Diversity Champions:
NALP’s Celebration of Leaders Moving Diversity Forward

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The NALP Diversity Champions Project was an opportunity to get to know some of the most innovative diversity and inclusion practitioners in the industry. Each was carefully selected through an intensive search that included the feedback and advice of NALP’s former Presidents, current and former Diversity and Inclusion Section chairs, former and present SOGIE (formerly LGBT) Section chairs, Regional Representatives, and work group members.

Candidates were interviewed and their careers and achievements chronicled in a format we hope will be helpful to you. We have included their individual stories, but have also consistently highlighted three pieces of information in each profile: a definition of diversity, advice to those pursuing a career in diversity and inclusion, and favorite diversity and inclusion initiative.

In drafting this resource the work group found three themes that ran through each Champion’s story. First, resilience. When faced with adversity, uncertainty, or lack of support, each persevered. Their collective character is peppered with optimism and guided by a learning mindset. Almost all talked of failure as a learning opportunity. Second, inclusive entrepreneurialism. Where there was no path, Champions blazed one. They did big things: launched their own companies and nonprofit organizations, and developed new roles in existing organizations to create the platform for change they wanted to see. Nonetheless, each will tell you that change is only possible through the collective impact of a multitude of small efforts, and thus collaboration and cooperation is imperative. Finally, diversity. Each Champion is tackling a slightly different issue from a slightly different angle. What unifies their efforts, however, is that each is well versed in both identifying opportunities to add value to the profession and mobilizing their efforts and the efforts of others toward a common goal.

Our goals in developing this resource were to provide examples of diversity initiatives for others to emulate, and to provide a career path model for diversity and inclusion professionals. What we got was that and a generous helping of inspiration. The Diversity Champions work group is honored to have had the opportunity to celebrate the dedication and impact of these Champions and we are so thankful to the Champions for providing us with a glimpse into the passion behind their pursuits.

Diversity Champions Work Group:

Jenia Bacote  
Lori Lorenzo  
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Michelle Vodenik
Champions Working on the Pipeline
Genhi Givings Bailey, Director of Diversity and Inclusion at DLA Piper LLP (US) is sprinting toward a legal profession that does not need diversity and inclusion professionals. While most see diversity as a marathon, Genhi points out that the objective of implementing diversity and inclusion programming in the legal workplace is not to be doing it for forever: “In fact, the sooner we can achieve the goal of leveling the playing field and making sure that every individual has a fair chance at a successful career, the better.”

Genhi’s career path has been a lattice instead of a straight line. Diversity is her third career; her first was managing a million-dollar, high-end catering company, then after returning to school to get her law degree, she established a career in the music industry, advising independent artists and small businesses in the areas of entity formation, contracts, and intellectual property rights. Interestingly, Genhi cites diversity and inclusion challenges among the reasons for her short tenure as a music lawyer, but views this experience as an important part of the work she does today.

Categorizing herself as diverse on the basis of gender and race, she also cites her eclectic upbringing as a basis for diversity; by the time she started high school in Toronto, she had lived in six different cities. She explains: “This, and numerous other non-traditional experiences, forced me to adapt early and quickly to new situations and people.” Altruistic and practical, Genhi cites twin goals for her continued passion for diversity and inclusion work: first, a belief that our country and our world would be better if people looked at one another as individuals and took the time to enjoy the commonalities and appreciate the differences; and second, the opportunity to help others fully realize their potential and to thrive in their careers.

In partnership with other leaders across the firm, Genhi pursues her goals by working to develop and implement initiatives that address a variety of issues, including work-life integration; recruitment, retention, advancement, and leadership opportunities; and education on topics such as unconscious bias and emotional intelligence. Her favorite program, however, is DLA Piper’s Undergraduate Internship Program, a diversity pipeline initiative. This six-week program provides exposure and experience to diverse undergraduate students. Initially a work placement initiative not directly tied to legal pipeline work, Genhi soon recognized that the firm could use the internships as a means to boost the pool of diverse law school candidates: “It made sense that if we could work with undergraduates we could introduce them to the law firm environment early and help them appreciate what it would take for them to be successful in law school and eventually in
practice.” The program has been a success. Among the 24 alumni, two have graduated from law school, five currently are enrolled, and 11 currently are preparing and/or applying to law school.

While successful, the program has had challenges. Genhi and her team have worked diligently to ensure that students are well integrated during their short time with the firm and that they are exposed to substantive work. She also notes that the success of programs like this one requires commitment not just to hard skills, but also to soft skills combined with continuous follow-up, feedback, and individual attention.

Genhi notes that any diversity work requires that one “be prepared to work harder than you’ve ever worked before [and also] to connect with people in new and interesting ways.” For her, an effective diversity and inclusion professional has an ability to listen to and hear what others are saying, as well as patience, courage, empathy, a desire to put others first, a sense of humor, and a strong sense of optimism.

**Definition of diversity:** For me, diversity is recognition that, by virtue of our cultural conditioning, we each “show up” differently. In the workplace, we tend to focus on the obvious differences, but it goes deeper than that. Inclusion is the next level — what do we do with the diversity we have. Diversity and inclusion are two sides of the same coin, but I would say building and sustaining inclusion is a more difficult proposition because it requires change.

**Best advice to those pursuing a career in diversity and inclusion:** Understand clearly why you want to pursue this profession. Then, develop a thick skin and check your ego at the door — you will have difficult conversations and it will be important not to take anything personally and to meet people where they are. We are all at different points of the diversity and inclusion journey!

