

bodman

ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS

Committed to a Diverse and Inclusive Workplace - at All Levels

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AND SOCIAL ACTION:

In the News

Editor's Note: This issue begins a series of features discussing how various Bodman PLC practice groups enhance the culture of diversity and inclusion within our Firm. The Banking Group feature below is the first in this series.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN ACTION IN THE BANKING GROUP

By: *Damali A. Sahu*

The Banking Group is proud to be one of the more diverse groups at Bodman. As a result, the Group has realized both tangible and intangible benefits. As clients are increasingly focused on the diversity of their outside counsel, our Group's diversity provides a competitive advantage. The Group's eleven female partners and four attorneys of color allow it to prove its commitment to diversity in critical ways, such as through the mandatory annual Law Firm Diversity Self-Evaluation of our client, Bank of America. It also allows the Group to capitalize, with integrity, on client-sponsored, diversity-focused events, such as Comerica's Women's Business Symposium and the Professional Business Women of California conference.

Additionally, as the trend of women in leadership positions in bank legal departments continues, the Group mirrors this trend with its gender diversity and the number of women partners in leadership roles. Notably, Firm clients, such as Fifth Third Bank, TD Bank, and Huntington Bank, all have women general counsel and join M&T Bank, SunTrust Banks,

Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase and American Express as firms that share that distinction.

Making sure that more than a token number of women from the Group are in leadership positions within the Banking Group, the Firm and the community is a priority. Kathy Hickey is a board member of the Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion, which also includes members from Firm banking clients. The Group is proud to count two of its women attorneys as members of the Office of the Executive and three as members of the Executive Committee. Four of the Group's important marketing groups are helmed and guided by women. This diversity in leadership contributes positively to business development by fostering new ideas, increasing the sense of inclusiveness and sending a powerful message to Firm clients about the importance of diversity to the Group. The Group continues to assess ways to diversify, not only the universe of its business development leaders, but also other important roles within the Group.

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"Our mission is to create a diverse firm with a culture of inclusion that values the differences and perspectives of everyone. By creating a culture of inclusion, we also create a strategic advantage for not only ourselves, but also our clients. We end up with broader points of view, a myriad of skill sets and talents, and a global perspective."

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DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN ACTION IN THE BANKING GROUP, *CONT'D*

In 2015, the Diversity Committee introduced the Firm's Diversity and Inclusion and Social Action Strategic Plan. One of the "Action Plans" contained in the Strategic Plan is the establishment and circulation of associate development benchmarks, which is designed to support the goal of improving the Firm's rate of retention and advancement of all attorneys. The Banking Group developed a 52-item list of benchmarks to be achieved by associates and created timing guidelines for when each benchmark should be introduced and "mastered" by an associate. The Banking Group's next steps will include the active implementation and measurement of successful completion of the benchmarks.

The Banking Group is also focused on the inclusion side of the diversity and inclusion equation. The Group has held a number of after-work social gatherings to increase each member's sense of inclusion and to build community. For variety, and to accommodate those that have difficulty attending evening gatherings, the Group will be holding "no

agenda" lunches. These lunches will provide members of the Group a time to connect with each other in a relaxed sitting over a meal without an expectation that group "business" be conducted.

Law firm clients are becoming increasingly vocal about their desire to see more diversity and inclusion in the ranks of their law firm partners. The Banking Group is constantly adapting and evolving to meet this demand. We can continue to be an active participant in this movement by acknowledging our achievements, observing other institutions' approaches and striving to be an example of how to attract, retain and promote a diverse group of attorneys.

We recognize that diversity and inclusion is a journey, and it is a high priority to identify and recruit additional diverse attorneys. Please let us know if you are aware of a potential recruit.

RAMBUS GIVES BACK AT WAYNE LAW SCHOOL

By: Christopher Rambus



To recognize Black History Month, Wayne State University Law School's Black Law Students Association (BLSA) hosted several events.

In conjunction with the Career Services Office, on February 15th, BLSA presented Esquire Etiquette, a program to sharpen the professional skills and etiquette of law students. Every year, Esquire Etiquette hosts a number of professionals eager to share their personal experiences and help students navigate the path to their legal careers.

The 2018 panel included: **Christopher Rambus**, Class of 2017, associate attorney at Bodman; Jehan Crump-Gibson, Class of 2009, founder and managing partner of Great Lakes Legal Group; Jessica Mills, Class of 2016, associate attorney at Edwards and Jennings; and Jason Webber, Class of 2004, counsel at General Motors.

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Upcoming Events

April 21 – Bodman Jeans for Charity Day – benefiting Life Remodeled.

June 16 – Bodman Jeans for Charity Day – benefiting VIP Mentoring.

July 14 – Bodman Jeans for Charity Day – benefiting Matrix Human Services.

August 18 – Bodman Jeans for Charity Day – benefiting Jewish Family Services.

September 1 – Bodman Jeans for Charity Day – benefiting the Houston Food Bank.

October 1-6 – Bodman joins Life Remodeled to remove blight and board up vacant houses in Detroit.

Would you like to submit an article or information for an upcoming issue? If so, please email all submissions to a Diversity Committee member.

Thank you!

