
Diversity Initiative 2023: Flaster Greenberg

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Currently, the firm's diversity, equity, and inclusion committee consists of 12 members with a wide range of backgrounds and skills, who meet bi-monthly with a structured agenda to discuss and plan internal and external facing initiatives, strategies, budgeting, challenges, goals and brainstorm new ideas for the future of the firm.

To help achieve these goals, the DEI committee created an annual scholarship program providing \$2,500 each to two diverse and women law students from local universities. The scholarships are designed to assist deserving students with direct or indirect costs of attending law school. The goal is to help lessen the financial burden of earning their Juris Doctorate so the student can focus more on their education and worry less about how they might pay off their debt. We also are in the process of creating an additional scholarship in honor of the firm's first woman shareholder to increase our impact on these efforts.

What is one change you'd like to see all Pennsylvania firms make in order to promote diversity in the legal profession?

As a Philadelphia-based firm, we take diversity efforts for granted because of the high bar set by our neighborhood law firms. But we recognize that other law firms throughout the Commonwealth may not have implemented such strategic and long-term diversity goals. Implementing an action plan to cultivate diversity can seem like an overwhelming task given the time and manpower required to be dedicated to such a cause. We can empathize with this as our firm has been working towards implementing a more diverse workplace for over twenty (20) years. However, if a law firm hasn't started a DEI initiative by now, they need to. Efforts to implement diversity is ongoing and ever-changing. Firm leadership, attorneys, and staff should be working together, continuing their focus, learning, educating others, and taking the appropriate steps to meet their goals. Even the smallest of changes can lead to the greatest impacts.

Three years out from the nationwide protests against systemic inequality in America, do you feel the legal community is continuing to make good on its DEI goals, or is it struggling to live up to those promises?

A law firm can only look at the barometer they set for themselves to measure the success of such goals. We are proud to say that we are making positive strides, meeting our goals, and continually amending and setting new goals as diversity in the workplace is ever changing. Looking externally to our peer law firms in the Philadelphia Metro area, we are in awe at the dedication and efforts of individual attorneys and law firms as a whole. Such lofty goal setting and achievements have set a high bar in the surrounding legal community. Education is a lifelong process, and we are not too proud to say that we learn by the examples set by our peers and seek inspiration to elevate our work.

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What is the greatest challenge you see to increasing diversity of Pennsylvania’s legal landscape?

For the past few years, all industries have faced the same, pervasive issue – a lack of qualified talent in the labor force. If the availability of labor is lacking, the subset of diverse labor is lacking. The lack of human capital has a negative impact on the achievement of diversity goals as there is not enough labor, let alone diverse labor.

What can firms do to help increase the pipeline of diverse candidates looking to enter the legal profession?

All law firms have needed to pivot in their hiring practices in order to survive in the face of a lack of a qualified talent pool. To help increase the pipeline of diverse candidates, law firms need to explore non-traditional approaches to seeking candidates. Flaster Greenberg has found success partnering with legal associations such as the Philadelphia Diversity Law Group (PDLG). The PDLG is committed to fostering participation of a more diverse group of lawyers in the Greater Philadelphia area and is an authentic first step to building a pipeline of candidates. They create programs to enhance mentor and cultivate the law student, to facilitate with recruitment, retention, and advancement of each PDLG candidate. Such efforts benefit the local, legal community as a whole, as they are training young, diverse law students for a career in the legal profession. By developing a pool of qualified candidates, they are raising the playing field for the entire legal community.