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I. The ABA and Law Student Division’s Commitment to Diversity

A. Goal III

In 2008, the ABA House of Delegates, the Association’s legislative body, adopted four goals for the Association. One of these goals, American Bar Association Goal III, which builds on a goal adopted in 1986, is Eliminate Bias and Enhance Diversity.

Goal III has two objectives:

- Promote full and equal participation in the Association, our profession, and the justice system by all persons.
- Eliminate bias in the legal profession and the justice system.

B. ABA Law Student Division Commitment to Diversity

Our Commitment:

To promote diversity within the ABA Law Student Division (LSD), and to ensure equal opportunity and inclusion for all law students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity in the membership, leadership, programming, and other activities of the ABA LSD.

II. ABA Law Student Division Diversity Activities

A. Purpose of the Diversity Handbook

The Diversity Handbook was designed to assist student leaders with the implementation of diversity programs at their law schools. Our goal is to alleviate some of the burdens associated with organizing a diversity event. This handbook contains an overview of the diversity initiative, programming advice, and ideas and suggestions for diversity day events.

B. Purpose of the Diversity Initiative

The ABA LSD encourages law schools to sponsor educational programs and events that foster a sense of mutual respect and understanding regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. These programs and events are designed to introduce law students to the many benefits of diversity.

Diversity Day is recognized each year on March 2. However, if March 2 falls on a weekend, schools can choose either the Friday before or the Monday following March 2. Schools are encouraged to participate in the nationally recognized “Diversity Day,” but it is important to preface that the diversity is an ongoing initiative; therefore, we encourage students to hold educational programs and events throughout the year.

C. Dean Henry J. Ramsey Jr. Diversity Award

Each year, the ABA LSD presents the Dean Henry J. Ramsey Jr. Diversity Award (Diversity Award) to an individual law student, law school organization, or law school for their efforts in promoting diversity.
The recipient receives national recognition at ABA LSD’s annual assembly, held during the ABA Annual Meeting.

The Division’s Diversity Award serves as a testament to Dean Henry J. Ramsey, Jr. of Howard University for his lifetime commitment to issues of inclusiveness and his efforts to increase the quality of the practice and study of the law. The Henry J. Ramsey, Jr. Diversity Award recognizes a law student, faculty, administrator, or law student group or organization, from an ABA-approved law school, that has demonstrated the strongest commitment to promoting full and equal participation in the legal profession through the encouragement and inclusion of minorities, women, persons with disabilities, persons of all religious affiliations, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered persons. The Diversity Award will be presented during the ABA Annual Meeting. Nominations may include, but should not be solely based on, events held in recognition of the Division’s Diversity Day Program.

This award presents a great opportunity to drive interest in diversity initiatives. Student organizations can gain recognition for their commitment to the advancement of diversity in the legal profession and the ABA. To nominate your school or organization for the award, you must apply by 11:59 pm CDT on April 1.

Please visit the ABA LSD webpage or contact your ABA representative for more details on how to nominate your school for the Diversity Award. www.americanbar.org/lawstudent.

III. Diversity Event Ideas

Diversity Day and Diversity Week are great ways to promote diversity at your law school, but again, schools are encouraged to hold diversity events throughout the school year. The Diversity Committee has composed a list of ideas and suggestions below:

- Host a workshop on diversity training and communication styles
- Showcase relevant research projects related to diversity
- Host a roundtable discussion on how to improve diversity and invite both faculty and students
- Host a debate or public lecture on controversial diversity initiatives. For example:
  - Accommodations in law school for law students with disabilities
  - Gender Equity in law schools and the practice of law
  - The definition of diversity
  - Invite diversity speakers to the Student Bar Association meeting (SBA)
  - Host an event honoring members of the community who have contributed sustainably to the diversity initiative

Additional ideas and suggestions can be found on the ABA LSD Diversity webpage. http://ambar.org/lsddiversity.

A. Establishing a Diversity Committee at Your School

Creating a diversity committee at your school can be an extensive process, but its long-term benefits can greatly impact future efforts to promote diversity at your school. Try to include students, staff, and faculty on your diversity committee; this will increase the success of long-term initiatives and strengthen the committee’s longevity. A diversity committee can be used to address a number of student diversity concerns, such as
creating a forum for discussing and planning diversity events
holding diversity training at your law school
appointing a group to plan diversity activities, and
developing a diversity plan for your school.