**Favorite diversity initiative:** DLA Piper’s Undergraduate Internship Program, which is a six-week program that introduces undergraduate students to the practice of law, prepares them to be successful in law school, and creates the foundation for a strong professional network.
“Live life to the fullest; love openly and freely and most importantly ... be relevant ... try to make a positive difference, each and every day.”

Tracey West values tenacity. She could not have built her position as Associate Dean: External Relations, Diversity & Inclusion at Boston College Law School (“BC Law”) without it. With responsibility for developing and overseeing initiatives to increasing the yield and matriculation of strong, diverse law students, Tracey develops programs to assist with diverse students’ successful transitions to BC Law and the legal profession and their academic success during law school, as well as faculty trainings surrounding D & I initiatives. She also fosters relationships with external sponsors committed to attaining diversity in the legal profession. These initiatives have proven instrumental with increased employment opportunities.

Ironically, despite her success in the field, Tracey never envisioned working in diversity and inclusion. A New York City native, Tracey received her undergraduate and law degrees from Georgetown University and Georgetown University Law Center. She subsequently moved to Boston and worked as a trial attorney in the public and private sector and as a clinical law instructor at Harvard Law School. During this time, Tracey faced overt racism, both professionally and personally. Despite some assumptions that “the little black girl sitting at the other table across the courtroom” was less skilled than her white colleagues, Tracey learned how to capitalize on her opponents’ biases and developed a thick skin. Indeed, such experiences have empowered Tracey’s ability to discuss the direct and indirect impact of racism with the various constituencies with whom she now works.

Tracey’s position with BC Law was one of the first diversity and inclusion positions at any law school, with a direct report to the Dean, which has allowed her the opportunity to be innovative in developing new initiatives. Influenced by mentors from within and outside the law school, Tracey conceived of and launched the LAHANAS program. LAHANAS, an acronym representing the racially diverse and LGBTQ student organizations at BC Law, systematically works to demystify the 1L experience for diverse students, many of whom are first generation college graduates. The comprehensive program has demonstrated impressive results.

The optional year-long 1L LAHANAS program begins in the summer prior to students’ matriculation at BC Law with an intensive two-day retreat. During the retreat, incoming LAHANAS students attend presentations about the upcoming 1L year, and receive an introduction to various types of legal practices, “JD advantage” opportunities, and Boston’s legal community. The program also includes monthly workshops during the academic year that address the interests and concerns of LAHANAS students. The program is supported by external partners and requires
the support of several internal constituencies. Tracey highlights the importance of two key skills in developing this initiative: first, collaboration with others at all stages of program development and implementation, including collaboration with those in other industries; and second, patience, patience, patience.

Despite some initial challenges primarily centered on program buy-in, with the help of a few institutional sponsors the initiative has been so successful that even early naysayers are now supportive. In its first year the LAHANAS program produced the highest number of invitations to African American students to participate on BC Law law journals, as well as the highest number of 1L diverse summer scholarships received. Moreover, students were actively engaged inside and outside of their classes and were confident in their interactions with their professors. Tracey explains, “They felt appreciated and supported, which, in turn, empowered them to actively engage.” LAHANAS students embraced leadership roles, participated and excelled in internal and external competitions, and by 3L year, many had accepted permanent, competitive employment offers. Today LAHANAS students continue to experience success at the law school and graduates are active alumni.

Tracey remains enthusiastic and dedicated to the success of the program and the individual LAHANAS students. She notes that others can impact diverse students without building an entire program by understanding that there is value in mentoring across differences. She says despite “[an] expectation that only someone from a diverse background can truly appreciate the challenges affiliated with this mission … some of the most significant relationships that have directly enhanced my professional development have been with those whom I have least expected.” The key is to ensure that both parties have the ability and willingness to learn from each other: “Learning to view from diverse perspectives enhances our abilities to be more empathetic and, as such, stronger mentors and advocates for our colleagues and clients.”

**Definition of diversity:** My personal definition of diversity is broad and includes the obvious: race, gender, sexual orientation, and physical disabilities, but I also include ethnic or religious backgrounds, socio-economic status, and learning styles and/or challenges. I have really come to appreciate the significance of creating an inclusive environment, because if an organization is authentically inclusive, diversity will follow.

**Best advice to those pursuing a career in diversity and inclusion:** Understand why you want to pursue this avenue. Then, develop a thick skin and check your ego at the door, as it is often difficult to interact in a biased environment and observe injustices.

**Favorite diversity initiative:** The 1L LAHANAS program. LAHANAS is an acronym that represents the law school’s racially diverse and LGBTQ student organizations. This optional, year-long program is designed to assist diverse 1L students with their transition to law school, including networking opportunities with our active alumni and other leaders in the legal profession. This initiative also includes leadership opportunities for 2L and 3L LAHANAS students.
Marcy Cox
Assistant Dean for Career Development, University of Miami School of Law

“For of those to whom much is given, much is required.”

For Marcy, mentoring runs deep. The daughter of educators, she credits her parents with being forward thinking role models who helped her understand the human condition and the importance of serving others. Marcy has been investing in others her whole professional career.

Marcy started her career in the typical fashion, going from law school into private practice then in-house. After moving from Los Angeles to Miami for an in-house position, she soon found herself with an opportunity to move into a law school setting. She had been eyeing a job in education for some time and seized the opportunity presented. Once she was in the career development office, Marcy’s desk became the landing zone for anything in the school that involved diverse students — from housing to recruiting to scholarships and more. Marcy read everything she could get her hands on and attended every conference she could find to quickly get up to speed. The more she learned, the more she wanted to learn, and the more she wanted to help. As she moved into leadership positions both at the University of Miami and with NALP, she reflects that she “made the most important decision of [her] career” when she hired a full-time diversity professional to work in the career development office. This decision allowed diversity to become systematically integrated, or institutionalized, into everything the office did. And although Marcy’s diversity professional was housed in the career services office, the role touched many of the law school’s functions, as Marcy’s work had done previously.

