

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council
April 10th, 2024 Meeting Minutes

The DEI Council advances diversity, equity, and inclusion and addresses the problems of bias, systemic inequities and underrepresentation in the legal profession and legal system.

Attendance

Member Attendees: Sunitha Anjilvel, Mia Little, Raina Wagner, Sharon Sakamoto, Christopher Swaby, Viveca Burnette, Noelle Chung, Mike Rhodes, Tom Ahearne, Miryam Gordon, SaNni Lemonidis

WSBA Staff: Diana Singleton, Saleena Salango

Meeting called to order at 12:05 p.m.

March Meeting Minutes

Sunitha Anjilvel moved to approve the meeting minutes. Miryam Gordon seconded and offered an amendment on page 1 of the minutes as follows: "Sharon Sakamoto ~~led~~ initiated a discussion..."

Update RE: Request for Information from King County JET

Sunitha introduced the letter written by WSBA Executive Director Terra Nevitt providing information on the decision not to move forward with the request for information on behalf of the DEI Council and that Gov. Jordan Couch has promised to share information received from an individual request he submitted.

Report on Western States Bar Association Conference

Govs. Anjilvel and Ahearne reported on a conference with bar associations from the Western States Bar Association Conference and the changing landscape of DEI in the legal profession, particularly states where there are statutes that prohibit DEI-related work in state positions. Gov. Ahearne shared that the Nevada State Bar Association has a medallion program as a marketing incentive for big firms, which they've expanded to include solo and small practice firms. Viveca Burnette asked whether this would be part of the DEI Plan as working towards a greater strategy, and that we take proactive rather than reactive approaches to DEI work.

New Member Recruitment and Selection

Raina Wagner introduced the volunteer application timeline for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Diana Singleton shared some updates to the application process, particularly for those seeking re-appointment. We currently have one vacancy that has not been filled. We will have two terms ending this year that aren't eligible for re-appointment. Diana asked all DEI Council members to spread the word about these openings so that we can receive applications before the May 31st priority deadline.

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

DEI Council and LLLT Program

Gov. Anjilvel updated the Council on outreach on this topic. Steve Crossland, the Chair of the LLLT Board (a Supreme Court appointed Board); he expressed desire to work with the Council but that the LLLT Board needs to approve this in order to move forward with a potential partnership. The LLLT Board will hold a special meeting in the next few weeks for a different issue and we expect to hear back after this time.

Subcommittee/Workgroup Updates

Membership Demographic Study – Diana shared that the Membership Demographic Study is continuing on and still needs to conduct focus groups in order to finalize the study. One barrier is the difficulty organizing MBA focus groups.

Pathways into the Profession – Christopher Swaby, Mia Little, and Saleena Salango shared that the Pathways to the Profession Summit date has been set for September 12th, 2024 at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, WA. Our next meeting will look at budgeting, program planning, event logistics.

DEI Plan – Miryam Gordon shared an update on the past few meetings and the work with IILP. There will be a strategic planning retreat in-person to focus specifically on the DEI Plan on June 28th. Similar to the Membership Demographic Study, IILP is struggling to get focus groups with MBAs to inform the plan.

Roundtable Discussion and/or Announcements

MBA Engagement & Buddy System – Raina Wagner shared feedback based on last LMBA meeting, where they expressed confusion about who to reach out to. We returned to the discussion on the MBA buddy idea.

Volunteer Engagement Policies – We discussed the levels of expectation of each volunteer member and clarification around enforcing them.

Meeting adjourned 1: p.m.