

**AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
GENERAL PRACTICE, SOLO
& SMALL FIRM SECTION**

Diversity Plan

2002

(Revised 9/30/02)

INTRODUCTION

The General Practice, Solo & Small Firm Section (GPSSFS) of the American Bar Association enthusiastically embraces the concept of diversity as a strength for the Section. Diversity in our membership brings a variety of unique and valuable skills and perspectives to the Section. We recognize, however, that the Section cannot expect to make great strides in achieving diversity in its membership without a demonstrated commitment to achieving diversity in its leadership ranks and in its committees.

For several years, the Section has attempted to increase both the diversity of its membership and its leadership and to increase the participation of women and lawyers of color in the activities of the Section and its committees. The GPSSFS has implemented a variety of initiatives to attract and retain the involvement of women and minority members to work as a catalyst in the Section to increase the involvement of lawyers of color and women in the work of the committees and the Section.

While certain initiatives have been employed, the Section has not had an organized or sustained effort with respect to outreach to minorities and particularly lawyers of color. Efforts have included the formation of a Diversity Committee, the creation of a Task Force on leadership, a diversity vice chair for all committees and a Bylaw amendment requiring the inclusion of women on the Nominating Committee. Unfortunately, these initiatives have produced only nominal results and the Section has not experienced any significant growth in the participation of lawyers of color over the past ten years.

The Section recognizes that the goal of diversification is not a temporary goal and that diversity encompasses more than racial, ethnic, and gender concerns. While these concerns remain vital to the future of the Section and much still needs to be done to fully address them, we must also do more to recruit young lawyers of all races, ethnic backgrounds, and genders and to foster the spirit of inclusiveness in all of the Section's activities. This will help to ensure that the Section will remain a growing and integral contributor to the legal profession.

The goal of diversity can only be achieved with the unequivocal support and participation of the Section's leadership and its committees and the individual commitment of each active Section member. However, it is recognized that in order to achieve our goal, the Section leadership and committees as well as our active members must be given guidance, encouragement, and training to:

- * actively recruit lawyers of color and lawyers with disabilities;
- * foster an atmosphere of inclusion to assist in retaining lawyers of color and lawyers with disabilities once they have become members;
- * seek the participation of lawyers of color and lawyers with disabilities on all educational programs panels, and on any task forces that are convened; and

- * provide lawyers of color and lawyers with disabilities with opportunities and training to take on leadership roles at both the Committee and Council levels.

It is with this goal in mind that the Section has adopted its Diversity Plan. The Plan is a basic outline of suggestions that, if implemented, will assist and encourage the members and leaders of the Section to ensure full and equal participation for lawyers of color and lawyers with disabilities.

DIVERSITY PLAN

GOAL 1. Maintain Diversity in Section Officers and Council Members and Increase Diversity in Committee Leadership

STRATEGIES

- A. Obtain unequivocal support and participation of the Section officers, Council Members, and Committee Chairs in implementing the Diversity Plan.
 - 1. Provide a copy of the Diversity Plan to each existing and incoming Section officer and Council member.
 - 2. Provide a copy of the Diversity Plan to each existing and incoming Committee Chair, together with a letter from the Chair of the Section stressing the importance of the Plan and the active participation of each Committee in implementing the Plan.
 - 3. Delegate to the Diversity Committee the responsibility to follow up with those Committee Chairs who are not participating in the Section diversity efforts and, where necessary, and with the input of the Committee on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession and the Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law, establish written expectations for Committees who are consistently ignoring the Section's Diversity Plan.

- B. Provide guidance to the Committee and Subcommittee Chairs with respect to diversity issues.
 - 1. Include diversity materials in the Committee Chairs' Orientation Handbook, including, among other things, the Section's policies and guidelines relating to diversity, a copy of the Section's Goal IX report card (see below), list of resources providing technical assistance and information for diversity on panels and publications, such as the ABA's Minority Speakers Clearinghouse, Commission on Women in the Profession, Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession and Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law.
 - 2. Develop resource material on diversity.
 - 3. Periodically update diversity resource materials.

