

**Minutes of Diversity Committee Meeting at Midyear Meeting
of Florida Bar Business Law Section, on January 10, 2013**

Attendees :

Leyza Blanco, Chair	Regina S. Hogan
Detra Shaw-Wilder, Vice Chair	Yolanda Paschal
Hon. John Olson	Hon. Paul Hyman
Hon. Gill Freeman	April Davidson
Arnell Bryant-Willis, Diversity Initiatives Manager, The Florida Bar	Steph Nagin, Executive Council, Chair Elect
Michael Higer	Hon. Bill Van Nortwick, Executive Council
April Davidson	Brian Gart, Executive Council, Chair
Joshua Brown	Amir Isaiah
	John Dorris

Sections Represented:

BKC/UCC	Antitrust/Franchise
Bankruptcy judicial Liaison	Computer/Tech
IP	Corporations/Securities
Business Litigation	

Meeting called to Order.

The meeting began with a visit from the **Executive Council Leadership** (Brian Gart, Steph Nagin, and Hon. William Van Nortwick). Chair Gart discussed the significant increase in the budget allotted to the Diversity Committee (\$20k starting in June, up from \$2.5k this year) and stressed that the EC needs to know how the committee will use this money. He wants new diversity initiatives, i.e., more than picnics and law student outreach. He also stressed that he wants to see measurable returns from these investments.

Diversity Chair Blanco discussed the Committee's **Leadership Initiative**, including a panel presentation on how to ascend to leadership in the section, and asked Section Chair Gart to set an appropriate time for the presentation so that it would be meaningfully attended. Section Chair Gart suggested that the presentation take place at the Labor Day Retreat and that it should also be a Membership initiative. Chair Blanco expressed concern that the retreat is expensive and it might be hard to get people there. Section Chair Gart responded that the Boca location should help and suggested that committee could use a portion of its budget to defray these costs for some attendees.

Section Chair Gart stated that the committee can takeover the handling of the **Fellowship Program** immediately. Michael Higer stated that the program does not work well if it is not well advertised early. Higer suggested in-person outreach to local voluntary bar and student bar associations. Arnell Bryant-Willis said she could facilitate outreach to these organizations.

Diversity Vice Chair Detra Shaw-Wilder suggested that instead of **Diversity Committee Liaisons** being appointed by committee leadership, they should be appointed by the EC. This change would increase the visibility of the liaisons and underline the importance of this role. Another member suggested that liaisons should be from different cities so that they can reach out to the voluntary bar associations in their area. Higer suggested that, at the EC Meeting, Chair Blanco call out the committees whose liaison did not attend this meeting. Chair Blanco said she had tried this in the past but found it ineffective. Instead she will use positive feedback, but give Section Chair Gart a list of the committees who were not present. Vice Chair Shaw-Wilder also suggested that we follow up directly with the liaisons who were not present and reinforce that they are expected to attend or send someone in their place.

Section Vice Chair Steph Nagin stated that he had a negative experience with the **Mentor/Mentee Program**. Mentees did not take advantage of the relationship (including offers to sponsor attendance at section meetings), did not answer his emails, or made excuses. Chair Blanco stated that the founder of the Miami-Dade Diversity Picnic has experienced the same problem and found that in person delivery of these messages is necessary to reach the targeted audience.

Judge Freeman suggested **Implicit Bias Training** for section leadership and members. Judge Freeman explained that the cause of most discrimination is unconscious bias and that to combat such implicit bias, individuals must consciously recognize the bias and avoid its effect on decision making. Wilhelmina Tribble provides such training. Various forums for the training were discussed including the section lunch at the retreat, next year's mid-year meeting, and next year's Miami-Dade Bench-Bar Conference. Bryant-Willis stated the Florida Bar is offering a similar training program for their staff called "True Colors." Chair Blanco suggested starting the training as a program for a lunch and then growing it into a standalone program once we have more support. Bryant-Willis noted that voluntary bar associations can get a \$1.5k grant from the Board of Governors. Deadline for applications is February 18th.

Chair Blanco gave a report of the committee's participation in the **Kozyak Minority Mentoring Picnic**. The section sponsored a booth that was hosted by members of the section. 58 law students signed up. Discussion had about ways to effectively follow-up on the student contacts made at the picnic.

Chair Blanco discussed the **Hillsborough County Diversity Networking Event** scheduled for Saturday, February 16th. This event used to be a picnic, but they brought it inside the Chester H. Ferguson Law Center. April Davidson will spearhead finding people to attend the Diversity Committee Booth at the event. Chair Blanco will reorder the pen/highlighters we used as give-aways at prior events. We still have a banner from past events.

Blanco discussed the initiative to allow **Self Reporting of LGBT Status on the Florida Bar Renewal Forms**. Section Chair Gart suggested that the best way to proceed would be for the Diversity Committee to author a memorandum stating the case for this change and noting examples where it has been done. Section leadership could then use this justification for approaching the Big Bar. Bryant-Willis noted that only 3% of the bar self report as African American, although the true percentage is probably between 6 and 8%. Higer and Bryant-Willis

will talk to the Bar's survey guru, Michael Garcia, to obtain any insight he may have. Judge Olsen and Davidson will receive feedback from Higer and Bryant-Willis and begin work on the memorandum as appropriate.

Blanco discussed attending the **Voluntary Bar Association Conference** to be put on by the Big Bar in Clearwater in September. She will get more information about the event and costs to attend as a vendor, attendee, or both

Discussion had regarding development of a Lit Skills Program for minority lawyers interested in Business Litigation. Judge Freeman described the program she conducted with the Florida Bar. Char Blanco suggested jointly sponsoring the Lit Skills Program with two other voluntary bar organizations. Chair Blanco will coordinate and apply for a grant from the Florida Bar Foundation.

Committee adjourned.