

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council
July 10, 2024 Meeting Minutes

The DEI Council advances diversity, equity, and inclusion and addresses the problems of bias, systemic inequities and underrepresentation in the legal profession and legal system.

Member Attendees: Gov. Tom Ahearne, Maria (Mia) Little, Alec Stephens, Raina Wagner, Miryam Gordon, Sharon Sakamoto, Viveca Burnette, Acting Pres. Sunitha Anjilvel, SaNni Lemonidis, Christopher Swaby, Gov. Nam Nguyen

WSBA Staff: Diana Singleton, Saleena Salango

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 12:05 P.M.

June Meeting Minutes

On motion from Sunitha, seconded by Sharon, the DEI Council voted to approve the June meeting minutes.

DEI Plan Strategic Planning Session – Report and Debrief

Sharon Sakamoto and Miryam Gordon reported on the strategic planning session on June 28th with the IILP consultants centered on the DEI Strategic Plan. The consultants will use the assessment and the information gathered during this session to develop a draft of the plan, which they aim to share before the in-person team building retreat on Saturday, July 27th.

Raina and Diana added that the Workgroup will still need to work with General Counsel to gather their risk analysis. Tom Ahearne offered to set up a meeting with Professor Hugh Spitzer to get additional input on the constitutionality. The next DEI Plan Workgroup is scheduled for August 2nd, 2 – 3:30 p.m.

MBA Relationship Building

Raina reported on the dinner between the Board of Governors and MBA Leaders at the Wing Luke Museum on July 9th. Not all MBAs were represented at the event, but the event was still well-attended by MBA Leaders, Board members, and DEI Council members.

Sunitha Anjilvel shared a desire to shift from “Minority Bar Associations” to “Affinity Bar Associations” and reported on the development of a relatively new ABA, the Seattle Chinese Bar Association. In addition, Sunitha shared that one intention during her presidency is to ensure these events are regular annual events and not a one-off. Alec Stephens suggested organizing a more substantive meeting between the Board and MBA Leaders around policy and commitment to DEI. Sunitha added that the DEI Council could take a role in ensuring the Board continues these events in the future.

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

MBA Buddy System & Relationship Building

Raina shared the current list of Affinity Bar Associations and called for Council members to sign up to consider being a point person with one to represent the DEI Council. We discussed the informal responsibilities, which include ensuring attendance at annual events, helping stay in the loop on leadership changes, and requesting to be added to their agenda for any DEI Council matter that we want to inform them about or encourage their engagement. The Council also discussed confusion about the roles and relationships between the WSBA, the DEI Council, and the affinity bar associations and the need for consistent messaging.

Based on feedback from the Council, Diana will include DEI Council membership dues to affinity bar associations in the FY25 DEI Council budget.

DEI Council Application Review Process

Raina reminded the Council to review the applicant materials and provide their recommendations by next Wednesday, July 17th.

Update on Lived Experience Stipend

Diana Singleton reported on a policy proposal originating from the Access To Justice Board around compensating people bringing lived expertise to volunteer and leadership roles. The Board Budget and Audit Committee last reviewed this and requested a fiscal note audit for their next meeting in August. The Budget and Audit Committee will decide whether the policy can be presented to the Board. Diana shared an opportunity to provide input and ask any questions via email.

Roundtable Discussion and/or Announcements

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 1:32 P.M.