. Students could also use this as an opportunity to seek advice about law school selection and the application process, or seek general advice. Students would also have an opportunity to speak with law school professors and current law students about specific fields of interest.

Pre-Law School Camp to Prepare Students for Academic Rigors of Law School

Provide a week-long pre-law school “camp” where diverse admitted students learn to analyze and discuss cases, and are exposed to the Socratic method and the academic rigors of law school in a classroom setting. Emphasis should be placed on case reading and analysis as well as legal writing. This pre-law camp should also expose students to note-taking techniques, exam strategies, creating mock outlines and the Issue, Relevant law, Application to Facts, and Conclusion (“IRAC”) method. Additionally the camp would provide basic introductions to the following core classes: Property, Torts, Contracts, Civil Procedure, Criminal Law, Constitutional Law and Legal Writing.

Legal Writing Instruction/Competition

Prepare students for legal writing by introducing them to legal research, legal analysis, vocabulary, authority and Bluebook citation rules. Host a writing competition focusing on a legal issue that relies on federal authority and could be used nation-wide.

Career Exploration: Exposure to the Profession, Practice Areas, and Diverse Career Opportunities

There are an abundance of career opportunities in the law. Many undergraduate students do not understand the opportunities available to lawyers outside of law firms. When students are exposed to the breadth of law-related career paths at an early stage, they are more likely to find one that appeals to them and “connect” to the profession and pursue their career goals.

The following suggestions were intended to identify ways in which legal employers and practicing attorneys could provide career exploration opportunities to diverse students.

Diverse Career Opportunities for Your Law Degree Panel

Provide panels and workshops on a wide array of career opportunities that are available with a law degree and provide students the opportunity to meet professionals whose careers will inspire and motivate them.

Practice Area Exposure Programs

Have students meet individually in small groups with attorneys who can discuss specific practice areas and describe what attorneys in this practice area do. The program would mimic a college fair format where each practice group has a table staffed by attorneys to discuss practice areas followed by a networking reception.

Public Interest Career Exposure Programs

Prepare students for public interest careers by introducing students to public interest work and teaching them how to build resumes that stand out to public interest employers through volunteer experiences and internships. Volunteer attorneys working in public interest should share their experiences and help students identify undergraduate and law school groups or organizations to join to gain experience. These attorneys should also recommend classes and advise students interested in specific public interest careers.

Constitutional Law Day

Host a Constitutional Law Day workshop with volunteer attorneys and judges for students to gain insight into the ways in which the Constitution affects everyday life. Discussion topics might include: warrantless searches, workplace discrimination, stop and frisk, same-sex marriage and the balance between civil liberties and national security.

Job Shadow Opportunities/Field Trips to Firms, Corporations and Public Interest Organizations

Arrange for students to spend a day shadowing attorneys in specific fields that align with their career interests and meet with attorneys who practice in those areas. Provide an opportunity for students to ask questions and gain valuable exposure through office tours, observations, and presentations. Firms could also host “Firm Nights” during which students visit individual firms and get a sense of firm culture: size, breadth of practice, demographics, etc.

Court Appearances and Observations

Schedule courtroom visits for students to observe trials, meet judges and trial attorneys, and become acclimated to courtroom proceedings.

Professional & Substantive Skill Development

In order for undergraduates to be “firm ready” they must develop basic professional skills. Support in this area can be provided by volunteer attorneys, college career counselors and pre-law administrators, and

diversity pipeline organizations. While undergraduate career offices provide general skills training and professional development, the quality of preparation that students receive varies by school. To help level the playing field, it would be beneficial to provide students with a series of skills training programs to prepare them for internships and/or employment in a professional legal environment.

These programs should consist of training that aids students in identifying and developing the skills necessary for legal careers, including research and writing, negotiation, presentation, and client counseling.

The following sets forth key program ideas which can be tailored by the volunteers providing these workshops and programs.

Professional Preparedness/Pre-Employment Trainings

Provide resume and cover letter workshops where students meet one-on-one with volunteers to write and refine their resumes and help them to articulate how their background correlate with their desired practice areas.

Address the interview process and how to prepare for it. Panelists would discuss scheduling and preparing for interviews, basic interview dos and don'ts, and appropriate follow-up. Mock interviews can be arranged with law firm and law school career office professionals.

Provide a workshop that addresses basic office etiquette and prepares students for communicating with supervisors, taking assignments, submitting work product, office etiquette and attending firm functions. These workshops should also discuss professional attire as well as appropriate email and social media usage.

Litigation/Transactional Mini-camp

Provide students with hands-on opportunities to learn the litigation and/or transaction process by developing a multi-day "camp" where lawyers demonstrate the anatomy of a litigation or transaction. As a culminating camp exercise, students could participate in a simulated deal or trial in a mock competition.

Alternative Dispute Resolution Training

Expose students to a variety of alternative conflict resolution arenas such as: mediation, negotiation and arbitration.

Provide practical skills training and educate students on dispute resolution theory, including developing a team-based negotiation competition at the end of the training.

Trial Advocacy Training/Mock Trial

Provide students opportunities to work with lawyers and law students who can train and guide them in simulated trial procedures.

Networking/Mentoring Opportunities

Many diverse students do not have relationships with lawyers or legal professionals who can advise them on law school and the legal profession. Helping to create and foster mentor relationships must be a priority in order to increase the number of diverse law school applicants and ultimately diverse lawyers.

While basic professional exposure is helpful, it is imperative for students to meet professionals who can answer specific questions and offer guidance and support. It is important for diverse students to see professionals who look like them, went to their schools, and can relate to their experiences.