Marcy has done diversity work in a variety of settings, on committees, task forces, and commissions through NALP and in her community through volunteer, foundation, and board work. Of all that she has done, she is most proud of her work on 1L minority hiring programs. She has seen firsthand the impact that first-year work experience can have on employment outcomes, and because she keeps in touch with a number of students whom she has helped over the years, she has had the great joy of watching those 1Ls grow into successful lawyers, working hard to positively impact their own circles of influence. Many of those 1Ls credit their participation in a 1L hiring program to their post-graduate career success. Today, after more than 15 years in law school career development and diversity work, Marcy is energized to continue pursuing diversity work because “of the basic need in the profession for expanded hiring, promotion, and retention of diverse attorneys. Ultimately when all is said and done, it is important to [Marcy] that law schools and legal employers do the right thing in matters of diversity and inclusion.”

When reflecting on her own diversity, Marcy looks not at the challenges she has faced because she is African American (challenges she calls “minor”), but instead focuses on the opportunities she has
been able to provide in the name of diversity. She notes that “when presented with obstacles, [she] chose to rise above or go around the obstacle in order to reach [her] desired destination.” She attributes the resilience necessary to do this to her upbringing, the education she received, and the advice and guidance of mentors along the way. In fact, she stresses the importance of mentoring in shaping the future. She fondly recalled her experience mentoring kids in an East Los Angeles facility where most of the kids were African American or Hispanic. Marcy chose to work with boys because the need in that demographic was greatest. She met with the boys on average four hours a week. While she worked with many over time, two boys deeply impacted Marcy. The first had been abandoned by his mother at age 11 and ended up living on the street. He was picked up by an older man and forced to exchange sexual favors for shelter, food, and clothing. When the man started physically abusing him, he returned to the street and became a prostitute because that was all he knew how to do. He was a kind and beautiful kid, who at 14 spent his time in jail surrounded by rapists, robbers, and murderers. The second was a kid who had been shot seven times in a drive-by and survived. He was arrested because he was in a car with gang members attempting to retaliate against the gang members who attacked him. He came from a good home with a single mother who worked two jobs and wasn’t at home when he got home from school, so he hit the streets in South Central LA and started hanging out with the wrong crowd. Both of these young men lived out their youth in the facility, and while Marcy has lost touch with both, she passionately believes her time with them is one of the most meaningful contributions she has ever made either personally or professionally and is confident she made a meaningful impact on them, too.

Definition of diversity: “Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being invited to dance.”
— Verna Myers

Best advice to those pursuing a career in diversity and inclusion: Develop strong leadership skills, be passionate about what you do, be open to change, and follow your moral compass.

Favorite diversity initiative: 1L Employment Programs because they open the door to valuable work experience after the second year and culminate with greater opportunities for satisfying entry-level positions following graduation.
Valerie Jackson

Senior Advisor to the Management Committee and Firmwide Director of Diversity & Inclusion

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Valerie’s passion is people. She says, “Some people wear their hearts on their sleeves; I wear mine on my business card!”

Valerie started her career as a securities and corporate governance lawyer, practicing both at a large U.S.-based law firm and in-house. She was practicing in-house when she was recruited to lead a diversity program at a U.S. law firm. There she discovered an interest in and then a passion for the business of law. She learned early that the core function of a diversity role in any organization is adding value. In her current position, she has two principal functions that nicely complement each other: managing the firm’s global diversity efforts and serving as an internal counselor and advisor to the firm’s Management Committee and other senior leaders.

As an ethnically diverse woman in the world of finance, Valerie was accustomed to being the only woman in the room, and often the only person of color. Moreover, she was and continues to often be the youngest person in the room. For Valerie, these were all opportunities that led to growth. Moreover, except for the “heightened exposure to other people’s ignorance,” she doesn’t believe that being diverse disadvantaged her over the course of her career.

Today, Valerie’s biggest challenge is what she calls “pushing the boulder uphill every day.” Resilience, she notes, is what keeps her going, but patience and persistence help too. Collectively, these skills allow Valerie to continue each day “to overcome (or outwit or outwait) close-mindedness” through innovative diversity and inclusion initiatives. And while the work isn’t without its challenges, the challenges, Valerie says, are outweighed by the great joy that comes with helping people find success and happiness at work.

Her favorite diversity initiative, the K&L Gates Kickstarter Program, focuses on just that. Kickstarter is a multi-faceted program designed to educate first-year law students who self-identify as diverse about life in private practice at the firm. It features a curriculum she designed which is taught by the firm’s lawyers and includes mentoring opportunities, resources, and educational sessions for the students. While starting the program was difficult because the competition for the attention of diverse law school talent was fierce, Valerie charged ahead and piloted the program to great success. Today the program runs in six K&L Gates offices, interacts with ten law schools, and has impacted nearly 50 diverse students thus far. Multiple Kickstarter participants have received
offers to be summer associates, and in 2015, one of the first Kickstarter participants will join the firm as a full-time associate!

To others interested in starting a similar initiative Valerie advises that a growth mindset is key. Start small, but think big. Be willing to take a risk and, when necessary, try again. She notes that no program will accomplish everything, nor will every initiative be successful right out of the gate. When things don’t work, Valerie reminds herself that even bad experiences are “learning experiences that prepare us for future success.” She also stressed the importance of both understanding how any new initiative adds value to the organization, and being able to describe that value concisely to others.

