

# Seton Hall University School of Law

## *Strategic Vision for Diversity*

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# *Strategic Vision for Diversity*

SETON HALL LAW SCHOOL

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## Preamble

At Seton Hall Law, diversity in all its forms is an essential part of who we are. Our community is enriched when individuals from different backgrounds come together to learn, analyze, and reform the law. To quote Justice O'Connor, "diversity promotes learning outcomes, and better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and society, and better prepares them as professionals."<sup>1</sup>

Although a diverse legal profession is more just, legitimate, and productive,<sup>2</sup> law schools do not yet reflect the diversity of our nation in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability. While Seton Hall Law has long been engaged in efforts to promote a diverse academic and legal community, the Dean, faculty, and administration concluded that it would be beneficial to create the Diversity Council—an advisory body, to support, supplement, and coordinate these efforts. This document sets forth the Diversity Council's Strategic Vision for Diversity.

## Mission, Vision and Values

The Diversity Council seeks to promote a diverse and inclusive academic environment, and to help increase diversity within the legal profession by serving as an advisory body to the Seton Hall Law community. It aims to further diversity through education, inclusiveness, collaboration, and respect. It seeks and values input from students, alumni, faculty, administrators, and staff.

## Longstanding Commitment to Diversity

Seton Hall Law's commitment to diversity dates back to its founding. It was the first accredited U.S. law school to have a woman dean, Miriam T. Rooney, who served from 1951-1961. It was also one of the first law schools, in 1977, to create an alternative admissions program, the Legal Education Opportunities Institute (LEO), for students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. The LEO Institute boasts over 500 alumni and has served to increase diversity at Seton Hall Law and the legal profession.

Shortly after creating the LEO Institute, Seton Hall Law assisted in the development of the Summer Institute for Pre-Legal Studies (Pre-Legal), an academically rigorous summer program that aims to increase the number of educationally and economically disadvantaged students who apply and gain admission to law school. Seton Hall Law hosts the Pre-Legal program, which is funded by the Educational Opportunity Fund of the Commission on Higher Education of New Jersey. Pre-Legal has been tremendously successful over the last 30 years. Over 80% of Pre-Legal participants who apply to law school are accepted.

Seton Hall Law's commitment to diversity is also reflected in the composition of its faculty. Forty percent of the full-time faculty are women and almost nineteen percent are racial or ethnic minorities. The faculty is also rich in cultural

and religious diversity. Each year, the Faculty Appointments Committee actively seeks candidates from diverse backgrounds.

The Law School's commitment to diversity is also reflected in its support of student organizations that serve students of diverse backgrounds, specifically:

- The Asian-Pacific American Law Students Association (APALSA)
- The Black Law Students' Association (BLSA)
- Christian Legal Fellowship
- The Irish American Law Students Association (IALSA)
- The Jewish Law Students Association (JLSA)
- The J. Reuben Clark Society
- Lambda Law Alliance
- St. Thomas More Society
- The Latin American Law Students Association (LALSA)
- The Muslim Law Students Association (MLSA)
- The Peter Rodino Society
- The Women's Law Forum

Despite these efforts and the efforts of other law schools, the legal profession does not yet reflect the diversity of our nation and indeed, is less diverse than most other professions.<sup>3</sup> While many legal employers in recent years have engaged in efforts to recruit and retain lawyers of diverse backgrounds, as the ABA recently noted, "racial and ethnic groups,

## Longstanding Commitment to Diversity

sexual and gender minorities, and lawyers with disabilities continue to be vastly underrepresented in the legal profession.”<sup>4</sup> For example, only 19% of law firm partners are women, and less than 2% are women of color.<sup>5</sup> Less than 2% of lawyers are openly LGBT and less than one-fourth of 1% of lawyers in the 2009-2010 *NALP Directory of Legal Employers* were identified as having a disability.<sup>6</sup>

