

Partners Notes

MCCA Reports Big Law Firms Make Diversity Strides Yet Disparities Still Persist

The Minority Corporate Counsel Association (MCCA) released its latest groundbreaking research report on the professional experiences of attorneys at Top 200 law firms, finding that while there have been commendable improvements to diversity programs in large law firms since its earlier studies done back in 2002 and 2003, "Big Law" has a long way to go before the legal profession becomes a true meritocracy.

This research study, the ninth one conducted by MCCA, is titled *Sustaining Pathways To Diversity: The Next Steps in Understanding and Increasing Diversity & Inclusion in Large Law Firms*. Reporting on the views of more than 4,400 practicing attorneys from more than 120 of the nation's top 200 most profitable law firms, MCCA's research is the most comprehensive and credible study to date about the professional experiences of Big Law attorneys.

Reflecting a broad sector of the legal profession, the respondents were diverse in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability status, age, experience, geographic location, and academic background. In fact, an outside statistician determined that the response rate gives MCCA's survey a confidence level of 99 percent, with a potential deviation of less than 2 percent for any one question.

Top Tier credentials are less important to success than is fitting within the majority culture. "MCCA's research reveals that when it comes to one's professional development, landing plum assignments and receiving satisfactory coaching/mentoring and feedback, whites enjoy a significant advantage over all minorities, and this advantage persists whether one's academic experience ranks as 'Top Tier' or 'Third Tier,'" said Veta T. Richardson, executive director of MCCA.

Some of the research highlights include:

- Many minorities who attended Tier 1 law schools reported having less access to mentoring, coaching and sponsorship than did all white lawyers, without regard to what tier law school these white lawyers attended.

- Whites who graduate from Tier 3 law schools are no less satisfied than their white peers who attended Tier 1 law schools, as 75 percent of all whites reported high levels of satisfaction with the coaching/mentoring and professional development that they receive in large law firms.

- Only half of the minorities who attended Tier 1 law schools reported that evaluations of their work were free of assumptions and stereotypes based on background, while nearly three-quarters of all the white attorneys, without regard to what tier law school they attended, reported work evaluations as free of assumptions.

- The group of lawyers who are most likely to consider law school grade point average and class rank less important when evaluating new hires is white females (associates and partners), with white male partners considering these factors most important in hiring deci-

sions. This underscores that while men and women may have different views about what "qualified" means, the findings suggest that these credentials are not considered essential to determining which lawyers receive the professional development they need to be successful in large law firms.

- Many white males reported feeling that the very programs intended to build more inclusive workplaces may be unfairly leaving them out. Several felt they were victims of "reverse discrimination" and as a result these lawyers tended to resent their firms' diversity efforts.

- Minorities and women reported lower satisfaction levels than white men regarding the work/life balance in their law firms. However, the perspectives shared by female associates were much closer to those of male associates than they were to female partners, illustrating that generational differences regarding work/life balance now appear to be more significant than gender differences, with younger male attorneys' views aligning more closely with that of younger women attorneys.

"We want to stress to law firms the importance of approaching diversity initiatives with sensitivity to ALL lawyers," said Ms. Richardson, who was in charge of the general oversight and financial responsibility of this research project. "MCCA believes when diversity programs are successfully executed, all attorneys and their firms benefit."

MCCA retained Dr. Arin N. Reeves of The Athens Group (www.athensgroup.net) to collaborate on this research and assist with all aspects of the project, including setting standards of research protocol, design of the survey questionnaire and instructions, determination of the research sampling, analysis of the survey findings, preparation of the written report, and development of the final set of recommendations. In addition to Dr. Reeves, MCCA's research team included Novations Group, Inc. which provided independent third-party data design, collection, consultation, and statistical analysis.

The demographic distribution across respondents was as impressive as the response rate. Background on who was surveyed and who responded includes:

- The survey was circulated to attorneys in 217 law firms, including all firms listed in the Am Law 200 list of top firms by revenue. All told, representatives from 124 different law firms responded. Nearly half of these firms had 10 percent or more attorneys responding.

- There was a total response of 4,404 lawyers, which equates to roughly 4.17 percent of the total attorney population in the 217 firms. With this sample size, the final results yielded a confidence level of 99 percent, per MCCA's independent statistician.