Valerie credits her achievements to a critical few champions who not only advised her along the way but created opportunities for her. She also feels fortunate to have had “two incredible, hard-working parents who were my role models” and an especially close relationship with her mom. A generous mentor to others, Valerie notes that the most important element in any mentor relationship is to build a genuine connection and remember that everyone has room to learn and grow.

**Definition of diversity:** Diversity refers to the myriad differences between individuals. Inclusion enables individuals to come to work as their full selves knowing they will be respected and valued.

**Best advice to those pursuing a career in diversity and inclusion:** Always think strategically about how you can add value to an organization and to individuals, and be genuine in your interactions.

**Favorite diversity initiative:** K&L Gates Kickstarter — a multi-week, multi-seminar program designed to educate first-year law students who self-identify as diverse about private practice at K&L Gates.
Champions Working on Making the Practice of Law More Inclusive
William “Bill” Cook began his career practicing law 26 years ago, when diversity initiatives were few. Even as he engaged in full-time law practice, Bill felt that diversity work was his duty to be carried out in appreciation of the struggles and sacrifices of African Americans who came before him. His work continues today with the goal of continuing efforts to remove any remaining barriers for the next generations of minority, women, and other diverse attorneys.

Early in his career, as an associate with Arnold & Porter in Washington, DC, Bill was one of the original founders of the minority affinity group at the firm, referred to as MAP (Minorities at Arnold & Porter). At that time, there were few law firms with affinity groups. MAP and other Arnold & Porter affinity groups, Bill says proudly, were organic, created and led by the diverse attorneys who belonged to them. Organized soon after a minority associate witnessed racially insensitive statements being made at a meeting, MAP provided a source of mutual support and a vehicle through which to communicate with firm management. This foundational coalition of minority lawyers provided the group with a collective voice, and the firm, to its great credit, acted swiftly and appropriately in handling the situation.

In 1995, when Bill made partner, there was a very brief period when the firm found itself with no African American associates. Concerned, the firm “doubled down” on diversity recruitment and retention efforts. Although the firm was committed to diversity and was one of the first major firms in Washington, DC, with an African American partner, this turning point in its evolution caused the firm to begin undertaking innovative initiatives to attract and retain a diverse workforce. The firm appointed Bill as a point person for minority recruitment and later appointed him as Chair of the Diversity Committee.

In his time as Chair of the firm’s Diversity Committee, Bill has had the opportunity to shape the firm’s definition of “diversity” and “inclusion” — both defined broadly by the firm. Bill has also been instrumental in helping the partnership better understand diversity and inclusion issues. Bill believes the biggest barrier to inclusion and advancement is unconscious bias, which in some ways is worse than overt racism. When unconscious bias is at play, the perpetrator may not even realize he or she is discriminating against a diverse attorney. The diverse attorney may not be sure whether a desired assignment or other opportunity is denied because of race or gender or if she is simply not as good as the white male attorney who received the assignment or opportunity. Bill believes such bias may underlie some disparities that continue to exist in law firms, such as the small number of diverse attorneys who hold management and leadership positions in firms or are elected to...
compensation and other important committees, and the small number of minority attorneys who inherit the institutional clients in law firms.

When reflecting on his own career, Bill doesn’t dwell on whether he has been denied opportunities because of unconscious bias. Instead, he makes a point of getting clear feedback when denied an opportunity and clearly expressing interest in future opportunities. Along the way, Bill has benefitted from mentorship. Early in his career, Bill’s mentor was a white male partner who recognized his talents and who gave him increasing responsibility. Bill committed to exceptional work product, and his mentor committed to guiding Bill through the challenging ascent to partnership. When the time came, the mentor was Bill’s biggest advocate for election to partnership: "Without his support, I am not sure I would have stayed in a law firm." When Bill now interacts with diverse attorneys, he stresses the importance of building relationships with as many mentors as you can, noting that your biggest or most important advocate will not necessarily be a diverse person. The advocate may be, for example, a non-minority partner who recognizes your ability and commitment and wants you on his or her team.

The commitment that Bill has to diversity is largely driven by his personal experience as an African American attorney, and his sense of duty and responsibility. Still, sometimes progress is painfully slow. He encourages other diversity professionals not to be discouraged by the pace of progress. Change is often slow and incremental; nonetheless, every small change lays a foundation of hope for what can be achieved tomorrow.

**Definition of diversity:** Bill helped to author both his firm’s diversity and inclusion statements:

“Diversity is an inclusive concept and encompasses many different aspects, including but not limited to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, veteran’s status, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local laws. We strive to have a workplace that is comfortable and welcoming for everyone.”

“Arnold & Porter seeks, through its diversity policy, to promote the treatment of every person with dignity and respect, value the contribution that each person makes as an individual, enable our colleagues to be comfortable being themselves, and encourage every person to realize his or her potential. The Firm believes that each individual has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunity.”

**Best advice to those pursuing a career in diversity and inclusion:** Never underestimate the value of networking and staying in contact with the diversity professionals you meet. It is important to have a network of professional friends who are available to listen to your ideas or offer potential solutions to problems. They are a valuable resource because they are likely to have encountered similar issues.

**Favorite diversity initiative:** MAP (Minorities at Arnold & Porter). I helped develop this affinity group as an associate at the firm. At that time, there were few law firms with affinity groups. I am proud of MAP and the affinity groups for women and LGBT attorneys at the firm because they developed organically, i.e., they were created by — and are led by — the diverse attorneys that belong to them.
Karen Hester

Executive Director of the Center for Legal Inclusiveness

"Effective participation by members of all racial and ethnic groups in the civic life of our Nation is essential if the dream of one Nation, indivisible, is to be realized."
— Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, Grutter v. Bollinger

As Executive Director of the Center for Legal Inclusiveness (CLI), Karen Hester focuses on advancing diversity in the legal profession on a daily basis. The job requires flexibility and adept skills in teaching, business, and fundraising, but for Karen, the most crucial is connecting with attorneys and legal professionals of all levels about how to make the legal profession more diverse and inclusive.