- C. Provide diversity training for current and future Section leaders and Committee Chairs at the Fall or Spring Meeting:

1. Retain a diversity consultant specializing in organizational (rather than workplace diversity).
 2. Videotape training sessions so that they can be used in the future.
- D. Provide accountability to diversity through use of the Committee Report Card:
1. Provide a report card based on the Commission on Women in the Profession model.
 2. Circulate Committee Report Card and gather results following Annual Meeting on an annual basis beginning in 2001.
 3. Establish a base line to monitor individual Committee efforts.
 4. Report findings as a Council Meeting agenda item; target the yearly Spring Meeting for this verbal report, where possible.
 5. Delegate to the Diversity Committee the responsibility to follow up with those Committee Chairs who are not taking steps to promote diversity in their Committee's activities.
 - * Provide all incoming Committee Chairs the results from the last Report Card for their Committee so that they can follow up.
- E. Ensure that Nominating Committee members reflect the diversity the Section is attempting to achieve with a Bylaw initiative with a five-year sunset provision similar to Article 12.
- F. Formalize the Nominating Committee's efforts to (1) take into consideration the current diversity of the Section leadership and (2) attempt to maintain diversity in the leadership or the Section by including these goals in the Section's by-laws.
- G. Evaluate annually (after the Annual Meeting each year) the Section's Diversity Plan.
1. Assess which initiatives are working and which are not and determine why they are not working; incorporate new ideas; and respond to then existing circumstances.
 2. Circulate the Diversity Plan to the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession and the ABA Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession for their additional input and guidance.
 3. Periodically assess the diversity plans of other entities that are associated with the American Bar Association to obtain new ideas, i.e., NBA, HNBA & PABA.

4. Report recommended changes to the Plan and seek approval from Council each year at the Spring Council Meeting.

GOAL 2. Increase Diversity in Membership

STRATEGIES

- A. Obtain unequivocal support and participation of the Section's Committees and Task Forces in implementing the Diversity Plan.
 1. Provide a copy of the Diversity Plan to each existing and incoming Committee, together with a letter from the Chair of the related Committee stressing the importance of the Plan and the active participation of each Subcommittee and Task Force in implementing the Plan.
 2. Delegate to the Committee Chair the responsibility to follow up with those Subcommittee Chairs who are not participating in the Section' diversity efforts.
- B. Provide guidance to the Subcommittee and Task Force Chairs with respect to diversity issues.
- C. Foster the spirit of inclusiveness in all of the Section's activities:
 1. Include "Non-members Welcome" on signs identifying (Committee and Subcommittee) meetings outside meeting rooms at the Spring, Fall and Annual Meetings.
 2. Ask Committee Chairs to invite any non-members to become members at the conclusion of each of their meetings.
 3. Advertise in all materials for the Spring and Fall Annual Meetings that non-Committee members are welcome to attend Committee meetings.
- D. Strongly encourage diverse panels in all CLE and Committee programming and diversity in all Section publications.
 1. Circulate the ABA's Minority Speakers Clearinghouse information and material to all committee chairs.
 2. Adopt a Section policy which encourages the use of diverse speakers on all panels and programs the Section is involved in and require that our Co-Sponsoring entities strive to achieve the same goal.

3. Delegate to the Programs and CLE Board the responsibility to follow up-with those Committees who consistently fail to present diverse panels and participation and Section publications.
 4. Delegate to the *GPSolo* Board the responsibility to follow up with those Committees who consistently fail to provide for diverse participation in the Section's magazine, *GPSolo*, and the Section's newsletter, *Solo*.
 5. Provide Diversity Committee's Report Card information to the Council. Authorize the Committee to provide written expectations to those Committees who fail to achieve diversity.
- E. Establish a Section Mentoring Program for new Section members.
1. Develop a Section Mentoring Program.
 2. Increase the visibility of a Section Mentoring Program by prominently displaying and staffing an informational table.
 3. Establish a Member Satisfaction Survey to be sent to new members twice a year.
 4. Ask new Section members in the Member Satisfaction Survey (sent to new members twice year) if they want to participate in the Mentoring Program.
 5. Provide as an option for new Section members who want to participate in the Mentoring Program to request a woman lawyer, a male lawyer, a lawyer of color, a lawyer with disabilities or no preference.
 6. Encourage the mentors to get the mentees active in various Committee activities, publications, and programs.
- F. Ensure that first-time meeting registrants feel welcome even prior to the meeting:
1. Mail in advance of Spring, Fall and Annual Meetings to all first-time registrants the ABA booklet, "How To Get The Most From Your ABA Meeting."
 2. Prior to each Spring, Fall and Annual Meeting, send Committee Chairs a list of the members of their committees who will be attending the meeting for the first time and encourage Committee Chairs to send to those committee members a welcoming letter with an invitation to attend committee activities and social functions taking place at the meeting.
- G. Follow-up all Spring and Annual Meetings with a letter from the Chair of the Section to