Diverse individuals are similarly underrepresented in the judiciary. Minorities comprise approximately 18% of all judicial law clerks even though they comprise over 33% of the U.S. population.<sup>7</sup> There is currently not a single Native-American judge on the federal bench and only one federal judge is openly gay.<sup>8</sup> Employers’ efforts to recruit lawyers of different backgrounds have been hindered by the lack of diversity at most law schools nationwide. For example, although African-Americans comprised 13.4% of the U.S. population in 2004, only 6.5% of all law students in 2005-2006 were African-American.<sup>9</sup> Representation of African-American, Mexican-American, and Puerto Rican students in law schools has actually decreased in the last fifteen years.<sup>10</sup>

In an effort to reverse this trend, Seton Hall Law has continued to develop initiatives to help recruit a diverse student body. For example, in 2008 it revised the LEO program to attract greater numbers of students from disadvantaged and traditionally underrepresented backgrounds to the Law School. It has also created a variety of scholarship programs, including the Distinguished Scholars and Dorothy Day scholarships, in part, to attract students of diverse backgrounds to Seton Hall Law.

In 2008, Dean Patrick E. Hobbs created the Diversity Council and the position of Administrative Officer for Diversity Initiatives to

support and supplement the Law School’s diversity initiatives. A representative from each of the student organizations listed above serves on the Council, along with Dean Hobbs, alumni, faculty, administrators, and staff. The Council’s main objectives are to support efforts to (1) increase representation of traditionally underrepresented groups in the legal profession and (2) increase awareness of issues of concern to a diverse student population and engage the entire Seton Hall Law community in addressing them. It has created three subcommittees—(1) Subcommittee on Diversity in the Legal Profession; (2) Subcommittee on Student Life; and (3) Subcommittee on Diversity Initiatives in Student Recruitment—to address additional objectives as described in Part III below.

Seton Hall Law faces many of the same challenges confronted by other schools seeking to recruit a diverse student body. One of the primary challenges is the lack of a diverse applicant pool, which is the result of the shortage of students from diverse backgrounds graduating from four-year universities. In an effort to address this pipeline problem, in 2006, Seton Hall Law partnered with the New Jersey Law and Education Empowerment Project (NJ LEEP). NJ LEEP seeks to increase representation of persons from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds in the legal profession by providing urban youth in grades eight through twelve with intensive law-related and other college preparatory educational programs. Seton Hall Law students and alumni work with NJ LEEP students as teachers, mentors, and coaches for debates and mock trial competitions and our faculty and administrators participate in NJ LEEP classes and events. The Diversity Council co-sponsors NJ LEEP’s annual fundraising event, Diversity in the Legal Profession, Diversity in Leadership, every year. As part of its pipeline efforts, in

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2009, Seton Hall Law partnered with the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson, and Union Counties and encouraged its students to volunteer to mentor urban youth. Over 40 Seton Hall Law students became Big Brothers and Sisters in 2009-2010.

The commitment of the Seton Hall Law faculty and administration to diversity initiatives is one of our greatest strengths. In addition to providing strong leadership, the faculty and administration support student organizations that serve underrepresented segments of the Law School or legal community by serving as faculty advisors and attending these organizations' events. The support of the Seton Hall Law Alumni Association, which provides financial support, mentoring, and professional opportunities to current students, also facilitates our efforts to promote a diverse academic environment. Our geographic location and strong relationship with the New Jersey and New York legal communities, as well as our increasing contacts in other legal markets, including Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Miami, help to ensure the success of students and graduates of all backgrounds.

Seton Hall Law's commitment to its students is reflected in its decision to have student representation on most Law School committees.

The Diversity Council reflects this tradition and seeks to address student life concerns. Some students have expressed interest in more frequent and meaningful interactions, both academic and social, with students of different backgrounds. Student organizations have also indicated that they would like more opportunities for collaboration between different student groups. An abundance of academic and social opportunities both inside and outside the Law School, however, has resulted in limited time for informal interaction between students of different backgrounds and those pursuing different interests.