The position is the natural culmination of all of her previous professional and personal experiences. As a diverse individual, former practicing attorney, and former law school director of diversity and inclusion, Karen has witnessed bias in action. The research on this subject concludes that bias and non-inclusive workplaces thwart the progress of and even marginalize diverse attorneys. These days she says it is primarily unconscious bias and affinity bias that are the culprits.

To combat them, Karen advocates that everyone be educated about bias and how it impacts the workplace and the practice of law. She says we all have bias and it is part of human nature. But, because bias tends to disadvantage some groups more than others, we — legal practitioners, employers, and legal community leaders — must work to be keenly aware of it so we can be more proactive and inclusive. Karen acknowledges that the legal system has much more work to do to truly be diverse and inclusive. She is hopeful because many law firms and law departments she works with through CLI are making an earnest effort to attract, retain, and promote diverse attorneys. Their willingness to do more helps her create exciting initiatives that build valuable support systems for diverse populations.

Karen considers herself fortunate to have had many people mentor, support, and even challenge her. We all need to have positive, supportive mentors and colleagues. They make a difference in a person’s professional development and willingness to test and exceed one’s own expectations. She credits two women for championing her work early in her career, Tina Harris and Gail Agrawal. Today, she credits the support of CLI’s Board of Directors with providing encouragement and supporting her efforts to innovate. She tries to do the same for others. Karen values her ability to empathize with other diverse lawyers and those trying to better the legal profession.

Karen’s supporters are right to encourage her; she has a proven track record of creating impactful diversity programs. During her time at the University of Kansas School of Law, Karen created the
successful Journey to J.D. (J2JD) program for diverse high school students. J2JD was a one-week pipeline program enabling high school juniors to reside on campus to learn the ins and outs of attending college and law school.

Now, as the Executive Director at CLI, she is developing initiatives to support practicing diverse attorneys. She joined the Denver nonprofit in 2013 and in 2014 created a successful business development initiative called the “Pitch Program.” Having a book of business is crucial for any attorney to advance at a law firm, but it is hard to get your foot in the door if you don’t have those key connections. Research frequently shows that many diverse attorneys are regularly given limited access to outside counsel and that affinity bias (bias in favor of those like oneself) also works against diverse attorneys. Since CLI focuses its efforts on retention and advancement of diverse attorneys, this organization finds ways to help them overcome obstacles like access to corporate counsel.

The Pitch Program gives diverse attorneys the rare opportunity to practice pitching their services to corporate counsel and receive feedback. On its face, the Pitch Program is a skill-building exercise, but another important benefit is being introduced to and working with actual corporate counsel. Karen says the program’s short-term goals were met — helping more diverse attorneys build direct relationships with outside counsel. As for its long-term goals, she is hopeful that future business opportunities will arise for them.

Obtaining buy-in was easy and the amount of financial resources needed for the Pitch Program was minimal. Karen’s advice to anyone interested in implementing similar initiatives is to find ways to partner with other organizations. It’s not necessary to go it alone, and there are so many organizations and individuals looking to get involved.

When thinking about your own professional development don’t forget to be inclusive. Expand your circle within and outside the legal industry. Karen recognizes that much of the work she does has been gleaned from professionals outside of law, who are also part of her network. She also urges diversity and inclusion professionals to get involved and become knowledgeable about the topic. She stresses the importance of attending diversity and inclusion conferences, reading research on the issues, writing articles, or giving CLE presentations.

“Most importantly, as you support and motivate each other and diverse legal professionals, remember that most people, including attorneys, need a safe environment to vent. Once they are heard, if they want help and you offer it, always follow through,” says Karen. “Remember that there will be times when it feels like we are regressing instead of progressing. We must continue the work and support each other, especially when plans don’t come to fruition. As long as we get back up again, we’re good.”

**Definition of diversity:** Simply put, diversity is counting the numbers while inclusion means making those numbers count.
Best advice to those pursuing a career in diversity and inclusion: Get involved, become knowledgeable of the topics, and write or give presentations. Educate yourself by attending conferences and reading recent research. Get to know the diverse attorneys in your area.

Favorite diversity initiative: Journey to J.D. (J2JD), a week-long residential pipeline program. J2JD was designed to support, mentor, and encourage diverse students entering their junior year of high school to attend college and, ultimately, law school.
As President & CEO of the Diversity and Flexibility Alliance (the "Alliance"), Manar Morales is motivated to find a better solution for attorneys seeking work-life control options. She created the Alliance with a vision of partnering with firms and corporate counsel to support flexibility for all, develop strategies for leveraging human capital, and increase organizational effectiveness. Her work at the Alliance focuses on the intersection of diversity and flexibility in the legal workplace and how organizations can use these as tools for the advancement and retention of talent and, in particular, of women.

Manar’s professional journey included law practice in employment litigation, ERISA, and family status discrimination work, and she served as the Executive Director at a nonprofit. It was during one of these transitions that she realized there was an opportunity to motivate change in the profession. When her family had the opportunity to relocate, Manar wanted to find a part-time attorney position where she could still practice but was told she would never find it. In this moment, her own diversity of being a mom threatened her career development. Undeterred, she did find a position and realized there had to be a better solution for attorneys seeking to control their work-life options. This realization awakened her entrepreneurial spirit, and the Alliance was created.