all first-time registrants thanking them for attending, asking them to share their opinions about the meeting, and inquiring as to what the Section can do for them to enhance their experience at the next meeting:

1. Prepare a report summarizing the responses received from the Chair's letter and circulating the report to the Council and Committee Chairs.
- H. Develop recruitment/retention materials with a focus on lawyers of color, women lawyers, and young lawyers.
- I. Sponsor a Caucus Breakfast for Lawyers of Color and Lawyers with Disabilities to provide an opportunity for lawyers of color to network with each other and meet the Section leadership in a relaxed, informal setting.
1. Encourage Section leaders to follow-up with one-on-one conversations with women, lawyers of color and lawyers with disabilities to personally make them feel welcome and help them get involved in activities.
 2. Use the Caucus Breakfast as an opportunity to provide information to lawyers of color and lawyers with disabilities on the opportunities for involvement in committee activities and publication opportunities
- J. Fund Section representatives to attend important minority bar meetings and events.
1. Encourage Sections leaders to attend the Annual or Midyear meetings and events of the NBA, the HNBA, the HNBA and NAPABA (note: representatives do not need to be someone of the same racial/ethnic background - diversity of representatives should also be a goal).
 2. Consider purchasing space at the respective Associations Expo area with a giveaway of a popular publication series or books. Use the fish bowl concept to collect cards and follow up with an organized solicitation including a well-done brochure that reflects diversity.
- K. Appoint liaisons to each of the national minority bar associations (e.g., National Bar Association of African American Attorneys, Hispanic National Bar Association, National Asian Pacific American Bar Association), establish expectations or responsibilities of these liaisons, and fund their attendance at these meetings.
- L. Involve in Section activities lawyers of color and lawyers with disabilities who are already involved in local and national minority bar associations (an emphasis should be placed on involvement with local minority bar associations because the Section is not usually viewed as a competitor of these associations).

1. Encourage joint programming with national and local minority bar associations.
 2. Establish a first time registration discount.
 3. Communicate first time registration discounts to lawyers of color and lawyers with disabilities.
 4. Solicit speakers from minority lawyer bar associations located in the host city and notify the Program Chairs early in the process the mechanism for them to recruit local minority talent.
 5. Advertise the Section's programs in periodicals/newsletters directed to minority lawyer bar associations.
 6. Send information on Section membership and benefits to meetings of national minority bar associations.
 7. Continue to obtain lists of minority bar associations from the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession and send to the persons on those lists who live in close proximity to the Spring or Annual Meeting sites a brochure about the meeting.
 8. Personally invite members and leaders of minority lawyer bar associations in the host city to programs and social events, waive any registration fees for the leaders of such associations, and appoint Section members to serve as hosts to those attendees.
- M. Coordinate efforts with and use the resources of the Commission on Women in the Profession, the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession and the Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law to assist in the recruitment efforts of the Section.
1. Sponsor joint promotions and membership drives with the Commission on Women Partners (formerly the Margaret Brent League) and the Commission on Opportunities for Minorities in the Profession.
- N. Create a Lawyers of Color Caucus Group and Lawyers with Disabilities Caucus Group:
1. Sponsor meetings of the Lawyers of Color Caucus and the Lawyers with Disabilities Caucus at the Spring, Fall and Annual Meetings to provide opportunities for networking and professional development.
 2. Create a marketing piece or other publication for the Caucus.