B. Tips for Successful Events

- When inviting faculty members to speak at your diversity event, be sure to ask professors about their hobbies or research interests. Chances are they have traveled abroad, participated in community service project, or have a hobby that encourages or advances diversity.

- When seeking presenters for your educational programs, look to individuals with diverse ethnic backgrounds, gender, and lifestyles. This diversity will ensure adequate representation.

- When advertising diversity programs, use creative, high-quality publicity. Students may have difficulty understanding what diversity programs might include. Use titles that students can easily understand and that specifically identify the topic of the program. If the focus is stereotypes in the media – say it; if it is sharing of cultures–say it; if it is racism–say it!

- Use bulletin boards to celebrate a specific culture, and ask students to become involved in this project! While this culture is being highlighted on the board, offer programs or study breaks that highlight the music, art, poetry, food, or dress from that culture.

- Research the cultural traditions and aspects of your program so they accurately reflect the highlighted cultures. The agenda and activity offered should convey the message that diverse groups have been included. Examples include calling a Christmas party a “Holiday Party” in celebration of all holidays occurring in December.

- Make a personal commitment to hold students accountable for their words or actions that denigrate or dehumanize others. For example, jokes or stories that are racist, sexist, or demoralizing to persons with disabilities.

- Plan early. Promote your event in the law school and in the community to provide maximum attendance and create a link between the law school and the community it occupies.

- If you host a symposium or roundtable, provide time at the end for attendees to meet and mingle. It’s important that students have the opportunity to speak casually with featured speakers and champions of minority issues.

- Provide means and accessibility to community members with disabilities. For example, post flyers and other materials at eye level to make it visually accessible to law students in wheelchairs.

- Be prepared for possible insensitive comments or gestures from participants during the discussion period. If this happens, remind students of the need to respect the race, gender, and sexual orientation of other students.

- Celebrate a different “Nationality Day” each year. Highlight cultural food and history from that nationality on that day.
PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Check the calendar to prevent scheduling your event to coincide with any religious observance that may exclude some members of your school or community.

- Avoid statements that may be misconstrued as stereotyping or as statements reflecting assumptions about ethnic or political groups, lifestyle preferences, or gender classifications.

- In your publicity, ensure that you are not depicting any groups based on stereotypes.

- The scope and publicity should convey an open invitation to all, not just members of one group. For example, advertise events on ethnic and racial programs, gender issues, religious concerns, sexual alliances, and special needs coalitions to all students.

- When planning activities during a traditional religious holiday be inclusive without offending others. For example, avoid using labels such as “Xmas party”; instead, use the phrase Holiday Party.

- Be sure to review the school’s master calendar to prevent scheduling conflicts.

IV. Collaborating with Other Organizations

Invite various organizations to collaborate on events and activities. This collaboration will not only alleviate the workload but will allow for a range of viewpoints. Some of the most successful diversity initiatives have been the product of collaboration, which is why the ABA LSD strongly encourages student organizations to collaborate.

Here is a list of organizations you can choose from to collaborate with when planning your next diversity event:

- National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL)
- National Asian Pacific Law Students Association (NAPLSA)
- National Black Law Students Association (NBLSA)
- National Hispanic Bar Association (NHBA-LSD)
- National Lesbian and Gay Law Association (NLGLA)
- National Native American Law Students Association (NNALSA)
- Local diversity bar associations
- Local law firms
- Other schools
- Other student organizations

V. Law Student Division Funding

The ABA LSD, through its Grant Program, provides financial support to student organizations of ABA-approved law schools for first-time programs and activities. The program is designed to assist law student organizations with the implementation of new programs. Students may use the grant fund to subsidize diversity outreach activities.
Please contact your Circuit Governor, ABA Representative, SBA President, Division Officer, or the Chicago office for more information.

**Share Your Ideas and Successes!**

There are many ways to promote and encourage a diverse culture at your law school and in your community. Three key points to remember are introduction, understanding, and inclusion. Introduce students to diversity through your SBA or other cultural groups. Help your fellow students to understand the importance of diversity. And promote inclusion at all events.

Please visit our website at [http://ambar.org/lsddiversity](http://ambar.org/lsddiversity) and share some of the diversity activities and events your law school is planning or has sponsored. Excerpts will be posted on the website and shared with other law schools that are striving to make a difference.

Please feel free to contact the ABA Law Student Division Diversity Committee, your Circuit Governor, or your Lieutenant Governor of Diversity and share your diversity success stories.