The Alliance is responsible for several high-touch programs noted for their practical value and benchmarking research that focus on both individual strategies and organizational solutions. The Annual Conference provides the forum for law firm chairs, general counsel, and legal talent professionals to demonstrate with real-life examples how flexibility is part of their business case and a critical component of diversity and inclusion within their organizations. From the individual perspective, the Alliance hosts the Flex Success Leadership Institute (the “Institute”), an intensive leadership program for Senior Associates, Of Counsel, and Junior Partners working a flex/reduced hours schedule. The Institute addresses the unique needs and challenges these attorneys face as they move forward with their professional development by providing essential, practical training and a trusted network of similarly situated colleagues. For 2015, Manar is excited to be launching the Alliance’s new Corporate Circle — a roundtable of general counsel and law firm chairs committed to advancing a more innovative and sustainable profession through work-life control for attorneys and staff.
Although the stigma surrounding flexibility in the workplace remains, Manar has found that there are many attorneys who want it, use it, and need it — even if they are not formally requesting it. The challenge is increasing awareness of the issues and providing the tools for overcoming real or perceived obstacles.

Although the industry changes are slow, she counts the fact that corporate counsel have expanded the way they communicate with their outside counsel, and that law firms are increasingly understanding the business case for flexibility — both as a result of their interactions with the Alliance — as successes. "Strive to stand out," she says, and develop an initiative that works toward meaningful change on an issue that is not currently being highlighted or highlighted enough.

Sustained by the support of her family, she acknowledges that we all need support, mentorship, and sponsorship no matter where we are in our careers. Manar eagerly accepts the responsibility of giving back. "As diversity leaders, we have a duty to support those coming up in the ranks." The work takes time, but she knows that dedication and commitment always triumph. For Manar, it’s important to remember where we started — and proving that what was once viewed as impossible is now the new normal is encouraging. No matter how dire the statistics are, or how resistant the climate is, she won’t stop.

**Definition of diversity:** Inclusion is creating an environment where everyone is valued, not just tolerated.

**Best advice to those pursuing a career in diversity and inclusion:** No matter what the statistics show us or what the current legal climate is, we can’t stop. Change takes time, and if you’re passionate about what you’re working toward, change will happen. Dedication and commitment will triumph in the end.

**Favorite diversity initiative:** Diversity & Flexibility Alliance’s Annual Conference and Flex Success Leadership Institute, both of which focus on how “holistic flex” is a critical component of diversity and inclusion.
Kenny Tatum is driven to help young lawyers embark on a path toward their dream job. As Assistant Dean of Career Services at Indiana University Maurer School of Law he has the opportunity to deliver on his passion every day. His own career started with a large law firm corporate securities practice. Over time Kenny found himself working with political campaigns and meeting various business owners. His network grew and so did his desire to help launch young lawyers’ careers. Driven to fill the gap in diversity recruiting efforts that existed, especially in placements with corporations, Kenny started a legal recruiting firm in Atlanta, Georgia that specialized in placing diverse lawyers. From there, Kenny joined a larger search firm and later transitioned into law school career services.

In his current position, Kenny’s goal is to help students become as professionally competitive as possible early in their careers. The task is multi-faceted and includes implementing specific diversity-related initiatives, setting expectations for staff, and exposing students to diversity-related matters in an effort to further their professional skills. Kenny enjoys what he does because he enjoys helping people develop their careers.

When he looks back over his career to date, Kenny is most proud of his success in diversity placements. He recalls a string of high-quality placements of well-credentialed diverse attorneys in technology companies. While Kenny enjoyed being able to help these lawyers achieve their goal of going in-house, the work was challenging because finding specialists in tech fields is difficult, and finding diverse specialists more difficult. But, the effort was successful as measured by the revenue generated by his search firm and the long-term career success of the attorneys Kenny placed.

When asked about his own diversity and the impact it has had on his career, Kenny finds it difficult to determine whether his diversity factored into any personal career-related decisions that were contrary to the outcome he wanted. He recognizes that he began his legal career during a time when there were many employment options available, and recalls that other African American male attorneys were very interested in his career development and in mentoring him. He credits law firm mentors and a law school professor for his professional development as an attorney. In turn, Kenny has paid it forward and mentored others because of what mentoring meant for his career. Additionally, Kenny helped Indiana University Maurer School of Law’s BLSA and LLSA chapters create alumni mentor programs that have been embraced by alumni and students alike. Kenny advises that in mentoring it is important to “remember that no one can be everything to anyone.” As a mentor, there will be things that you cannot offer advice about, and, if so, you should be
honest with your mentee. Also, while the best mentor relationships are organic, a structured program can be essential in initiating mentor relationships.

For those interested in recruiting work, and for those interested in diversity and inclusion work generally, Kenny offers three key pieces of advice. First, participate in various organizations and use the knowledge gained to elevate your profile with the partners with whom you work and in the community. Second, do everything you can to develop broad diversity and inclusion experience. Diversity and inclusion professionals can develop a rewarding career within the law firm environment but the field is not for everyone. Kenny advises considering a corporate or academic environment as well for long-term success and career satisfaction. Additionally, unless you have an employment law background, you may want to explore getting human resource certifications from respected training programs. Finally, never stop building professional relationships.

**Definition of diversity:** I define diversity broadly to include all cultures and the unique mix of demographic differences. Inclusion is a concerted effort to demonstrate the value of diversity and to be as non-biased as possible in all practices.

**Best advice to those pursuing a career in diversity and inclusion:** Never stop building your professional relationships and consistently illustrate your passion for diversity and inclusion matters. Seek to provide value to other people to show you’re invested in their success instead of just hoping they will be invested in yours.