BODMAN CONDUCTS GENDER DIVERSITY WORKSHOPS

By: Damali A. Sahu

Bodman explored gender bias issues in November, 2017 by hosting a gender diversity workshop with sessions held in Detroit and Troy. The Diversity Committee took a different approach to this workshop by, first, convening two focus groups with women in the Firm, guided by workshop facilitator Skot Welch, to discuss and identify perceived gender bias issues at the Firm. The results of the focus group discussions were used to create the framework and substance of the workshop.

Instead of a lecture-centric experience, the gender diversity workshops were active and lively brainstorming sessions focused on developing multiple solutions to a specific set of issues and challenges. The sessions culminated in the production of a “gallery” of ideas that were voted on to determine the most popular.

With the results of the gallery of ideas, the focus group sessions, and feedback from a survey of workshop participants, the Diversity Committee developed an initial set of recommendations designed to address gender issues. The recommendations will be presented to the Office of the Executive for consideration.



The Diversity Committee thanks everyone who invested time and energy in the gender diversity workshop. The Committee welcomes topic suggestions for future workshops.

PAULSON SERVES ON STATE BAR COMMITTEE TO ENSURE A MORE CONSISTENT FEE WAIVER PROCESS AND ENHANCE ACCESS TO JUSTICE

By: Kimberly A. Paulson

To better achieve the goal of equal access to justice, all persons, regardless of income, must have access to the courts. One significant impediment, though, is the mandatory fees charged by courts for case and motion filings, entry of orders, and the like. It costs an average of \$175 just to file an action in a state circuit court, an amount that is out of reach for many.

For that reason, the State of Michigan enacted MCR 2.002, which provides for the waiver or suspension of fees and costs for indigent persons. The rule, enacted in 1985, states that filing fees should be waived for individuals who are receiving “public assistance” or who are “indigent.” But, for some time, those examining the access to justice issue have complained that vagueness and ambiguities in the rule are leading courts across the state to apply it inconsistently and, in many cases, in a manner that imposes great burdens on applicants and that actually deters use of the rule.

As a result, in late 2017, the State Bar of Michigan assembled a workgroup to address the perceived problems with MCR 2.002. I have the pleasure of serving on that workgroup. Acting quickly, the workgroup has prepared a proposed revised rule that better defines terms (such as “public assistance” and “indigency”), sets forth with greater specificity the circumstances under which a person is eligible for a fee waiver and the application process that should be used, and clarifies the timeframe and process for holding a hearing if the application is denied. The workgroup also recommends that applications require only a verification instead of a notarization, making the process easier for applicants and better comporting with the e-filing process. The workgroup feels confident that the revisions recommended will result in a fee waiver process that is more consistent and easier for the applicant.

The workgroup has submitted its proposed rule revision to various stakeholders, including judge and court administrator associations, and intends to submit the final version to the Representative Assembly to be discussed at its April meeting.

HOW CULTURE IMPACTS THE BOTTOM LINE

By: Michael S. Melfi

The culture of an organization is defined by the way people behave consistently. Culture creates a strong sense of belief in values that all levels of an organization understand, believe in and are committed to. Culture is also the reason why groups of people in an organization tend to think, feel or see problems or solutions in a certain way.

Just how important is culture? Here are a few statistics on the impact of culture on organizations:

- *Throughout 2014 and 2015, Duke's Fuqua School of Business surveyed more than 1,400 North American CEOs and CFOs. More than 50% said corporate culture influences productivity, creativity, profitability, firm value and growth rates.*
- *One way culture affects overall profits is through the productivity of employees. The Department of Economics at the University of Warwick found that happy workers are 12% more productive than the average worker. In fact, unhappy employees cost American businesses over \$300 billion each year.*
- *In order for employees to engage at the highest level of productivity, they must be happy. Harvard Business Review found that employees were happy when four basic needs were met: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.*
- *According to Dale Carnegie, companies with engaged employees, outperform those without by 202%.*

It is essential for organizations to understand where their culture is today and, more importantly, where it must go to align with the long term business strategy for growth and success. There are many ways in which an organization can align their culture with their long term business strategies. Seven of them are highlighted below:

- *Leadership must understand what specific behaviors they need to promote in order to maintain the culture and ensure they are aligned to the business strategy.*
- *Given the time requirements for professional service providers, it is important to create an atmosphere and work environment where people want to work, stay and succeed.*
- *Office design and location can have a strong impact on culture. It can be a foundation for the kind of culture desired to maintain a unique business strategy.*
- *A set of behaviors across team members can create a positive impact for customer opinions regarding the professionals in the organization and the services provided.*
- *In a competitive legal environment, it is important that the corporate culture aligns with business development efforts.*
- *The use of technology can be an important factor in shaping the corporate culture in tandem with strategy.*
- *A strong culture can attract talent. Once they are invested, they can be trained as to what it takes to be successful within the organization.*

While having all of these would be ideal to building a strong culture, many organizations are limited in their resources. Often, the ability to prioritize a few of these items and focus resources towards implementation would dramatically impact the growth and success of an organization.

A few questions to think about are below:

- *What are your thoughts around the importance of culture?*
- *What suggestions do you have for our current culture?*
- *How can the Diversity Committee better serve you and your needs?*

Drop us a line and share your thoughts.