



SAN DIEGO COUNTY
BAR ASSOCIATION®

ACC AMERICA
Association of Corporate Counsel
San Diego Chapter

DIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

PROGRAM OVERVIEW FOR EMPLOYERS



WHAT IS THE DIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM?

As part of our commitment to diversity, the San Diego County Bar Association (SDCBA) & the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) have joined forces to bring you the Diversity Fellowship Program (Program).

Created in 2009, our Program provides an opportunity for diverse, first year law students to learn and develop skills that are necessary to be successful in a law firm and corporate legal department environments and exposes law firms and corporate legal departments to qualified individuals who might not otherwise have come to your attention. Our Program is modeled after similarly successful programs in Sacramento, Puget Sound/Seattle, Cleveland, St. Louis, Columbus, Atlanta, and the Bay Area. The Program is not a recruitment tool, but an educational tool.

Our Program was created to: 1) Increase the number of diverse attorneys practicing in San Diego County law firms, corporate legal departments, and public sector agencies, by providing first year law students and part time second year law students with an opportunity to develop skills and make professional contacts through Fellowship opportunities at law firms, corporate legal departments, and public sector agencies; and 2) To assist San Diego County law firms, corporate legal departments, and public sector agencies in their efforts to recruit competent diverse attorneys by introducing them to qualified, diverse law students who may not have been selected for employment through traditional summer programs. In addition, employment of these students affords a diversity of ideas which enhances the quality of legal services that participating employers may provide their clients.

The diversity of San Diego population demands diverse lawyers. Helping to facilitate the development of practice skills in our diverse law students helps law firms, corporations, agencies, and our community at large.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Plain and simple, diversity is good for business. Studies have shown that diverse companies outperform homogenous ones, relate better to and serve the needs of their clients, are more innovative and have better reputations in the community. By participating in the Program, employers are provided Fellows from diverse backgrounds who can contribute their life experiences, talent and skills to your organization in a way that is unique to the majority of your employed staff.

Please see our article in the San Diego Lawyer located on our website at www.sdcba.org/diversityFellowship which provides detailed insight from each of our participating employers about how the Program positively impacted and enriched their firm's strength and adaptability in an ever increasing diverse world.

WHAT IS THE TERM OF THE FELLOWSHIP?

The duration of the Program is eight to ten weeks during the summer. The start and end dates are set between the employer and the Fellow to make sure the dates work with schedules of both parties.

HOW QUALIFIED ARE THE FELLOWS?

All Fellows must be:

1. First year or part-time second year law students;
2. Diverse;
3. Enrolled in an American Bar Association (ABA) accredited law school; and
4. In good academic standing

A Committee evaluates the student applications based upon a number of factors, including, but not limited to the Fellow's:

1. Application;
2. Resume;
3. Writing Sample;
4. Personal Statement;
5. Confirmation of Good Academic Standing by the Career Services Department of the law school attended
6. Two letters of recommendation; and
7. In-person interview

Focus is centered on the strength of the writing sample, personal statement and interview skills, rather than grades alone. This is based on the idea that after completing one semester of law school, the Fellow's grades are not available and not the best indicator of the Fellow's potential for success.

Even though grades are not a required factor in choosing candidates for this Program, the purpose of the Confirmation of Good Academic Standing is to ensure that the Fellow will be enrolled in law school for the Fall semester and is not on academic probation and/or in danger of being removed from law school.

HOW MUCH OF MY TIME IS REQUIRED TO OBTAIN A FELLOW?

A wonderful facet of the Program is that the SDCBA handles all the legwork so you don't have to. We understand your time is valuable so we handle all the details including reviewing the candidates applications, the interview process and selecting the best Fellow for your organization.

The interview is conducted by a panel of two or three interviewers from an SDCBA committee who ensure that interviews are conducted in a fair and equitable manner and in compliance with state and federal employment laws and best practices. All interviewers are required to ask candidates a minimum of five primary questions selected from a standardized question list and are permitted to ask additional follow up questions based on the responses provided by the candidates.

After the interviews are conducted, the participating employers and selected candidates are invited to a reception. After the reception, the participating employers have an opportunity to give their input on the candidates to the Committee, including preferences regarding the placement of potential Fellows.

The SDCBA then handles the final step of matching Fellows with employers that best fit their needs and cultural competencies. Interviewers discuss and place top candidates with employers based on a number of factors including, but not limited to, (1) overall application strength, (2) interview skills, (3) criteria given to the Committee by the employers, and (4) input given by participating employers following the reception. In addition, the Committee takes into consideration that final Fellowship offers are fair and balanced among the candidates from all three local law schools. The law school attended by the student shall not be known prior to placement with the employer.

All final decisions regarding Fellowship offers and placements are the sole discretion of the SDCBA.

HOW DO I SELECT THE FELLOW RIGHT FOR OUR WORKPLACE?