**Favorite diversity initiative** It’s a tie. I am very proud of the high-quality placements of well-credentialed attorneys in technology companies when I worked as a recruiter. It’s wonderful to see how they have succeeded. I am also very proud of the BLSA and LLSA mentor programs I helped to launch. I look forward to seeing how our alumni will help these future lawyers carve their own paths.
Champions Working to Make Our Workplaces More Accountable
Ritu Bhasin didn’t wait for an invitation. When she realized that her dream job didn’t exist, she founded her own consulting firm focused on advancing cultural competence, diversity, and inclusion in organizations.

Born and raised in Toronto by immigrant Indian Sikh parents, Ritu had a very progressive upbringing. Her parents, whom she credits with inspiring her self-confidence and resilience, often discussed human rights, racism, discrimination, and feminism with their children, especially given their experiences. These discussions, along with her experiences with racist bullying as a child, ignited a passion for social justice in Ritu, and her future as a lawyer was clear early on.

As a People Strategist and Diversity Specialist and Founder and Principal of bhasin consulting inc. ("bci"), Ritu’s work focuses on leadership, talent management, diversity and inclusion, and the advancement of women. Prior to starting her consulting firm, she practiced at a “big law” firm in Canada and later worked as a Director of Legal Talent at the law firm, Stikeman Elliott. After obtaining an executive MBA (which she accomplished while working full-time) five years ago, she launched bci, which provides her with the platform for effecting the cultural change she is most passionate about.

This cultural change requires that law firms and organizations shift the focus to inclusion rather than center on diversity. While diversity — the quantitative representation of diverse people within an organization — is important, it is insufficient at leveraging the value of difference. Expecting people to “conform” and “minimize” their ethnic, racial, gender, and other cultural identities undermines this value. Instead, Ritu explains, organizations should focus on inclusion: “A legal environment that is truly inclusive encourages the voices of difference to share their experiences — for example, women feel more comfortable to discuss their experiences with parenting, minority attorneys discuss their cultural practices openly, and LGBT attorneys share about their families. So, inclusion is where the magic happens.”

Ritu is also committed to addressing the systemic and individual roots to the challenges in advancing women and diverse professionals. She notes, “The legal profession attracts women and diverse lawyers, but the community undervalues and underutilizes these groups’ abilities to contribute to the profession due to bias/blind spots and the discomfort with cultural differences.” In its work with global law firms and organizations, bci focuses on cultural competence — the ability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and
commonalities — as an inclusion competency in addition to unconscious bias. Though many legal organizations have focused on unconscious bias training, she maintains that cultural competence training is equally critical to addressing blind spots in legal culture: “Unconscious bias is about fear of the “other” — but when we have a deeper understanding of cultural differences, we are less likely to hold these fears.”

bci uses a range of tools with its global clients to assist in uncovering the challenges with inclusion, including relying on the leading tool which assesses cultural competence, the Intercultural Development Inventory® (the “IDI®”). The IDI, Ritu explains, helps her clients recognize their development challenges in creating and maintaining an inclusive workplace in a safe and comfortable way. Ritu notes that she repeatedly hears from law firm management teams that the IDI has been instrumental in shifting their inclusion efforts. bci has also been developing a diagnostic tool to help law firms and organizations better assess experiences of inclusion and exclusion within the corporate culture, in order to address an assessment gap in inclusion programming.

In her own leadership and career journey, Ritu practices what she preaches with the intentionality with which she has built her own inclusive network of mentors, sponsors, supporters, and colleagues. She has relied on many “angels” who come from all over and have been both in the forefront and the background, and she counts “older white men,” people of color, and junior people among the ranks of those who have elevated her. She credits her business education, which helped her to deepen her leadership frameworks, with helping her to not only build a successful firm, but to more effectively teach others about career advancement. Lastly, Ritu is very grateful for her mindfulness and spiritual practices, which help to keep her “centered, grounded, and rooted in what is most important in life.”

**Definition of diversity:** Diversity focuses on quantitative representation of diverse people within an organization, and while important, it does not leverage cultural differences and authenticity. The real focus needs to be on inclusion, an experience that encourages people to bring their whole authentic cultural selves to work. Inclusion is “where the magic happens.”

**Best advice to those pursuing a career in diversity and inclusion:** Two key pillars — (1) Deepen your understanding of cultural competence, diversity and inclusion concepts, frameworks, and principles. (2) Develop heightened understanding of talent management and human resources practices so that you are better able to apply a cultural competence, diversity and inclusion lens to these practices.

**Favorite diversity initiative:** Leveraging the Intercultural Development Inventory® (the “IDI”), the leading tool that assesses cultural competence, which is the ability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. It is critical in advancing inclusion within organizations.
During the first years of the AIDS crisis, Andrew Chapin, Director of Public Interest Scholars and Counseling at Fordham University School of Law, began volunteering at the Gay Men’s Health Crisis, a nonprofit in New York City where by chance he was placed in their fledgling Legal Services as an administrative assistant. There he discovered an affinity for legal services and lawyers, especially for the diverse members of the legal community. His volunteer position turned into a job, which led to other legal employment opportunities with large law firms, a corporate general counsel’s office, Columbia Law, CUNY Law, and now Fordham Law. At Fordham, Andrew works to promote inclusion across the range of experiences and perspectives and is active with and known by the student affinity groups, especially OUTLaws (the LGBT student organization) and Stein Scholars for Public Interest. He spends much of his time counseling students and alumni on career development opportunities, and producing and delivering programs, resources, and relationships that educate and connect lawyers and students with similar interests.

