

THE WEST VIRGINIA LAWYER

Unity in Diversity

**Leadership Council on Legal Diversity
sets out to broaden West Virginia's horizons.**

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July - September 2016



Leadership Council on Legal Diversity President Robert Grey, Marilyn McClure-Demers, West Virginia State Bar Past President Kevin Robinson and WVU College of Law Dean Gregory W. Bowman.

VISION 2020

West Virginia attorneys partner with the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity to create a new trajectory for talent in the state.

Anyone who knows me would say I am proud to have been born and raised in West Virginia. As a total product of West Virginia University and the WVU College of Law, my professional journey has included practice in Illinois, Pennsylvania and Ohio. I have remained active and engaged with my home state, law school and the West Virginia State Bar — all of which helped shape the lawyer I am today. As an Appalachian female attorney, I know we must be purposeful and intentional about being inclusive and increasing diversity across all dimensions of the profession. One way we can do so, as a state and the practicing bar, is to partner with a leading national organization called the Leadership Council for Legal Diversity (LCLD).

I have been personally involved with LCLD for several years, and I have benefited enormously from the organization. So has my employer, Nationwide, which is a Fortune 100 company ranked 69th. The history of LCLD is interesting and worth recapping briefly here. Launched in 2009 by a group of law firm managing

partners and corporate general counsel, LCLD was founded around a very simple idea: The United States would be better served by a truly diverse legal profession, inclusive of all talent. To reach that goal, LCLD's founders committed to use their positions of influence to innovate and expand the pool of diverse legal talent in their organizations and in society.

Six years later, LCLD has nurtured more than 7,000 talented individuals from diverse backgrounds, preparing them for leadership of the profession for years to come. More than 250 law firms and private companies are members. By 2020, LCLD aims to produce more than 10,000 legal role models, creating a groundswell of momentum and making a substantive stamp on the lives of the next generation of leaders.

Based on my experience with LCLD, I firmly believe LCLD could benefit West Virginia. So with the active leadership of the WVU College of Law, the West Virginia State Bar, LCLD and some law firms and companies in the state, work began on developing a strategy and

By Marilyn McClure-Demers
Photos courtesy of the WVU College of Law



Allan Daily from Dinsmore's Cincinnati office talks with Marilyn McClure-Demers (center) and Ashley Pack (right) at the LCLD summit at WVU in April.

action plan. Like most successful endeavors, strong participation is a must to lead and carry this effort forward.

Following lots of hard teamwork over this last year and a half and connecting with many across the state and nationally, we are well on our way! Thank you to the State Bar leadership — specifically Executive Director Anita Casey; Past Presidents Mike Frazier and Kevin Robinson; President John McGhee and President-elect Meesha Poore for seizing the moment and for your support in this effort. Thank you to Dean Gregory Bowman at the WVU College of Law for your thoughtful leadership and visionary partnership. Thanks to new West Virginia law firm members who have stepped up to take the lead, which includes Steptoe & Johnson who joined late last year, new corporate member Mylan who joined

earlier this year and to Jackson Kelly who recently decided to join LCLD.

Robert Grey, president of LCLD, and LCLD participants were called upon and invested in this journey to bring LCLD over country roads to our West Virginia State Bar and law school. As a result of our combined and focused efforts, we had the pleasure of hearing from Grey at the State Bar's Annual Conference and Meeting at The Greenbrier in April. He shared LCLD's vision of a revitalized U.S. legal profession, in step with a changing world and as diverse as the nation it serves, and it was impressive.

To reach that goal, LCLD has created a number of action-oriented programs designed to develop leadership skills at every stage of an attorney's career. These range from Mentoring and 1L Scholars programs for law students, a Pathfinder program for associate level attorneys,

and landmark Fellows and Fellows Alumni programs for partner- and senior partner-level participants.

LCLD is also developing new initiatives to provide leadership training for senior attorneys aspiring to the very highest levels of the profession — general counsel or managing partner. Using innovative practices and instruction, participants in LCLD programs are exposed to a curriculum that is focused on leadership and relationship building.

The LCLD Fellows program, for example,

brings together more than 200 mid-career in-house and law firm attorneys every year for a year-long experience that includes three in-person meetings along with structured interactions with managing partners and general counsel in small group settings.

This year alone, Fellows will have the chance to attend small-group meetings hosted by the general counsel of PNC, GlaxoSmithKline, Wal-Mart, The Home Depot and Scripps Networks Interactive. Known as Learning Experiences, these meetings provide a unique chance for Fellows to learn the inner workings of corporate legal departments and to hear about client service directly from chief legal officers.

