

Diversity Committee Draft Minutes
May 7th, 2022 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm

The Washington State Bar Association's Diversity Committee is dedicated to implementing WSBA's Diversity and Inclusion Plan. The work of the committee promotes historically underrepresented groups to enter and stay in the profession of law. The Diversity Committee does this through collaborative relationships and community building activities, which highlight the numerous societal benefits of a diverse law profession.

Present: Maria Mia Little, Megan Dawson, Gov. Matthew Dresden, Raina Wagner, Christopher Swaby, Gov. Alec Stephens, Nam Nguyen (co-chair), Gov. Sunitha Anjilvel (co-chair), Sharon Sakamoto

Absent: Michele Fukawa, Janice Langbehn, Luís Beltrán, Gov. Lauren Boyd, Mubarak Abdur Raheem, Cory Beetley, Danitza Casselman, SaNni Lemonidis, Shirley Prasad, Monica Lopez Reinmiller, Gov. Lauren Boyd

Law Student Reps: Laine Ellison

Guests: BOG President Brian Tollefson

Staff: Diana Singleton, Imani Shannon, Nicholas Mejia

Meeting Called to order at 12:15 pm

Volunteer recruitment: There are currently six (6) spots open. Historically the committee has done recruitment in letting others know through listservs, but it may be important to do something more strategic to encourage diversity. The official deadline for applicants is June 3rd. The BOG will be reviewing the council proposal at the July meeting. If charter is approved, the eligible individuals could be broadened from the current pool. There was discussion regarding the committee working to do some recruitment now and/or after the possibility of the charter is approved. It was suggested that for this year in particular in the event the charter passes, to begin recruitment in July. The committee agreed it would be important to send out a survey to current committee members to get a better sense of who/ what communities we already have connections with, and what communities we want to begin establishing authentic relationships with.

Subcommittee/Workgroup Report Out
Council Exploration

Gov. Anjilvel shared our proposal to become a DEI Council, which includes changes to the WSBA bylaws, is on the May BOG meeting agenda for a first reading of the bylaws.

Membership Demographic Study

Nam shared that the workgroup provided feedback on the Request for Production, and the process is moving forward with interviewing different outside consultants to conduct the membership survey.

Definition of Diversity:

Had two listening sessions in April. Had a large discussion centered around the definition. Some workgroup members were in favor of listing what makes an individual "diverse", and some were not in favor.

Law Student Pipeline Subcommittee:

The subcommittee looked at how we can support students during covid, as they go through law schools, and graduation. Met w/ UW and Seattle U regarding the matter and are hoping to meet w/ Gonzaga soon.

Work and Commitments

Questions posed to the committee included: What programming do you want to prioritize? What about our current work is and isn't working?

There was a discussion around subcommittee engagement, including programming and creating a comprehensive pipeline plan. Covid impacted the committees work when it comes to law schools and law students, but it was noted a definitive plan can be followed every year. There was discussion of changing the direction of the Law Student and Pipeline Subcommittee to focus more young attorneys entering the profession and collaborating with new attorney mentorship efforts that WSBA already engages in. It was noted it may be important to partner with the Young Lawyers Committee; the law schools keep getting better and better when it comes to underrepresented individuals as students but the WSBA hasn't seen much improvement when it comes to minority membership. It may be important to beef the mentorship program up and make it more readily available. The following questions were posed, "should we be focusing on what can we as the DEI Council bring that isn't already being done? And what are our actual goals?" It was stated one focus could be to see how best to support young attorneys and keep them in the profession; it is something that can be researched and measured and may be important to look at. It may be important for subcommittees to be able to meet with each other at least once a year. Currently the WSBA has information on member demographics, but it was suggested that the WSBA ask how long these individuals have been members.

There was also a discussion about working with the Washington Leadership Institute (WLI) and what commitment, if any, the committee would make. Gov. Anjilvel is in favor of working with the WLI. Discussion around whether the WLI manual on supporting law students would need to be updated once a year, and if so, does the committee have the capacity to update it. Nam will follow-up with the WLI about expectations.

Updating D&I Plan

Gov. Anjilvel and Nam decided to set up a subcommittee. Imani will send an email afterwards asking people to join subcommittee. The ATJ Board has a planning process that may be beneficial to look at as an outline. For the ATJ Board, each plan is independent of each other. The ATJ Board has been creating plans since its creation in 1994. Some costs related to planning may be travel, facilitator, and potentially food.

The ATJ Board gets together and creates a plan over an 18-month period. They create a consensus group to create the plan with people in and outside of the committee for matters relating to the planning process and has in person and hybrid meetings related to their planning. It is notable that the ATJ Board's plan is only 15 pages long which allows it to be easily read and accessible. Sunitha volunteered to be on the subcommittee to come up with a plan, Matthew Dresden echoed Sunitha's comments and

commitment. One concern is for committee members is the possibility of only or mainly BOG members sitting on the subcommittee. It may be important to send out recruitment emails and having the discussion regarding matters on an email chain. Could be helpful to for the workgroup to meet before May 31st so that there is a sense of what is fiscally needed for the proposal.

Respond to MBA proposal:

Raina and Sharon drafted a response memo, and included personal perspective as to why they support the MBA proposal, understood this would be voted on in today's meeting.

President Tollefson noted that it may be important to do something in advancing the MBA proposal, and created an ad hoc committee composed of four governors, Govs. Adewale, Anjilvel, Williams-Ruth and four members of the MBAs. It may be important to have the Diversity Committee be in favor as well as the BOG to show support on the matter.

Sunitha: Made a motion to approve the draft that is currently before this committee in the materials to be presented before the BOG at their May meeting.

Gov. Matthew Dresden voted in favor, Gov. Alec Stephens seconded.

Voted unanimously, motion carried.

Minutes:

Gov. Stephens made motion to approve April minutes, Gov. Sunitha Anjilvel & Gov. Mathew Dresden voted yes. Motion carried.

Gender and Pronoun Training

Imani Shannon, WSBA Equity and Justice Lead, gave training on gender and pronouns. Parts of the training included that there were many societies and cultures pre colonization that had more than one gender or no noted genders at all. During colonialism many settlers took away community and identity to control indigenous peoples which helped aid the creation and structure of the gender binary. It is important to note this was forced assimilation through colonization. Also, the gender binary compounds with other forms of systemic oppression, such as racism, ableism, sexuality, and more. It also leads to societal pressures about how each gender should perform based on societal expectations.

It is important to recognize trans people are often asked to prove their transness and there is a sense of entitlement when trans people are asked these questions. It is important to know that some people may use multiple pronouns, such as they/them & she/her. It is important to make asking pronouns a habit as well as practicing using pronouns such as "they are going to send an email". It is important to update client intake forms to reflect correct name as well as correct misgendering. It is important to use the correct pronouns for clients in the courtroom.

Trans misogyny is the oppression of Black transwomen and femmes. At the current moment black transwomen are the most targeted and harmed individuals. 25% of LGBTQ youth attempted suicide in the first half of 2021, so it is important to support this community. It is crucial to not use a deadname when speaking to a trans individual, it can be harmful to the individual and can bring up a lot of

traumatic memories. It is important to not list gendered dress codes in the workplace, a simple solution can be stating what is and isn't appropriate without delegating it to a specific gender.

To summarize, the gender binary stems from colonization, who are we harming if we are not actively engaging in the work related to gender identity and self-expression, pronouns are not a preference.

Meeting adjourned at 3:08 pm