

GROOM
LAW GROUP

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

ANNUAL UPDATE • 2023

GROOM LAW GROUP, CHARTERED

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OUR COMMITMENT

Groom Law Group Chartered's ("Groom's") diversity, equity, and inclusion programs focus on hiring, retention, and advancement of attorneys from diverse backgrounds within our firm, as well as the creation and sustainment of pipelines for our future colleagues. Here, we share an update of our recent diversity, equity, and inclusion activities.



MESSAGE FROM OUR DEI CHAIR

I am incredibly grateful to continue to serve as Groom's DEI Committee Chair for 2024. Over my 12 years at Groom I have witnessed a steadfast commitment to recruit, develop, and retain the best and brightest talent, including those from diverse backgrounds. I am proud of the strides that Groom has made in supporting a culture that is inclusive, equitable, and fosters belonging. I also recognize that our work is not done and believe the path forward is paved with a combination of intention, action and humility.

- Viv Hunter Turner, Principal



MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL



Embracing diverse perspectives is a catalyst for innovation and in doing so, we are leading by example and building a firm and workplace that is inclusive for all. As demonstrated by this past year's ongoing work to provide learning, mentorship, advocacy, and other meaningful opportunities, Groom's commitment to inclusivity resonates in every initiative we undertake, from seeking supplier diversity to advocating for impactful change.

At Groom, unity and collaboration thrive hand-in-hand with diversity. Our passion lies not only in delivering exceptional client service but also in cultivating an inclusive, forward-thinking firm. Our vision extends beyond professional excellence. It is about creating a future where all people in the world are healthier and wealthier, allowing them to live their best lives.

The fervor of our efforts from all corners of our firm is a driving force for the progress we have achieved. From inside the firm to outside the firm, it truly takes a village, and so, throughout the pages that follow, we illustrate our collective endeavors, accomplishments, and momentous occasions of the past year that we hope will have lasting impacts for years to come.

- Christine L. Keller, Executive Principal



GROOM'S DEI ACTION PLAN

Groom's commitment to diversity is grounded in the belief that lawyers with diverse perspectives provide the best legal advice and most adequately meets the needs of our clients. We further believe that it is critical to increase the numbers of attorneys from diverse backgrounds entering the practice of law, particularly in the employee benefits, health, and retirement space. We will continue to devote substantial time and resources to help propel students of all backgrounds through school (at various stages) and to gain valuable experiences and job search skills, so they then may succeed in law careers – either at Groom or elsewhere.

Objectives

- To ensure Groom's continued status as the premier employee benefits, health, and retirement law firm through the creation and maintenance of an inclusive environment.
- To recruit and hire highly qualified law students and lateral candidates of different backgrounds and to provide them with the resources to develop and advance the legal skills required for promotion within Groom.
- To cultivate a culture that offers equal opportunities, development, and advancements for all Groom lawyers to build successful careers.
- To compose talented, diverse teams to deliver a variety of dynamic skills and perspectives to address our clients' needs.
- To create awareness at Groom on the experiences of underrepresented groups in our firm and the broader legal industry, as well as how to be allies.
- To participate in racial and social justice work to improve the broader community for all.



GROOM'S DEI ACTION PLAN

Continued

Actions

As a firm, we commit to:

Increase Investment

- Devote financial resources to implement firm-wide trainings on key topics (including anti-racism, cultural fluency, microaggressions, allyship, and inclusive leadership).
- Provide extensive formal training for junior and mid-level associates, as well as mentorship and sponsorship with a focus on creating a culture of equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Review Policies, Procedures, and Practices

- Conduct assessments of current policies and practices. Use the assessment data to review issues and create solutions in the areas of inclusion, equity, and belonging as it pertains to the retention of attorneys.
- Continue to spotlight Groom and our work in benefits and diversity to attract talent from all sources, including women and candidates from historically underrepresented communities. Use search, recruitment, and vetting strategies that create pipelines of top talent from all sources.

Forge Partnerships with the Community

- Continue partnerships with Minority Corporate Counsel Association (“MCCA”), National Bar Association’s Crump Law Camp, the Council on Legal Education Opportunity, Inc. (“CLEO”), diverse bar associations, local law schools, and student organizations to promote diversity and inclusion in the broader legal industry.
- Continue and expand pro bono partnerships with civil rights and civil liberties organizations to support antiracism work, including Legal Aid, Equal Justice Initiative, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and American Civil Liberties Union.

GROOM'S FOUR PILLARS

The DEI Committee's ultimate goal is to effect real change, both internally within Groom and as a whole within the legal profession. To reach that goal, the DEI Leadership Committee is focused on the following four pillars:

Client Relations

Ensuring client teams are inclusive and exploring ways in which to partner and engage with clients to further collaborate on DEI initiatives.

