

Divided Community Project at Moritz College of Law to Receive Lawyer as Problem Solver Award

The ABA's Section of Dispute Resolution has named the Divided Community Project (DCP) at the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law the recipient of the 2018 institutional Lawyer as Problem Solver Award, which will be presented at the Section's Spring Conference in Washington, DC.

The Divided Community Project, which grew out of an April 2015 meeting of leaders and mediators from throughout the United States with experience dealing with civil unrest in communities, is helping communities transform divisive issues into broad-based, forward-thinking community action. The project utilizes a proactive approach to addressing community division: communities are first asked to focus on the roots of deep community divisions, and then project members take a multi-disciplinary approach to generating ideas to help those communities create plans before divisive incidents erupt.

The 2015 meeting and the Divided Community Project were a response to tensions and conflicts from Sanford to Ferguson, intended to strengthen and expand communities' local capacity and resiliency to meet such challenges. Two reports, "Key Considerations for Community Leaders Facing Civil Unrest" (2016) and "Planning in Advance of Civil Unrest" (2016) have provided support to leaders at a time when such assistance continues to be urgently needed.

The Divided Community Project's signature work is its collaboration with four community partners engaged in this proactive work, groups working in Columbus, Ohio; San Mateo, California; Rochester, New York; and Orlando, Florida. In Columbus, the majority and minority bar associations worked with the US attorney's office to lead the initiation of the Columbus Community Trust. The group's all-volunteer steering committee has tested a pilot project concept with more than 50 stakeholders, including leaders and representatives from mayor's office, law enforcement, religious groups, civil rights organizations, and civic organizations.

Aiming to examine the impact of social media on dispute resolution intervention and prevention dynamics, the DCP recently brought prominent advocates and interveners in divided community situations together with knowledgeable social media developers and users. The DCP then developed its third report focused on the intersection of community division and social media, titled "Divided Communities and Social Media: Strategies for Community Leaders."

The DCP has created a toolkit for communities that includes the three reports; the Midland Simulation, a multiparty effort to gauge preparedness for community crisis; and the Community Preparation Assessment Test, through which users can access their own community division. All are free of charge to communities whose leaders would like to use them.

Grande Lum serves as DCP director. The DCP steering committee is comprised of Nancy Rogers, Joseph (Josh) Stulberg, Sarah Cole, Bill Froehlich, Susan Carpenter, Chris Carlson, Craig McEwen, Andrew Thomas, Sarah Rubin, and Michael Lewis.

The JAMS Foundation provided seed funding for the project, and the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law provided additional in-kind funding that enabled the creation and continuation of the Divided Community Project. Additional funding has been provided by the Kettering Foundation, the AAA-ICDR Foundation, the Jacques M. Littlefield Foundation, Nextdoor, the OSU Emeritus Academy, and the OSU Democracy Studies Program. For more on the Divided Community Project, please go to: go.osu.edu/dividedcommunityproject.

For more information about the Spring Conference and the awards events, go to americanbar.org/spring2018.