- 49.3 percent of the respondents were partners, 40.7 percent associates, and 8.2 percent were counsel/of counsel.

- 58.5 percent were male, and 41.5

percent were female.

- 22.6 percent self-identified as racial/ethnic minorities, and 75.1 percent as white/Caucasian (non-Hispanic).

- 4.9 percent self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

- 1.8 percent self-identified as a person with a disability.

The Minority Corporate Counsel Association advocates for the expanded hiring, retention and promotion of minority attorneys in corporate legal departments and the law firms that serve them. Since its founding in 1997, MCCA has emerged as the legal profes-

sion's knowledge leader on diversity issues, and its expanded platform offers solutions to diversity management challenges involving women, physically challenged, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender lawyers, in addition to attorneys of color (which remains its primary focus). MCCA advances its mission by publishing innovative research, illuminating diversity best practices, honoring diversity leadership with its prestigious Employer of Choice and Thomas L. Sager awards, and assisting diverse law students through the Lloyd M. Johnson, Jr. Scholarship Program.

Goodwin Procter Named "Law Firm Of The Year" For The Buyout Industry

Buyouts Magazine has awarded Goodwin Procter its coveted "Law Firm of the Year" award, which recognizes the most outstanding law firm serving the buyout industry. Goodwin Procter was chosen based on its experience in traditional leveraged buyouts as well as in the expanding growth equity sector, and in reflection of the practice's robust expansion in the new markets, organically and through the addition of lateral partners.

Buyouts announced the winner at its third annual awards dinner at the Grand Hyatt in New York City on March 26.

Goodwin Procter's Private Equity

Practice focuses on buyouts, recapitalizations and portfolio company transactions, representing both single investors and "clubs." The firm has a team of over 100 attorneys who specialize in buyouts, growth equity transactions and other private equity investments and M&A transactions throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia. In 2008, *Private Equity Analyst* ranked Goodwin Procter the second most active law firm in the country for buyout deals (based on volume). Goodwin Procter is also ranked by *Chambers USA* as one of the elite private equity practices in the United States.

William A. Dreier Is First Recipient Of Annual Award To Be Named After Him

William A. Dreier, a Member of the Bridgewater, New Jersey law firm of Norris McLaughlin & Marcus, P.A., will be the first recipient of the William A. Dreier Award from the Products Liability and Toxic Tort Section of the New Jersey State Bar Association (NJSBA). The Award, named after him, will be an annual award given to attorneys and jurists for excellence in and advancement of product liability and toxic tort law in New Jersey. He was presented with the award at the Annual Products Liability and Toxic Tort Section Seminar on Thursday, April 2, 2009, at the Hyatt Regency in New Brunswick.

"William A. Dreier's work as an attorney, jurist, author, lecturer and mediator has shown a sustained commitment to increasing an understanding of product liability and toxic tort law. In doing so, he has been generous of his time and his talent to the legal profession in general and the Products Liability and Toxic Tort Section of the New Jersey State Bar Association in particular. When they say 'he wrote the book on it,' they were obviously referring to Judge Dreier," stated John B. Kearney, Chair of the NJSBA Products Liability and Toxic Tort Section.

Judge Dreier heads the Norris McLaughlin & Marcus worldwide prod-

ucts liability practice, in addition to supervising commercial litigation and mediation and arbitration. He frequently lectures, mediates and arbitrates substantial Chancery and other disputes. In 2008, Judge Dreier was awarded the prestigious 2008 Medal of Honor, the highest award for an attorney, by the New Jersey State Bar Foundation ("NJSBF") for his professional excellence, as demonstrated by his accomplishments in the law and service to the profession and community throughout his career.

As an arbitrator and mediator, Judge Dreier has been chosen as a member of the New Jersey Panel of Distinguished Neutrals, International Institute for Conflict Prevention & Resolution, and the American Arbitration Association's National Panel of Commercial Arbitrators, its class action and complex case panels and its International Centre for Dispute Resolution. He is also a member of the Marie L. Garibaldi ADR Inn of Court, the New Jersey Association of Professional Mediators and a founding member of The Resolution Group (TRG). He regularly lectures on alternative dispute resolution.

Judge Dreier has published numerous articles on ADR, products liability and other subjects, in addition to 380 published judicial opinions.