While the Law School seeks to maximize professional opportunities for all students and recent graduates, it is particularly concerned with increasing access to information and opportunities for students who are underrepresented at Seton Hall Law or the legal profession. These students often lack mentors and opportunities to network in their respective communities and might also lack informal access to information about legal opportunities. The Dean, faculty, and administration are committed to addressing the needs of all students and have expanded the Office of Career Services to increase our contacts and resources in the legal community.

# Objectives, Strategies, and Goals

## Diversity Council Overall

### OBJECTIVES

Enhance efforts to increase representation of traditionally underrepresented groups in the legal profession.

Enhance efforts to increase awareness of issues of concern to a diverse student population and engage the entire Law School and legal community in addressing them.

### STRATEGIES AND GOALS

Create the position of Administrative Officer for Diversity to support, supplement, and assist in the implementation of the Law School's diversity initiatives.

Assist Seton Hall Law Communications and Marketing Department in promoting diversity initiatives, including developing a prominent diversity webpage.

Evaluate whether Seton Hall Law is meeting the needs of diverse students by continuing to use measurements such as the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE), Diversity Council surveys for faculty, administrators, and staff, and other evaluative tools.

Encourage and support programs and activities that bring diverse perspectives to Seton Hall Law.

Encourage student organizations to collaborate on programs and events and reach out to

organizations represented on the Diversity Council with which they have not collaborated in the past.

Encourage greater student participation in programs focusing on issues impacting persons of diverse backgrounds.

Support the efforts of the faculty and administration to recruit and retain faculty and administrators of diverse backgrounds.

Encourage faculty to include multiple perspectives when teaching traditional courses, and to teach courses that specifically focus on issues of equality and diversity.

Provide faculty with information on creating an inclusive learning environment.

Organize and promote social events that celebrate diversity inside and outside of Seton Hall Law.

Host and support events and conferences that promote teaching and scholarship in areas that engage diversity in legal academia and the legal profession and encourage faculty to participate in such conferences.

Work with the student organizations represented on the Diversity Council to increase diversity on the Interscholastic Moot Court Board and law journals.

# Objectives, Strategies, and Goals

## Subcommittee on Diversity Initiatives in Student Recruitment

### OBJECTIVES

Support the efforts of the Admissions Office to recruit students from diverse backgrounds.

### STRATEGIES AND GOALS

Support Seton Hall Law's continuing efforts to recruit students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds through the regular admissions process and through alternative programs, including LEO.

Explore opportunities for outreach to undergraduate students from backgrounds that are underrepresented in the legal profession via organizations such as the Law School Admission Council (LSAC).

Organize law school pipeline programs, such as New Jersey Law Day, targeting college freshman and sophomores from backgrounds that are underrepresented in the legal profession.

Develop relationships with college pre-law advisors and undergraduate student organizations to attract students from diverse backgrounds to Seton Hall Law.

Support and expand the development of pipeline programs that expose diverse youth to higher education such as NJ LEEP, Pre-Legal,

and the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program.

Support the Admissions Office's continuing efforts to expand its participation in diverse student law and graduate school fairs.

Encourage student organizations represented on the Diversity Council to assist with efforts to recruit students from backgrounds that are underrepresented at Seton Hall Law or the legal profession.

Encourage Diversity Council members and alumni to participate in at least one admissions event or activity each year.

Expand the Diversity Council's presence on the Seton Hall Law webpage as a tool for outreach to prospective students of diverse backgrounds.

Work with the Admissions Office and the Student Bar Association to increase participation of diverse students at admissions events.

Encourage the Admissions Office and Office of Student Services to emphasize during Orientation the value of diversity, collaboration, and inclusion of multiple perspectives.

# Objectives, Strategies, and Goals

## Subcommittee on Diversity in the Profession

### OBJECTIVES

Assist students of diverse backgrounds in succeeding in law school and the legal profession.

### STRATEGIES AND GOALS

Encourage and support Career Services' efforts to meet and collaborate with student organizations represented on the Diversity Council.