3. Cross-market that publication and promotional mailing to the Commission on Minorities in the Profession when available and appropriate.
 4. Create and maintain a Minority Caucus list.
- O. Use technology more effectively:
1. Advertise more fully on the web site information and materials, but provide access to actual documents to members only.
 2. Develop a chat room for members of the Caucus.
 3. Provide a mechanism for potential new members to ask questions and get information about specific topics via the Internet.
- P. Establish a GPSSFS Fellowship Program and fund the Program on an annual basis:
1. Initiate the Program in 2000 to provide Section scholarships for attendance at the Spring and Fall Annual Meetings for 2 - 4 minority individual members. This plan is premised on the active involvement in substantive Committee work with the goal of grooming these scholarship recipients to become future leaders of the Committees and the Section.
 2. Advertise the availability of the Program scholarships among the State and Local bars, National Conference of Bar presidents, and the Minority bars and in the New Member Benefits materials.
 3. Provide that one of the duties of the scholarship recipient is to actively recruit other minority lawyers for Section membership.
 4. Provide Section mentors to each lawyer in the Program.
 5. Develop specialized programming having special appeal to lawyers of color and lawyers with disabilities.
 6. Encourage the appointment of scholarship recipients as vice chairs or assistant vice chairs of committees.

GOAL 3. Raise Awareness That Diversity Is Valued and Why it is Valued by the Section.

- A. Provide diversity (sensitivity) training for current and future Section leaders at the Spring, Fall, or Midyear Meetings or at a Committee Chair orientation meeting.

- B. Publish results of Committee Report Card on the Section web site and *GPSolo* emphasizing the progress the Section is making.
- C. Reinvigorate the Section's liaison program by:
 - 1. Regularly circulating the list of liaison duties, which includes reporting back to each Committee on diversity initiatives.
 - 2. Communicating regularly with liaisons prior to meetings.
 - 3. Supporting the two Commissions by purchasing tables at their programs including the Margaret Brent and Spirit of Excellence Luncheons and ads in their publications.
- D. Encourage a policy that the Section will co-sponsor programs with other Sections or Divisions only if there is a diverse panel.
- E. Amend the Section Mission Statement to include a commitment to diversity.
- F. Require Section Liaisons to the Commission on Women in the Profession and the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession to:
 - 1. Report at the Spring, Fall and Annual Meetings of the Membership Committee regarding: (1) current developments and initiatives undertaken by those organizations and (2) steps taken by the other ABA sections to increase diversity.
 - 2. Attend the Women's Caucus Meeting sponsored by the Commission on Women in the Profession at the ABA Midyear and Annual Meetings and the Minority Caucus of the House of Delegates.
- G. Regularly update Section web sites and attempt to have other relevant web sites (e.g. Commission on Women in the Profession, Commission on Opportunities for Minorities in the Profession, National Bar Association of African American Attorneys, Hispanic National Bar Association, National Asian Pacific American Bar Association etc.) links to the Section.
- H. Encourage and recognize contributions by lawyers of color and lawyers with disabilities in the Section's publications.
 - 1. Include photos of contributing authors where appropriate and within publishing guidelines.
 - 2. Include photos acknowledging diversity of membership in membership material.

3. Include regular reports on achievements in the diversity area in *GPSolo*.
- I. Set as a priority funding activities of the Diversity Committee and Membership Board and publicize the Section's efforts at increasing diversity.
 - J. Communicate the Section's commitment to diversity to as well as our desire to strengthen the Section's relationship with minority bar associations.
 1. Encourage joint programming with the Commission on Women in the Profession, the Commission on Opportunities for Racial and Ethnic Diversity and the Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law in the Profession, and national and local minority bar associations.
 2. Encourage joint programming with state minority bar affiliate groups
 3. Co-sponsor programs and activities with law schools in host cities that have significant minority student body.
 4. Communicate first time registration discounts to lawyers of color and lawyers with disabilities.
 5. Solicit minority lawyer speakers from bar associations located in the host city.
 6. Advertise programs in periodicals/newsletters for minority bar associations.
 7. Publicize programs and other Section initiatives in Goal IX newsletter and in Perspectives.
 8. Personally invite members and leaders of minority bar associations in the host city to GPSSFS programs and social events, waive any registration fees for the leader of such associations, and appoint Section members to serve as hosts to such attendees.