

# Diversity & Inclusion Update

GROOM LAW GROUP  
AT THE CENTER OF BENEFITS, HEALTH, AND RETIREMENT

We are proud to count diverse lawyers within our ranks. Asian, Hispanic, openly LGBT, disabled, and African American lawyers practice law at Groom at all levels. In fact, our equity partnership of 41 attorneys includes members of each one of those groups. In addition, our equity partnership includes a higher percentage of female partners (35%) than the average law firm of our size (21.8%), according to data compiled by Law360's annual survey of women and minority lawyers.

We are committed to hiring and promoting diverse lawyers, and like most firms, we continuously strive to do better.

Below is a summary of our recent and ongoing diversity initiatives. Some of these initiatives focus on the promotion and advancement of lawyers already at our firm, while others focus on the pipeline of students who might be our future colleagues. In this respect, we believe it is critical to increase the numbers of diverse attorneys entering the practice of law, and we have devoted substantial resources to helping propel such students through school, so they then may succeed in law careers - either at Groom or elsewhere.

## Revamped Associate Review Process

In 2018 the firm revamped its review process for associates. Instead of a single, once-a-year, anonymous review process, associates in the program meet individually with each supervising attorney on a quarterly basis to discuss their work in the preceding quarter. The program is designed to: (1) establish a forum to discuss career advancement, particularly for associates who otherwise might not receive the advice they need to succeed, (2) give associates a chance to put their best foot forward by allowing for prompt course correction and identifying advancement opportunities, and (3) improve partner mentoring skills. We anticipate that this program will help us retain and advance more diverse lawyers.

## Women's Initiative

Groom Law Group understands that the firm's success - its ability to deliver superior solutions to clients - depends on identifying and removing barriers to success for women and others who are underrepresented in the legal field, particularly in private practice. The Women's Initiative partners with firm management and with other firm committees to promote retention, advancement, networking, and leadership opportunities for women attorneys at Groom. The Initiative includes periodic meetings, panels, development tools, and networking events - for the women of Groom and our clients - to discuss relevant issues affecting women in business. A highlight of the Women's Initiative is the women's networking event at our annual Firm Seminar, where Groom women of all levels interact with clients in a discussion geared toward leadership and advancement. Some years this program has been facilitated by an outside party, included a "book group"-style discussion on a notable book on women's issues, or "Ted Talk" presentation, where Groom attorneys and clients come together for an honest and open discussion of diversity issues affecting women and minority groups.

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## Affinity Groups

Groom actively supports attorneys who wish to participate with outside legal affinity groups and has been a sponsor of events at the local Chapter of the Hispanic National Bar Association, the Asian Pacific American Bar Association Educational Fund (AEF), the National Bar Association (NBA), and the DC Women's Bar Association (WBA). We also just launched an internal Parent Affinity Group, where working parents trade information, attend programs on technical topics, such as family tax planning, and advise Groom on potential issues impacting parents.

## Summer 1L Diversity Mentoring Program

In 2017, Groom created a summer program for diverse 1L students to receive hands-on mentoring on the law firm recruiting process and the variety of legal opportunities in DC. We focus on three specific areas: (1) preparation for the upcoming on-campus and callback interview process for 2L summer positions; (2) what a summer program or associate life in a law firm may look like, along with unique legal opportunities in Washington, DC (for example, working on Capitol Hill or a federal agency); and (3) guidance on developing and fostering strong professional associations that can be relied upon throughout their careers. Our goal is to give diverse students the tools they need to obtain a 2L summer associate position and succeed while they are there. Each year, we have had former participants get back in touch with us months later to thank us and say how much the program helped them navigate the interview process.

## Minority Corporate Counsel Association (MCCA) Scholarship Program

Groom is a proud and long-time member of the MCCA. Since 2006, we have supported the MCCA Lloyd M. Johnson (LMJ) Jr. Scholarship Program. The goal of the program is to nurture the academic and professional careers of outstanding law students and advance the diversity pipeline to the legal profession by providing financial support for diverse first-year law students. Groom actively participates on the selection committee and has taken our involvement a step further and committed to provide support for all three years of law school for the designated Groom scholar. Our last scholar currently is a first year associate at a prestigious New York City law firm. We have a new MCCA scholar this year, whom we will support through her three years at Columbia Law School.

## Crump Law Camp

We have participated in the National Bar Association's Crump Law Camp since 2005. This program brings high school students from across the country to Washington DC to learn about legal careers and participate in a mock trial. Three other national minority bars – the Hispanic National Bar Association, the Native American Bar Association and the National Asian Pacific Bar Association - also are involved in the camp. Every summer since 2012, Groom has hosted a lunch program for the campers in our office.

## Council on Legal Education Opportunity ("CLEO")

In 2017, Groom sponsored the 50th anniversary of the Council on Legal Education Opportunity, a legal scholarship program for low income and minority students.

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## Employee Benefits Law Panels

We regularly partner with student organizations, such as Black Law Student Associations, to organize panel discussions at law schools about careers in benefits law. Usually 2 to 3 Groom attorneys participate, and we arrange for government lawyers and corporate counsel who practice benefits law to appear as well. Law students may not know about employee benefits law, so for many students, these panels provide an introduction to our practice and a potential pipeline for future diverse attorneys.

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If you have questions, please contact the Groom Law Group Professional Development, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (PDIC):

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