

## MEMORANDUM

October 31, 2008

TO: Ritu Bhasin, Board Liaison, Diversity Section

FROM: Dana Morris, Chair Diversity Section

RE: Second Quarter Report

CC: Fred Thrasher, NALP Deputy Director

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This report provides information on Section activities and includes updates on the Section's Work-group Projects and 2009 NALP conference Diversity Reception since the previous report. It also recaps environmental scanning issues discussed during our recent conference call.

On October 24, I held a conference call with members to update the group on issues being handled by the work-groups and to elicit feedback on proposed plans for handling upcoming tasks on the year's agenda. The following summarizes the key points of the discussion I'd like to share with the Board:

### **Update on Work-group Projects**

#### **a) Pipeline Initiatives**

Susan Robinson has been appointed to help coordinate the NALP/Street Law Legal Diversity Pipeline Project with the NALP staff and this charge is no longer included under the auspices of the Diversity Section. In lieu of this project, I thought the Section should consider ways to advance the NALP membership's awareness of other pipeline efforts being undertaken by NALP member schools and employers. While the NALP website highlights a number of ongoing employer initiatives, there are probably many other projects, particularly on the law school side, that could be added to the site. We wondered whether the Board would agree that it would be useful to survey NALP members on this issue? The survey could be lead by the Diversity Section and coordinated Judith Collins, if approved.

#### **b) Association of Law Firm Diversity Professionals (ALFDP) Collaboration**

For some time, the NALP Board and staff have been seeking ways to establish and foster an ongoing working relationship with the ALFDP. Several of the Section's members are also members of the ALDPF and they've continued to express deep interest in helping to move the relationship forward. Towards those ends, I have been brainstorming with Marcy Cox (NALP's liaison to the ALFDP) and our ALFDP members about the possibility of extending the olive branch by inviting the ALFDP to attend the Diversity Reception at the 2009 NALP conference. The invitation could be extended on behalf of NALP by the Diversity Section or Marcy, as NALP's liaison, or both. Signatories could include our resident ALFDP members who could present the invitation at the ALFDP's next meeting in mid-November. So far the idea has gained traction with Marcy Cox and ALFDP members in the Section. I'd welcome the Board's feedback on the idea.

#### **c) Diversity Best Practices Guide**

Karen Hester is heading up this Work-group and I elicited more volunteers to help on the project during our recent conference call. Gwen Tobin and Crystal Deazle will be assisting on the project, with the goal of updating the Best Practices Guide by January 2009.

### **2009 NALP Education Conference - Diversity Reception Speaker (April 3, 6pm.)**

Since the last report, I've been in touch with GLBT Section Chair Andrew Chapin to discuss potential speakers for the reception on April 3, 2009. I've also elicited suggestions from the Section and the following people have been suggested: Eric Holder (former U.S. DOJ Deputy Attorney General), John Payton, (former WilmerHale partner/civil rights lawyer and new Director –Counsel and President of the NAACP Legal Defense & Education Fund), Yale Law Professor Drew Days, III (founding director of the Orville H. Schell Jr. Center for Human Rights). An invitation has been extended to Eric Holder but he hasn't been confirmed. John Payton will be invited next if I cannot confirm Mr. Holder within the next two weeks.

### **Environmental Scanning – Issues on the Minds of Members**

Several members on the last conference call expressed concern about the effect the economic downturn will have on employer diversity recruitment efforts. On the school side, there's worry about the fewer number of offers being made this fall and how deep in the class employers will recruit next fall if the economy doesn't pick up. Members also voiced concerns about diversity job fairs held later this recruiting season – will participating law firms will seriously consider candidates interviewed, rescind any offers made, or just pull out of the job fairs planned for 2009.

There's a lot of concern about employers and students upholding the NALP Part V. Timing Guidelines on offers. A few members from our New York Region mentioned reports of NYC firms rescinding offers during the 45-day period or contacting students to discourage them from taking offers already extended. There have also been reports of students holding onto more than 5 offers, with the idea that firms aren't abiding by the NALP Guidelines, so they won't either -- and they're talking about it on the law blogs (See the Above the Law blog, Oct. 23). Members in other markets are seeing firms not make 100% offers and few rescinding offers but to lesser extent than the NYC market. Overall, there's just heck of a lot of concern on both sides about how things are going to shake out with the economy. I'm encouraging Section members to share their feedback on the NALP's Part V. teleconference calls this November.

In conclusion, the above summarizes the Section's recent communications and progress. I look forward to receiving the Board's feedback on the ideas proposed above. Thanks.