Community

Coordinating with school / community affinity groups and programs that support individuals from historically excluded groups in the legal profession, and supporting Groom staff and attorneys who are involved in these groups.

Workforce

Using coaching, trainings, and targeted mentoring to create more inclusive teams and a culture of belonging. Continuing our focus on increasing the number of attorneys from diverse backgrounds entering the practice of law, particularly in benefits, health, and retirement, through focused recruiting at HBCUs, and ensuring that attorney candidate interview panels are diverse.

Workplace

Conducting specific programming to educate our employees about the experiences of underrepresented groups, trainings on micro-aggressions and hidden biases, and town halls, book clubs, and webinars to facilitate discussions about these critical issues at Groom.

CLIENT RELATIONS

Brem Foundation Empower Hour Luncheon

The Brem Foundation Empower Hour Luncheon was a meaningful event that brought together Groom and the Brem Foundation, an organization committed to early breast cancer detection and support for local women. The Women's Initiative and the Pro-Bono Committee sponsored a table at this impactful luncheon, held at the Intercontinental at the Wharf. The highlight was an expert panel discussion, emphasizing the significance of early detection and assistance for those facing breast cancer. It was a powerful gathering, resonating with a shared commitment to supporting women's health and well-being.



I particularly enjoyed hearing and sharing thoughts with other Groomies about how to speak more inclusively and address confusing scenarios at the PRIDE Language of Inclusion Workshop. The MicroLearning Challenges have been a lot of fun and a great way to celebrate diversity at the firm and beyond!

- Rina Fujii (Associate, DEI Advisory Board Member)

1L Summer Intern Pilot Program

The DEI committee's Summer Law Intern Program was a collaborative effort between Groom and a client that provided a law student with a unique split internship experience: four weeks at Groom and three weeks in the client's corporate legal department. Their focus at Groom centered on the client they would join for the remainder of the summer, allowing for relationship-building and understanding of the client's issues before starting their internship there. This emphasis on connections and understanding served as a strategic pathway to foster diversity and familiarity with Groom's specialized benefits law.

Our Partners

- Asian Pacific American Bar Association Educational Fund, *Sponsor* •
- Brem Foundation, *Sponsor* •
- George Washington Lamda Law Alumni Association, *Sponsor* •
- George Washington University Law Diversity Reception, *Sponsor* •
- George Washington University Black Law Students Association, *Sponsor* •
- Minority Corporate Counsel Association, *LMJ Scholarship Sponsor* •
- Minority Corporate Counsel Association Creating Pathways to Diversity®, *Sponsor* •
- Move the Needle Fund (Diversity Lab), *Pipeline Collective Participant* •
- National Bar Association Crump Law Camp, *Host* •
- NJ LEEP ((Law and Education Empowerment Project), *Sponsor* •
- Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs Wiley A. Branton, *Sponsor* •
- Western Justice Center Empower, *Sponsor* •
- Women's Bar Association Foundation, *Sponsor* •
- University of the District of Columbia, *Sponsor* •



Women's Bar Association Annual Dinner

Empowerment was in full bloom at the Women's Bar Association Annual Dinner on May 25th, 2023. Groom's Women's Initiative stood alongside the Women's Bar Association of the District of Columbia and the Women's Bar Association Foundation at the National Building Museum in Washington, DC. The event celebrated the incredible accomplishments of women in law, fostering an atmosphere of connection, inspiration, and forward-thinking discussions.

AFFINITY GROUPS

Groom understands that the firm's success – its ability to deliver superior solutions to clients – depends on identifying and removing barriers to success for those who are underrepresented in the legal field, particularly in private practice. Groom sponsors four affinity groups that are comprised of a mix of individuals with the background or identities outlined below and allies.

- **The Collective** brings together attorneys from racially diverse groups and allies, and **The Collective+** brings together attorneys from racially diverse groups, the LGBTQIA+ community, and allies. The goals of the Collective and The Collective Plus are to allow Groom's attorneys to build relationships within and beyond the group, to support our attorneys from diverse backgrounds, and to provide a space for attorneys to share experiences and strategies that will lead to greater inclusion and integration within the Groom community.
- The **Women's Initiative** promotes retention, advancement, networking, and leadership opportunities for women attorneys at Groom. The Women's Initiative hosts periodic meetings, panels, networking events and provides development tools to support women attorneys.
- The **Parent Affinity Group** allows working parents to trade information, attend programs on technical topics, such as family tax planning, and advise Groom on potential issues impacting parents. Thanks to input from our Parent Affinity Group, the DEI Committee helped create a ramp down/ramp up policy related to billable hours leading to and following parental leave, initiated the MilkStork program for nursing mothers who are traveling, and rolled out the Mindful Return program for mothers and fathers who are returning to the workplace following parental leave.