Andrew is openly gay, and recognizes that many of his employers found his diversity a desirable characteristic that added value and skill to the work they want him doing on their behalf. His experiences in and with the LGBT legal community also helped him conceive of and spearhead NALP’s initiative to have employers publicly report LGBT demographic data for both associates and partners. Driven by the invisibility of LGBT lawyers in the legal community, Andrew wanted to provide a resource that would help LGBT attorneys and law students better navigate employment options and better understand potential legal work environments. Despite support from NALP and his deans, the task was not without challenges, including the fact that sexual orientation was not — and still is not — a universally acknowledged nondiscrimination category in employment as gender, age, race, and disability are. Additionally, when Andrew started the initiative, “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” was still law in the U.S., and there was so much unawareness of transgender issues it seemed that even saying the word was provocative in a corporate setting. Nonetheless, Andrew persevered in persuading legal employers to report their LGBT demographic data.

Working on this initiative and others Andrew has learned that change takes longer than expected and happens in much smaller increments than expected, but that persistence pays off. Although the buy-in was slow at first, Andrew counted it as a success when even one employer was willing to report LGBT data. Today, he is encouraged by the continued public reporting by most NALP members. Moreover, other NALP members have taken up the cause and for the last two years have been driving a similar reporting initiative for law schools.
If there is any down side to being a diverse person pursuing change for diverse populations, it is the danger of being perceived as a specialist, which, Andrew believes, can be limiting when trying to work on other issues or take advantage of other opportunities. To be successful, he advises others to seek out the support of colleagues and supervisors and to take advantage of the networks available through NALP participation. “Take advantage of opportunities to volunteer, speak, publish, and participate on other topics as often as possible,” he advises. Andrew reminds others to keep things fresh, to be creative, to be open to ideas that sound impossible, and never to take no for an answer, saying, “The future is yours to shape!” Finally, Andrew reminds us to keep our eyes on the goal, feel the success with each small step, and remember nearly everything is a team or community effort and success.

**Definition of diversity:** Diversity means equal inclusion across a range of experiences and perspectives. Inclusion means respect, encouragement, and support for all, not only for those who share my perspectives and values.

**Best advice to those pursuing a career in diversity and inclusion:** Be creative — the future is yours to shape.

**Favorite diversity initiative:** NALP’s demographic categories of openly LGBT attorneys and LGBT associates.
Brad Sprayberry
Director of Attorney Recruiting & Professional Development, Gunster

“Don’t think outside the box. Think about a bigger box.”

In high school Brad Sprayberry was involved in a swimming pool accident that resulted in a fractured vertebrate in his neck. Had the fracture been more severe, he may have become quadriplegic, and he thinks about how that would have affected his life.

Brad is the Director of Attorney Recruiting & Professional Development at Gunster, a large Florida business law firm where diversity initiatives are part of his everyday responsibilities. After noticing that disability was not being independently addressed at NALP conferences, Brad decided to do something about it. Motivated by a desire to elevate the topic of disabilities in the larger diversity and inclusion conversation, Brad submitted a proposal for a conference session for the 2013 NALP Annual Education Conference — “Hiring Attorneys with Disabilities” — and then was asked to lead the work group charged with adding ADA/disability elements to NALP’s 2014 Diversity Best Practices Guide.

Brad’s work on disability inclusion builds on a career of advancing diversity issues in the workplace. In the ten-plus years that Brad has been part of Gunster, his role has expanded to include helping form, and serving on, the firm’s Diversity Committee as well as its Women’s Leadership Forum. Despite his dedication to diversity work, one of his most significant professional challenges has been figuring out how best to be a part of the diversity and inclusion conversation when, from the outside, he may appear to be part of the non-diverse establishment as a “middle-aged, white male.” While he does fit into each of those three discrete categories, he also believes that his working and professional background have given him the training and platform to effect change on the diversity and inclusion front. He firmly believes that teams accomplish more than individuals and is happy to work in partnership with others to advance diversity initiatives.

Not only have these partnerships helped to move diversity initiatives forward, but Brad has relied on them for his own development. His most influential diversity-related mentors include former Gunster shareholder and current Florida Circuit Court Judge Meenu Sasser and a number of accomplished professionals including Esther Rodriguez, Sonia Menon, and Caren Stacy. As the beneficiary of such great mentoring, Brad thinks often about mentoring others, and suggests to mentors that they jump in with both feet and openly share their experiences. He advises mentors to “remember that your mentee sought you out, wants to grow, and is seeking — in some large or small way — to replicate what it is that you have done professionally.” To mentees, his best advice is to identify an area of need and find a mentor to emulate.
When reflecting on what success looks like as to disability-related diversity initiatives, Brad suggests that success can be measured by whether law school and law firm professionals are becoming more cognizant of disability-related accommodation and hiring issues. Like any other diversity issue, acceptance can’t come without awareness of the issue. Brad challenges others interested in working on diversity and inclusion initiatives to be bold and challenge the status quo: “Just wade in and start working. If you lead the charge, others will see what you’re doing and join in.”

**Definition of diversity:** I think of diversity and inclusion together. To me it’s a broad concept including differing ideas, perspectives, and experiences that are brought to the table from participants across the full spectrum of race, sexual orientation, gender, disabilities, age, religion, and socio-economic backgrounds. Tied to that concept, inclusion is working to make sure that we provide channels for education and participation in the discussions.

**Best advice to those pursuing a career in diversity and inclusion:** Talk to everyone. Ask for their opinions. Challenge the status quo. Since you can’t be someone else, pick the best parts of the people you admire and figure out how you can use those traits to your organization’s — and to your — advantage.

**Favorite diversity initiative:** I am most proud of being part of elevating the topic of “disabilities” in the larger diversity and inclusion conversation.