Collaborate with Career Services to ensure that its programming engages all students and includes speakers of diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Work with Career Services and the Office of Student Services to ensure that professional development programs address issues of particular concern to students that are underrepresented at Seton Hall Law or in the legal profession, including women, persons with disabilities, and racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities.

Support Career Services' efforts to encourage students represented on the Diversity Council to attend career-related panels and events, and to utilize the office's career counseling services.

Encourage Diversity Council members, and diverse alumni and legal professionals, to participate in career-related events at Seton Hall Law.

Work with Career Services to maximize the number of students from diverse backgrounds applying for clerkships.

Encourage Career Services to organize brown bag lunches or small group discussions with members of the judiciary and diverse alumni who have clerked.

Work with Career Services to encourage students represented on the Diversity Council to compete for positions on law journals and the Interscholastic Moot Court Board.

Work with Career Services to maximize participation of students represented on the Diversity Council at career fairs, including specialized career fairs targeting diverse student populations.

Encourage students represented on the Diversity Council to establish connections with bar associations, including diverse affinity bar associations, sections, and committees.

Work with Career Services to sponsor small group discussions with practitioners on issues of interest to the student populations represented on the Diversity Council.

Support Career Services' efforts to facilitate pro bono or community service projects that aim to involve multiple student organizations and provide networking opportunities with alumni.

Encourage and facilitate communication between the student organizations represented on the Diversity Council and their counterparts at other law schools.

Identify the student organizations represented on the Diversity Council that have a particularly small number of members in any given year and explore ways to support those groups.

Work with Career Services to ensure enforcement of the Law School's anti-discrimination policy, including compliance with the American Association of Law Schools (AALS) Amelioration Policy.<sup>11</sup>

# Objectives, Strategies, and Goals

## Subcommittee on Student Life

### OBJECTIVES

Assist student organizations that seek to address the needs of diverse students at Seton Hall Law and the legal community.

Assist the faculty and administration in addressing issues that may disproportionately affect students that are underrepresented at Seton Hall Law or in the legal community.

### STRATEGIES AND GOALS

Encourage the Office of Student Services to collaborate with and provide resources to student organizations that request assistance in developing and implementing their annual goals for diversity.

Encourage the Office of Student Services to offer at least one training event each year for new e-boards of organizations represented on the Diversity Council.

Work with the Office of Student Services to encourage all student organizations to plan programs and events that raise issues of concern to a diverse student population, or represent multiple perspectives.

Support collaboration between student organizations and encourage organizations with large memberships to co-sponsor events and programs with diverse student groups.

Work with the student organizations represented on the Diversity Council to organize and promote social and cultural events that celebrate diversity inside and outside of Seton Hall Law.

Encourage the entire Seton Hall Law community to participate in the Fall Diversity Wine & Cheese and the Spring Diversity Day program.

Work with the student organizations represented on the Diversity Council to encourage their members to compete for positions on law journals and the Interscholastic Moot Court Board.

Work with Career Services and the Office of Student Services to ensure that professional development programs include and address issues of particular concern to students that are underrepresented at Seton Hall Law or in the legal profession.

Support faculty efforts to provide academic assistance to students that are underrepresented at Seton Hall Law or in the legal profession.

Work with the Dean of Students, the Academic Success Director, and faculty to ensure that students that are underrepresented at Seton Hall Law or in the legal profession perform to their full academic potential.

## Measuring Our Progress

The Law School should develop appropriate measures to gauge the success of its efforts to promote a diverse and inclusive academic environment and increase diversity within the legal profession.

<sup>1</sup> *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306, 330 (2003).

<sup>2</sup> See American Bar Association, Presidential Diversity Initiative, *Diversity in the Legal Profession: The Next Steps*, at 5 (April 2010) (discussing the democracy, business, leadership, and demographic rationales for diversity in the legal profession).