Upon joining the Program, you are welcome to provide us with your preferences and criteria regarding your ideal Fellow. We will take these items into consideration when placing a Fellow in your organization. You can email the Program Director at bw@bhashinilaw.com.

ONCE WE HAVE A FELLOW, WHAT ARE OUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

Success of the Program will depend, in large part, on the extent to which the Fellow is completely submerged in the law firm, corporate legal department, or public sector agency, which includes their involvement and participation in social activities of the employer. We encourage employers to incorporate your Fellow into the organization in the same manner and to the same extent as first year summer clerks.

In addition, employers are encouraged to ask attorneys to devote appropriate attention and to provide supplemental support to the fellows; it is anticipated that this process will be informal. Whenever possible, each Fellow should be assigned a mentor attorney who will be asked to closely follow the Fellow's progress and to assure that he/she is in the mainstream of activities.

Upon conclusion of the fellowship, your Fellow shall receive an exit interview with the employer.



Year after year, we have had absolutely terrific diversity fellows. Without exception, they have come well vetted and prepared, with a great attitude, and have added not only well-received cultural richness and diversity, but truly beneficial, high quality legal work.

Thomas Turner

Managing Partner - Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch LLP

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS OF FELLOWS DURING THEIR FELLOWSHIP WITH US?

Time Commitment. The Program is intensive and requires the full-time commitment of the Fellows. Upon acceptance of a Fellowship position, Fellows may not solicit nor accept employment of any kind for the Fellowship period. Upon acceptance of a Fellowship, participants agree to complete the Program in its entirety.

Professionalism & Integrity. Upon acceptance of a Fellowship position, Fellows agree to conduct themselves in the highest level of professionalism, honesty, and integrity. Fellows are required to act ethically and uphold the reputation of the profession. Fellows should take pride in their work and strive for excellence in fulfilling the employer's provided roles and responsibilities in line with the employer's values and core competencies.

Attendance at Program Events. The Program includes events intended to enhance the Fellowship experience for all participants including a reception at the commencement and conclusion of the Program; educational seminars covering a variety of topics such as legal writing, time management, professionalism in the workplace, networking, creating mentoring relationships and/or other topics relevant to professional development and advancement. Each Fellow is expected to participate in these events.

Employer Specific Requirements. Some participating employers may require Fellows to submit to and pass a background check, drug test or conflicts of interest check prior to accepting the Fellow's employment.

HOW DO I PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM?

If you are interested in participating in Program, please contact Bhashini Weerasinghe at bw@bhashinilaw.com or at 619.352.0519. Each participating employer will be given an Employer Agreement to sign. There is also a small administrative fee of \$250 to cover outreach and administration costs associated with the Program.

CAN I PROMOTE THIS PARTNERSHIP?

Yes. We encourage you to promote your partnership with the Program and your pledge to diversity in the community.

DO I HAVE TO PAY THE FELLOW DURING THEIR TIME OF EMPLOYMENT?

Yes. Each participating employer is requested to compensate their Fellow at a minimum rate of \$20 per hour¹ and is responsible for complying with all applicable federal and state wage, hour and employment laws.

WHAT IF I WANT TO RETAIN THE FELLOW AFTER THE PROGRAM?

Employers participating in the Program are not expected to extend, but are not prohibited from extending an offer of employment to the Fellow following the completion of the Fellowship term. Whether the participating employer makes an offer of employment after the Program or if the Fellow accepts is a decision for the participating employer and Fellow. There are no expectations for either party. We have had employers extend offers to continue after the fellowship to stay on as law clerks.

¹ Unless the employer is a county employer, in which case, in accordance with their policies, they may pay \$19.97.

CAN I BILL TIME FOR THE FELLOWS?

Yes. A Fellow's billable time should be treated in the same manner as any employed law clerk working for your organization at the hourly billing rate of your choosing.

WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE AN ISSUE WITH THE FELLOW?

We want this to be a great opportunity and an enriching experience for both the Fellow and the employer. If an issue arises at any time with your Fellow that cannot be handled internally, the SDCBA has assigned the Program director as an ombudsperson to this Program who is available for any reason.

WHAT IS THE PROGRAM OVERSIGHT STRUCTURE?

The SDCBA assembles a DFP Committee ("Committee") to support the Diversity Fellowship Program. It is comprised of representatives from the SDCBA, the Committee for Diversity and Inclusion (formerly, ERDC), and representatives from diverse bar associations around the County.



The Diversity Fellowship Program means so much to our firm. We are proud to be a diverse firm and believe it is important to provide learning opportunities to students from all backgrounds. The program has also benefited us tremendously in that we have enjoyed the pleasure of working with dynamic, positive, and inspiring students, including Jessica Yang, now a second year lawyer in our firm, and Briana Givens, our shining fellow from this past summer.

Jonathan Andrews

Managing Partner & Founding Member, ANDREWS • LAGASSE • BRANCH & BELL LLP