"It's all about relationships," Grey said. "LCLD program participants are building a network of friends and colleagues that will follow them

throughout their professional lives, sustain them in good times and bad, and mitigate the sense of social isolation that hinders so many diverse attorneys and derails otherwise promising careers. In fact, one of these essential relationships brought me to West Virginia.”

During his remarks at the State Bar Annual Conference and Meeting in April, Grey reflected on the current state of diversity in the profession and how LCLD is making an impact through its initiatives

and programs. Grey was thought provoking and challenged members of the West Virginia State Bar to think of their investment in diverse talent as a necessity for success — not just by hiring diverse talent, but by actively investing in their future success.

Such investment involves looking at systems as well as individuals, so that organizations can address questions such as who gets the more complex assignments, how leadership committees are constructed and staffed, and how attorneys might more effectively mentor and sponsor future leaders of the organization.

Study after study has shown that diverse teams outperform those with a similar viewpoint — a group’s ability to innovate and solve problems is enhanced by the variance and depth of their perspectives.

By simply focusing on making connections and relationships



with developing lawyers, many of the “once insurmountable barriers to inclusion can be struck down,” Grey said. “Today, in West Virginia, we see some of those barriers crumbling.”

The following day, Grey continued his tour of West Virginia with a visit to the WVU College of Law, the only law school in the state. As part of our West Virginia strategy, by invitation of Dean Gregory Bowman, a group of LCLD members, program participants and local lawyers gathered to explore the relationship between the State Bar, LCLD and the law school, where the issue of diversity is front and center of Dean Bowman’s agenda.

Among those in attendance were Kevin Robinson, past president of the West Virginia State Bar, Executive Director Anita Casey, as well as representatives from K&L Gates, Reed Smith, Nelson Mullins, Jackson Kelly, Steptoe

& Johnson, Mylan, Bowles Rice, Gabriel Brothers, Littler Mendelson, Dinsmore & Shohl, Frost Brown Todd, Buchanan, and Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company.

These professionals talked about their experiences with LCLD and the positive relationships formed through participation in the LCLD Fellows and Pathfinder programs. Throughout the engaging discussion, one prominent theme emerged: West Virginia legal leaders hoped to use LCLD as a force multiplier for diversity in the state.

Referencing the momentum and relationships formed through LCLD, the group also discussed the importance of focusing on the pipeline of diverse attorneys and how to upgrade recruitment and retention practices in the state. “The LCLD meeting had an indescribable energy — this is the right time with the right people for change — attracting and retaining



Attorneys from West Virginia, LCLD members and program participants gathered at WVU to discuss how the State Bar, WVU College of Law and the LCLD can work together to promote legal diversity in the state.

top talent in the state is an achievable goal with the help of LCLD programming,” said Ashley Pack, a Charleston Partner at the Dinsmore & Shohl firm. Pack went on to say that “Dinsmore is excited to be involved in this opportunity to effect real change through the combined partnership of the West Virginia State Bar, the dean and LCLD, and is eager to see where this programming and effort can take the practice of law in West Virginia.”

At the conclusion of the meeting, the group decided to take action together. In addition to ongoing recruitment of LCLD members to benefit from programming and make impact on our State Bar, we focused on a goal of working with LCLD to focus on a mentoring program for diverse law students at the WVU College of Law with State Bar members serving as mentors and LCLD member firms, Fellows and Pathfinders taking the lead along with Dean Bowman.

“The personal commitment of a practicing lawyer to a law student

can make an immeasurable imprint on the life and career of a student,” Bowman said. “If we commit to ensuring that our diverse students have access to mentors, we are making a big step forward in our commitment to their future success.”

“I couldn’t have put it better myself,” Grey said. “That’s what

the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity is all about.”

LCLD has given us the tools to work together to make a tremendous impact on the pipeline and the profession, and it is imperative that we use those tools to begin today to work together to lead and to show the rest of the nation that we can get it right in West Virginia.

I am extremely proud of the collective work to begin this journey together, making the practice of law in West Virginia even better.

WVU

Marilyn McClure-Demers is associate general counsel for Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, where she leads the teams responsible for all corporate and intellectual property litigation, and discovery management for the enterprise. She currently sits on the WVU College of Law Visiting Committee, the LCLD Alumni Executive Council and is President of the Ohio Women’s Bar Association.



From left, Jeff Phillips, partner at Steptoe & Johnson in Lexington, Kentucky, (formerly Charleston, West Virginia), chats with Ashley Pack, partner at Dinsmore & Shohl in Charleston, Tina Jernigan, assistant dean of student life at WVU College of Law, and Dean Gregory Bowman of the WVU College of Law.