

The Pipeline for Under-Represented Minority Attorneys

June 2014

The legal industry in the United States faces a severe issue with the available pipeline of historically under-represented minority attorneys including African Americans and Hispanics. The representation of both groups in the legal profession is far below their representation in the US population, admissions of African Americans and Hispanics into law schools have declined in the past 3 years, and bar passage rates are historically low. Various programs have been developed by the industry to increase the representation of African Americans and Hispanics in law school. The sources below include the following: (1) an overview of legal industry and law school statistics for under-represented minorities, (2) underlying reasons and possible solutions, and (3) a sampling of pipeline programs and related resources for national law firms with a strong San Francisco Bay Area presence.

Raising the Bar: An analysis of African American and Hispanic/Latino diversity in the legal profession
http://blogs.technet.com/b/microsoft_on_the_issues/archive/2013/12/10/raising-the-bar-exploring-the-diversity-gap-within-the-legal-profession.aspx

While the African American and Hispanic representation in the country's workforce is 12% and 16% respectively, African Americans and Hispanics make up less than 5% each of the legal industry's workforce. This 2013 Microsoft-commissioned study points to bar passage rates as a significant barrier to under-represented minorities in the legal industry. The study examined data about the bar passage rates of African American and Hispanics that reveal that over 20% of African Americans and more than 10% of Hispanics who attend law school never pass the Bar Examination. This is a significant difference from the less than 5% of white law school graduates who never pass the Bar Examination. The study points to two ways to improve minority Bar passage rates: 1) making Bar preparation part of the law school curriculum; and 2) providing financial assistance to underrepresented minorities to pay for costly Bar preparation courses. Other solutions to the pipeline dilemma that the study highlights are flexible law degree programs such as night school programs; undergraduate pipeline programs aimed at underrepresented minorities; and scholarships and loan forgiveness programs.

Law School Admissions Council Diversity Data

<http://www.lsac.org/lisacresources/data/ethnic-gender-admits>
<http://www.lsac.org/lisacresources/data/ethnic-gender-applicants>

LSAC data reveals that admissions of Black and Hispanic law students have decreased between 2012 and 2013 by 3.9% and 1.3% respectively. Moreover, overall law school admission is down over 9% for the second year in a row. Additionally, between 2012 and 2013, there was 9.4% drop in Black applicants to law school and a 7.7% drop in Hispanic applicants.

The American Bar Association and Law School Admission Council Diversity Pipeline Directory

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/diversity_pipeline/resources/pipeline_diversity_directory.html

This resource is a searchable database that allows law firms, law schools, prospective law students and more to find programs that aim to increase the representation of minorities in the legal field. Law firms can, for example, use the database to find local mock trial programs for which their attorneys can serve as volunteers. The data base allows users to search for pipeline programs at the pre high school, high school, community college, college or university, law school and even adult career changing levels.

Street Law Program

http://www.streetlaw.org/en/programs/law_firm_diversity_pipeline_program

The Street Law Program partners law firms and in-house legal departments with high school students in an effort to increase students' interest in the law and the legal field. The Street Law Program is partnered with the National Association of Law Placement and is a well-established national program that can provide an opportunity for law firms to advance diversity in the legal field. One example of a Bay Area pipeline outreach program pulled from the data base is an ABA high school outreach program that brings volunteer attorneys into underprivileged high schools for career presentations.

California Bar Foundation Diversity Scholarship

<http://www.calbarfoundation.org/div-scholarship-fund.html>

The California Bar Foundation Diversity Scholarships are awarded to diverse future law students to help pay for tuition, books and materials in their first year of law school. The scholarship exists because of generous donations from various law firms who are able to name the recipient with the firm's name.

King Hall Outreach Program

<http://www.law.ucdavis.edu/prospective/outreach/khop.html>

This UC Davis program is aimed at first generation students or those who come from economically under-served community or background college sophomores. In a four to eight week summer course, students are prepared for the LSAT, taught about the law school admissions process, and advised on what to expect in law school.