The Business Case for Diversity
A Clear Vision for Collaboration

BY NAOMI K. MCLAURIN

Wild About Warbirds
BY JEFF LYONS

10 Questions for Judge Magdelene D. Coleman
BY ANTOINETTE R. STONE
Some people believe there is a moral imperative to advance diversity and inclusion in the legal profession because it is the “right thing to do.” They point to the historical exclusion of women and minority attorneys and the social justice gained from a more inclusive profession.

Others emphasize the “business case” for advancing diversity and inclusion because of the global market and corporations’ insistence that law firms better reflect society and their employees and customer base. They believe diversity is good for business and organizations that understand this principle are more competitive than organizations that do not.

Of course, advancing diversity and inclusion is the “right thing to do.” But, law firms and corporations are businesses. As such, they seem more responsive to the impact diversity may have on the bottom line.

According to the Institute for Inclusion in the Legal Profession’s (IILP) recently released research study, “The Business Case for Diversity: Reality or Wishful Thinking?”, “The business case for diversity is important. In many instances, it has been the driving force behind the decisions by some individuals and organizations to more actively support and engage in diversity and inclusion efforts. While we can all understand and appreciate that, and indeed it is one of the reasons we chose to undertake this project, it is equally important to remind ourselves that the importance and value of a more diverse and inclusive legal profession goes well beyond dollars and cents. A diverse and inclusive legal profession is fundamental to social justice.”

Sandra S. Yamate, chief executive officer, says “IILP undertook this research project because despite all the attention paid to the business case for diversity, none of the stakeholders – corporate clients, law firms and diverse partners – have found it satisfactory in achieving meaningful improvement in the profession’s diversity and inclusion goals and objectives. This report provides the first measurable data about whether the business case for diversity is working.”

The study found that “while a business case for diversity does exist, it stops short of generating the significant amounts of business necessary to enhance career sustainability, vitality and success of meaningful numbers of diverse partners. Corporate clients’ interest in diversity serves as an impetus for law firms to increase efforts to recruit, retain and promote diverse lawyers to their partnership ranks, and to otherwise support diversity efforts in the broader profession.”

According to Yamate, “An added bonus to IILP’s report is that we’re able to see how the business case for diversity plays out differently or similarly, depending upon the type of diversity about which we are speaking. It allows us to challenge assumptions about the effectiveness of the most common business development strategies. And it provides us with a basis upon which to develop and implement strategies based upon more than just anecdotal evidence or intuition.”

Some white men may feel vulnerable because of an increased focus on diversity and inclusion. Ironically, white
Collaboration is necessary for all of us to thrive. As we invested in the development of reservoirs of knowledge, we housed in the multitude of organizations.

According to a NALP: The Association for Legal Career Professionals’ November 2010 press release, nationwide, minority attorneys account for 3.97 percent of law firm partners and 13.29 percent of associates. Women account for 19.43 percent of law firm partners and 45.79 percent of associates.

Collaboration is good for diversity whether you are involved in the moral imperative or business area. To do that, there are ethnic, gender and generational reservoirs of thought that are housed in the multitude of organizations.

Through collaboration between the organizations that invested in the development of reservoirs of knowledge, we can more efficiently and effectively move the ball forward.

The Philadelphia Diversity Law Group, Inc.

The Philadelphia Diversity Law Group, Inc. is well known for its first-year minority clerkship program in which law students complete a rigorous interview process and are hired at law firms and corporate law departments for the summer. The clerkship program launched with the hiring of 12 students. Since its inception, 212 minority law students have participated in the clerkship program. Of the 29 students in last year’s program, 26 received an offer of employment for their second summer. This summer, 34 students are employed at 30 different law firms.


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Sandra S. Yamate is chief executive officer of the Initiative for Inclusion in the Legal Profession.

Finding opportunities for firms with ethnic or current clients talk about changing relationship partners or staffing matters to include women and minority attorneys. Moreover, in the last 10 to 12 years, the legal landscape is large and inspiring, the actions being taken are concrete and specific. The membership has defined four distinct areas for strategic focus – strengthening the pipeline of diverse talent entering the profession; developing diverse talent to eventually take the reins of the member organizations; recognizing and replicating successful models and programs that encourage diversity and inclusion; and creating new metrics that can benchmark and measure the improvement of the profession’s progress toward greater diversity.

PHILADELPHIA DIVERSITY LAW GROUP, INC. (PDLG)

Local organizations also understand that collaboration is critical to achieving meaningful diversity. And, like the LCLD, the Philadelphia Diversity Law Group, Inc. believes in collaboration. PDLG is a consortium of law firms.
The Philadelphia Bar Association’s Office of Diversity will present the 10th anniversary luncheon on Sept. 21, 2011, PDLG will unveil a mentoring program that pairs minority attorneys with white male attorneys who are rainmakers and can pass on business. Says Danielle Banks, PDLG co-president and Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP partner, “White men are the decision-makers about where business goes. The idea is to get the mentor invested in your success and want to inherit their business.”

DIVERSITY IN THE PROFESSION COMMITTEE (DIPC)
The Philadelphia Bar Association has a broad concept of diversity that includes race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, and many other aspects of diversity. It is committed to advancing diversity in the profession, so that all members of the bar can fully participate in all aspects of the profession.

This year, Philadelphia Bar Association Chancellor Rudolph Garcia converted the Minorities in the Profession Committee to the Diversity in the Profession Committee, a forum for collaboration with and among the local minority and affinity bars. The heads of the groups serve as ex-officio members of the committee. “This brings them together to work on common goals, share ideas and develop best practices, with the full support of the Association,” Garcia said.

According to Scott W. Reid, DIPC chair, Cabinet-level diversity chair, Board of Governors member and Cozen O’Connor member, “We must work together to further these efforts. Advancing diversity and inclusion in the legal profession is a shared responsibility. At the end of the day, what truly matters is a profession that is reflective of our increasingly diverse and global society.”

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National Symposium on Diversity in the Legal Profession

The Philadelphia Bar Association’s Office of Diversity will present a National Symposium on Diversity in the Legal Profession on Tuesday, November 8 from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m. at The Union League of Philadelphia, 140 S. Broad St.

The half-day CLE program will begin with a luncheon featuring keynote remarks by Robert J. Grey Jr., executive director, Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD), and former president, American Bar Association (ABA). At the opening plenary, a panel of local and non-local general counsel and law firm managing partners will discuss the importance of collaboration to advance diversity and inclusion in the legal profession; benchmarks to measure success; and best practices for the recruitment, retention and advancement of women and diverse attorneys.

Three concurrent breakout sessions may focus on topics such as the role of white male attorneys who are rainmakers and can pass on business; successful pipeline initiatives and mentoring programs; and an employment law update. A VIP networking reception will follow from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

For additional information or questions, please contact Naomi K. McLaurin, Esq., director of diversity, Philadelphia Bar Association, 1101 Market St., 11th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107-2955; nmclaurin@philabar.org or 215-238-6340.

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