The following program ideas which include both short-term and long-term mentoring opportunities allow volunteer attorneys to support and mentor prospective law students:

Lunch with a Lawyer

Provide brown-bag discussion sessions with attorneys at firms, schools or local bar associations. This minimal time commitment from attorneys would benefit students and provide them with an opportunity to ask general questions about the legal profession or specific questions about areas of law.

Speed networking/Mentoring

Provide students with the opportunity to increase their professional networks by meeting with groups of attorneys in brief speed-networking or speed-mentoring sessions. In preparation for the program, students should be provided with suggested questions and talking points and end the session with an open networking reception.

Law school hotline

Develop a hotline for students to ask lawyers questions about law school and the legal profession. Lawyers would be asked for a one day, limited time commitment, where they would field calls from students curious about law school (“How difficult was it?”, “How did you find first job after law

school?”, etc.). Attorney participants would provide their bios and be available to staff the hotline for the prescheduled time period.

Connection to alumni & current law students/Shadow law students

Alumni can provide useful perspectives for prospective law students. Therefore, it would be beneficial to offer opportunities for undergraduates to meet law students who attended the same school or graduated from the same or similar program. These alumni contacts could describe their individual career paths and the amount of work required. To encourage maximum alumni engagement, alumni should be offered opportunities to mentor current students both in short-term and long-term settings.

Long-term Mentor Program

Create a mentor program that matches students with law students/lawyers who would provide guidance throughout college and the law school application process. A substantive program that provides an opportunity to develop better relationships with students would require a longer time commitment. Mentors and mentees would meet monthly in person and could also communicate through email or phone.

Undergraduate Pipeline Month

Participating firms, organizations, and pipeline groups would commit to hosting one or more of the aforementioned programs over the course of a specific month. As a result of concentrating all these programs within a month, undergraduate students would gain a high level of exposure to the legal profession in a short period of time. Ideally, organizations could commit to a month where undergraduate students are on break so as to effectively reach the most students.

Conclusion

The purpose of the programs suggested in this report is to generate ideas that place emphasis on creating mutually rewarding programs with incentives for both undergraduate students and volunteer attorneys. By implementing these kinds of programs, students will receive much needed guidance, mentoring, and preparation for law school and volunteers will have the opportunity to support programs that help students achieve their goals.

The Committee believes that these programs and ideas will support and motivate students to fulfill their goal of entering law school and succeeding in the legal profession. By implementing two or three of the aforementioned programs, employers, educators and diversity offices can bridge the gap in the pipeline for

college students and recent graduates who wish to pursue legal careers. Once these programs are in place in New York and prove successful, program materials can be shared with other regions with the goal that they too will implement these programs and ultimately expand the pipeline nationwide of diverse college students who will enter the profession.

Action Items

Action Items for Pipeline Diversity Groups

Focus Groups/Pipeline Consortium

Diversity representatives should meet periodically to discuss ways to collaborate with and support each other's programs, address problems and provide solutions. Collaboration will serve to maximize the effectiveness of each group's programming and inspire new ideas. By working together, pipeline organizations can better provide resources to expand the scope of effective programming, replicate strong programs, develop new and unique program ideas, and support them.

Toolkits & Social Media

Pipeline organizations should make resources and information available for download. It is important that students be able to access this information outside of their school environment. This is especially helpful for students who are taking time off between college and law school. These organizations should host and post webinars and create podcasts of specific programs online ("How to Select and Apply to Law School", "Financing Law School", etc.) and share information about all available programs via strong social networking. These organizations also should make at least one annual visit to colleges and universities and provide a packet of information that these institutions can give to the students, and urge schools to engage in the programs on their own.

Regularly updated database

Each local bar association should maintain an updated database of pipeline groups, the services they provide, and a current contact. This information should be readily available for prospective participants, partners, volunteers, and funders.

Program Evaluation

Bar associations also should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of programs. As a result of this evaluation, they should work to strengthen those that are not effective, and have a way of tracking programs and assessing their success or failure.

Financial Aid

Pipeline programs need to offset the costs for students so that they will not need to work while participating in them; for example, they should help with housing or offer a stipend for participation. For this to be possible, these organizations must be funded. Additionally, alternative opportunities must be available so students can take courses at night and work during the day as many of these non-traditional students may be responsible for supporting their families or have other commitments. Having firm or school sponsored scholarships for both LSAT preparation and during law school would be ideal.

Action Items for Firms, Corporations, and Public Interest Organizations

Academic Support & Preparation for Law School

- Sponsor LSAT training for groups of students
- Host LSAT Prep Training at law firms
- Volunteer for pre-law school camps
- Host mock law classes at law firms
- Volunteer to judge legal writing competitions

Career Exploration: Exposure to the Profession, Practice Areas, Diverse Career Opportunities

- Provide presentations/panels on practice areas
- Provide job shadow opportunities
- Host “Meet the Firm” nights
- Invite students to view court proceedings
- Provide internship opportunities for pre-law students
- Sponsor travel stipends for students in unpaid internships

Professional & Substantive Skill Development

- Host litigation/transaction mini-camps to provide hands-on experience in the trial and transaction process
- Provide resume review workshops
- Provide internship readiness panels on office etiquette, attire, and social media usage
- Recruit volunteers and/or judges for alternative dispute resolution training, trial advocacy and mock trial trainings, and deal negotiations
- Provide writing seminars/workshops

Networking/Mentoring Opportunities

- Develop and host speed networking events
- Develop a long-term mentor program to match students with law students/attorneys/judges
- Sponsor one-on-one attorney lunches with students
- Volunteer to field calls from pre-law students on a pre-law college hotline

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