<sup>3</sup> See *id.* at 12. For example, in 2000, only 9.7% of lawyers were racial or ethnic minorities as compared with 20.8% of accountants and auditors and 24.6% of doctors. See Rodolfo de la Garza & Sepehr Hejazi Moghadam, *African American and Latino Enrollment Trends Among Medicine, Law, Business, and Public Affairs Graduate Programs*, The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute School of Policy, Planning, and Development, University of Southern California, at 10-11. Although more recent comprehensive data is not available, according to the ABA, “demographic projections for the legal profession for 2010 are not suggesting that much progress has been achieved.” *Diversity in the Legal Profession*, *supra* note 2, at 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Diversity in the Legal Profession*, *supra* note 2, at 5.

<sup>5</sup> See NALP, *Law Firm Diversity Demographics Show Little Change, Despite Economic Downturn*, Oct. 21, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> See NALP, *Although Most Firms Collect GLBT Lawyer Information, Overall Numbers Remain Low*, Dec. 2009; NALP, *Reported Number of Lawyers with Disabilities Remains Small*, Dec. 2009; see also ABA Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law, *The Second National Conference on the Employment of Lawyers with Disabilities: A Report from the American Bar Association to the Legal Profession*, at 22-23 (2009) (reporting that relatively few college students with disabilities attend law school and those who do are less likely to find legal employment than their counterparts without disabilities).

<sup>7</sup> NALP, *A Demographic Profile of Judicial Clerks*, June 2008.

<sup>8</sup> *Diversity in the Legal Profession*, *supra* note 2, at 13; Lisa Keen, *Schumer Urges Obama to Appoint Gay Man to Federal Bench*, *Bay Area Reporter*, Feb. 8, 2010 (noting that U.S. District Court Judge Deborah Batts is the only openly gay judge on the federal bench).

<sup>9</sup> See de la Garza & Moghadam, *supra* note 2, at 10-11. Similarly, Latinos comprised 12.5% of the U.S. population in 2000, but only 5.5% of the 2000 graduating law class was Latino. *Id.* at 11.

<sup>10</sup> See ABA Legal Education Statistics, available at <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/statistics/stats.html>; *Diversity in the Legal Profession*, *supra* note 2, at 24 (citing study finding 7.5% decline in the representation of African-American students entering law school in 2008 as compared to 1993 and an 11.7% decline in the representation of Mexican-American students during that period).

<sup>11</sup> AALS prohibits member schools from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation or any other protected category and requires employers seeking to use a law school’s career services to certify that they do not discriminate on the basis of any protected category. Federal law, however, requires the military to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and bars schools that do not allow the military to recruit on campus from receiving federal funds, including financial aid for students such as federal grants and Work-Study funds. AALS recognizes that most law schools cannot afford to lose these federal funds and thus permits member schools to allow the military to recruit on their campuses “[a]s long as a school provides ‘amelioration’ in a form that both expresses publicly the law school’s disapproval of the discrimination against gays and lesbians by the military and provides a safe and protective atmosphere for gay and lesbian students.” Although AALS does not specify the actions that a law school should adopt to satisfy the amelioration policy, it states that:

As a starting point, each school should assure that all its students, as well as others in the law school community, are informed each year that the military discriminates on a basis not permitted by the school’s nondiscrimination rules and the AALS bylaws and that the military is being permitted to interview only because of the loss of funds that would otherwise be imposed . . . Other ameliorative acts that schools might consider include forums or panels for the discussion of the military policy or for the discussion of discrimination based on sexual orientation.

AALS Handbook, *Statement of Good Practices, Military Recruiting at Law School Career Services Offices* (Aug. 13, 1997), available at [http://www.aals.org/about\\_handbook\\_sgp\\_mil.php](http://www.aals.org/about_handbook_sgp_mil.php).



**Seton Hall University School of Law**

Diversity Council

One Newark Center

Newark, New Jersey 07102-5210

[law.shu.edu/diversity](http://law.shu.edu/diversity)