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Diversity Initiative 2024: Weber Gallagher Simpson Stapleton Fires & Newby

Check out the professionals who are finalists in the Diversity Initiative category as part of the Pennsylvania Legal Awards.

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Awards

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Weber Gallagher Simpson Stapleton Fires & Newby

Carolyn Mirabile, family law managing partner and DEI leader, answered the questions.

What is one change you’d like to see all Pennsylvania firms make in order to promote diversity in the legal profession?

Implementing guidance programs and initiatives supporting marginalized individuals in the legal profession would be one way to make an impact and promote diversity in the legal profession in Pennsylvania. These types of endeavors along with embracing diversity and inclusion in the workplace, we can gain insights from various perspectives and showcase a dedication to community commitment.

Four years out from the nationwide protests against systemic inequality in America, do you feel the legal community is continuing to make good on its DEI goals, or is it struggling to live up to those promises?

The legal community has made progress towards achieving DEI goals since the nationwide protests, but there is still work to be done. We have taken steps to address global inequality and develop diversity initiatives, there are challenges that remain. Representation of marginalized groups, especially at leadership levels, remains an issue. There are instances where initiatives might be seen as symbolic, lacking significant influence, or lacking a genuine dedication to systemic transformation.

To continue to meet DEI goals within the legal community, we should define strategic goals like enhancing presence and participation across various organizational levels and ensure that leaders include diverse voices. It is also imperative that there is a focus on education and elevating access to good education in marginalized communities.

In recognizing achievements, it’s imperative to acknowledge where the legal community encounters challenges in fulfilling its commitments. Self-assessment and a dedication to ongoing enhancements are crucial for cultivating a profession that is genuinely diverse, equitable and inclusive.

What is the greatest challenge you see to increasing diversity of Pennsylvania’s legal landscape?

A prominent obstacle in enhancing diversity within Pennsylvania’s legal landscape is the enduring lack of access, opportunities and education for underrepresented individuals. The availability of quality education and networking prospects hold a pivotal role in cultivating a diverse community. Traditionally disparaged communities may encounter

obstacles in accessing these resources, impeding their pursuit of legal careers.

Addressing this challenge necessitates a holistic strategy. Collaborative endeavors involving educational institutions, legal organizations, and clients are imperative to forge pathways ensuring equitable access to legal education. We can break down barriers by advocating a culture that values and actively pursues diversity, creating an environment where individuals from all backgrounds feel embraced and empowered to pursue legal careers in Pennsylvania.

What can firms do to help increase the pipeline of diverse candidates looking to enter the legal profession?

Firms have a pivotal role in shaping the future of the legal profession by contributing to the diversification of the candidate pipeline. To make an impact, firms should not only focus on recruitment but also invest in long-term strategies. One innovative approach could involve establishing partnerships with educational institutions which would provide a pipeline to diverse candidates. We do this at Weber Gallagher, starting at the High School level all the way through Law School. We think it is important to create an interest in the younger ranks and create opportunities for those that are farther along. Firms can provide resources, guidance, and exposure to the legal profession, clarifying the path to a legal career. Additionally, offering scholarships, and a more flexible work environment to assist in overcoming financial and ethnic barriers.

Ultimately, a holistic and proactive approach that goes beyond traditional recruitment methods will not only increase the pipeline of diverse candidates but also contribute to building a more inclusive and dynamic legal profession.

We hope you'll join us at the Pennsylvania Legal Awards in Philadelphia on May 15. For more information about the Pennsylvania Legal Awards and to purchase tickets, please contact Andre Sutton at (757) 721-9020 or email asutton@alm.com.

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