Groom actively supports attorneys who wish to participate with outside legal affinity groups and covers expenses for those who wish to attend diversity conferences or learning events. Our attorneys have attended conferences hosted by the National Bar Association ("NBA"), Minority Corporate Counsel Association ("MCCA"), LGBTQ+ Bar Association, National Asian Pacific American Bar Association ("NAPABA"), and more.

WORKFORCE

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 provided supplies for the camp and hosted a lunch program for the campers in our office.



“One of my longstanding DEI activities at Groom has been to support New Jersey LEEP (Law and Empowerment Project). Our work with Prudential got us involved with NJ LEEP many years ago. This program starts to work closely with underserved students while they are in high school - sending 25 each year to further their educations at great colleges across the US.”

- Lou Mazawey (Principal, DEI Advisory Board Member)



Minority Corporate Counsel Association ("MCCA") Scholarship Program

Groom is a 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.

WORKPLACE

Town Hall Meetings

Through 2023, we upheld our tradition of organizing inclusive town halls, providing a platform for candid and impactful dialogues on racial topics. Facilitated by Janet Crenshaw Smith from the Ivy Group, these sessions delved into the essence of effective allyship. The success of these conversations has inspired us to continue these Town Halls into 2024.

2023's town halls featured engaging themes such as:

"Disability Town Hall"

"Pride: Language of Inclusion"

"Allyship Town Hall"

Each session aimed to foster deeper understanding and actionable steps toward a more inclusive and equitable environment for all members of our firm.

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“As one of its most important functions, the DEI Committee helps to ensure our firm is a welcome place for all who call Groom their work home. Serving on the DEI Advisory Board allows me to be a part of that conversation and process, which is very meaningful to me.”

– Mike Marricco (Principal, DEI Advisory Board Member)

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Heritage Month Celebrations

Throughout the past year, Groom commemorated a range of cultural and historical milestones, each holding profound significance within our diverse community. During Black History Month, we honored the invaluable contributions and resilience of Black individuals, celebrating their impact on our shared history. On the International Day of Holocaust Remembrance, we solemnly reflected on the past, fostering understanding and empathy to ensure such atrocities never happen again. Asian

American Pacific Islander Heritage Month and Hispanic/Latinx Heritage Month allowed us to celebrate the rich tapestry of cultures, acknowledging their vibrant traditions and achievements.

Finally, during Native American Heritage Month, we paid homage to the wisdom, heritage, and enduring spirit of Indigenous communities. These observances underscored our commitment to honoring diversity, fostering inclusion, and learning from the diverse stories that shape our collective identity at Groom.

WORKPLACE

Disability Inclusion and Allyship

Groom welcomed attorney and advocate Melissa Kubit Angelides, who shared insights on navigating the legal landscape as an attorney with hearing loss. Melissa emphasized the vital importance of fostering inclusion, advocating for others, and embracing open-mindedness, highlighting their relevance not only in the legal profession but across diverse workplaces. The program aimed to educate participants on fostering inclusive environments for individuals with disabilities, establishing effective practices, and cultivating allyship, empowering them to create supportive and equitable workplaces.



Women's Initiative Boat Cruise

The 2023 Women's Initiative Boat Cruise was a memorable voyage on the Potomac! After a two-year hiatus, our beloved boat cruise made a triumphant return. This year's event was an exclusive happy hour boat tour aboard the iconic Miss Mallory, treating participants to stunning views of the city's landmarks. Despite a sprinkle of rain, our 3rd annual Potomac adventure was a joyous celebration with top-notch cuisine and cherished camaraderie.

Inter-Firm Collaboration

The collaboration between Groom's recruiting committee, professional development committee, and the DEI committee marks an impactful union dedicated to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion across the firm. By uniting forces, these committees aim to fortify the firm's readiness for the forthcoming transformations and guarantee the steadfast implementation of these fundamental principles in the days ahead.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Leadership Committee



Viv Hunter Turner
Principal, Chair



Shanna Cramer
Of Counsel



Stephanie Felder
Dir. Professional
Development & Diversity



Kalena Kettering
Associate

Advisory Board Members



Sarah Adams
Principal



Haley Dronfield
Senior HR Generalist



Jennifer Eller
Principal



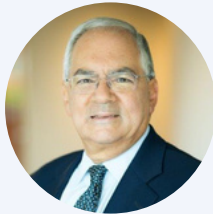
Catherine Ferguson
Associate



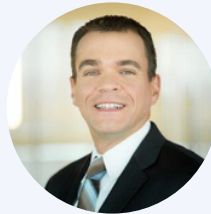
Rina Fujii
Associate



Michael Maricco
Principal



Lou Mazawey
Principal



Malcolm Slee
Principal



Christy Tinnis
Principal



Margaret Zhang
Assistant

****Prior past committee members who assisted in DEI matters include Joanne Jacobson**

To learn more about Groom's DEI program, please contact:

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