PROGRAM'S GOALS

The San Diego County Bar Association (SDCBA) & Association of Corporate Counsel – San Diego (ACC) Diversity Fellowship Program (Program) is designed for law students that are:

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

The Program provides an opportunity for diverse, first year and part-time second year law students to learn and develop skills that are necessary to be successful in law firms, corporate legal departments, and public sector agencies and introduce to such employers qualified individuals who might not otherwise have come to their attention. The Program is modeled after similar 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.

1 Diverse means all underrepresented classes including, but not limited to, ethnicity, gender, physical disability, Veteran service or relationship, family and socioeconomic background, and sexual orientation.

INTRODUCTION

EMBRACING DIVERSITY & CLOSING THE GAP IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

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2 Preference shall be given to students from San Diego County law schools.

PROGRAM'S GOALS

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 and part-time second year law students with an opportunity to develop skills and make professional contacts through fellowship opportunities with such employers.

2. 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.
HOW TO APPLY

In order to apply to the Program, you must submit the following documents:

1. Application;
2. Resume;
3. Writing Sample based on a fact pattern provided by SDCBA;
4. Personal Statement;
5. Confirmation of Good Academic Standing by the Career Services Department of the law school attended (please see the minimum standard requirement under “Grades and Application Review Process” of this document); and
6. Two letters of recommendation.

Note: The name of your law school must be redacted in all documents submitted with your application other than where we specifically ask you on the online application.

GRADES AND APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Applications must be submitted online as instructed. A committee of attorneys will review, evaluate, and score the applications; based on the foregoing the DFP Director, will determine which applicants will be invited for interviews. The review committee evaluates the student applications based upon a number of factors, including, but not limited to, the strength of the writing sample and personal statement, rather than grades alone. This is based on the idea that after completing one semester of law school, the applicant’s grades are not available and are not the best indicator of a student’s potential for success.

However, students must be in academic good standing both at the time of selection into the Program and at the time of the fellowship.

³ “Fellow” is a student selected into the Program following the Interview phase.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Participants in the Program are diverse, first year or part-time second year law students from ABA-accredited law schools, with preference given to those from San Diego County law schools. Applications for the Program are submitted online via SDCBA Diversity Fellowship Program. Selected applicants are interviewed by an Interview Committee and notified if they have been chosen to participate in the Program. The selected candidates (Fellows³) are then required to return a letter of acceptance by the deadline indicated in the fellowship offer letter. The duration of the program is 8-10 weeks or consistent with the employer’s summer program. The details of the Program are described herein and may be subject to change as deemed appropriate by the SDCBA.

Increasing diversity in our profession is of utmost importance. We have an obligation to reflect our community and represent our clients to the best of our ability. A diversity initiative or program is a key component of that objective.

Patricia Hollenbeck
Partner - Duane Morris, LLP
Minimum standard requirement: even though grades are not a required factor in choosing candidates for this Program, the students must maintain good academic standing; the purpose of this requirement is to show that the student applicant 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. Employers in the Program and SDCBA need to be assured that student participants will be law students and future attorneys for reason of investment of time and resources in furthering diversity in the legal community.

**INTERVIEW PROCESS**

An interview committee conducts all interviews of the candidates. Interviews will be conducted by a panel of two or three attorney interviewers from the SDCBA’s Committee on Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) as well as other attorney members of the legal community. All interviews are conducted in compliance with state and federal employment laws and best practices. All interviewers are required to ask candidates a minimum of 5 primary questions selected from standardized question list that is provided to all members of the interviewing panels. Beyond these primary questions, panelists are permitted to ask additional follow up questions based on the responses provided by the candidates.

Note: No law school staff/faculty members will be included in the Interview Committee.

**BASIS FOR SELECTION OF FELLOW**

Following interviews, the Interview Committee discuss and select top candidates based on a number of factors including, but not limited to, (1) overall application strength, (2) interview skills, and (3) criteria given to the Committee by the employers. At the conclusion of deliberations, the Committee will create a final list of Fellows and alternate candidates who will be extended an offer to participate in the Program as a Fellow if an opening comes up.

**THE MEET AND GREET RECEPTION**

After the Fellows are selected into the Program, the application materials submitted to SDCBA will be shared with the employers. All of the Fellows and participating employers will be invited to a reception (Meet and Greet) after the selection phase is completed and before the match. After the reception, the participating employers have an opportunity to give their preference as to who they would like to be matched to their office. Attendance at the reception is mandatory for all Fellows. Refer to the DFP Timeline for when the Meet and Greet will be held by visiting our website (www.sdcba.org/diversityfellowship).

Fellows are expected to present themselves in a professional dress and manner, as employer feedback based on interactions with the Fellows at the reception may be considered during final

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The DFP fellowship was important to me because it presented me with an opportunity that I may never have received without it. In retrospect, applying for the DFP fellowship was one of the most impactful decisions that I made my 1L year.

Christopher Moore

California Western School of Law, 2019 DFP Class
placement deliberations. After the reception, the SDCBA will notify by email each Fellow of their placement and employer contact.

**ALTERNATE CANDIDATES**

Should a Fellow cease to be eligible, is unable to accept a fellowship offer, or an additional fellowship placement becomes available, alternate candidates will be assigned fellowships in the following manner:

- If placement has not yet taken place, the highest ranked alternate candidate (by the Interview Committee) will be selected into the Program and expected to participate in the Meet and Greet.
- If placement has taken place, the employer will be given the opportunity to review application materials of all of the alternate candidates and provide feedback and the SDCBA will consider the employer’s feedback to offer the fellowship accordingly.

**DIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM OVERSIGHT STRUCTURE**

The DFP Director, as the point person for this Program, works closely with SDCBA staff, Chairs of the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion (formerly ERDC), and various DFP Committees to carry out the various aspects of the Program. The DFP Director regularly submits reports on Program matters to SDCBA’s Committee on Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) comprised of representatives from diverse bar associations around the County and other community leaders, SDCBA’s Executive Director and Board of Directors, as well as Association of Corporate Counsels - San Diego Chapter.

DFP Committees include ad hoc committees such as, DFP Subcommittee, Application Review Committee, and Interview Committee. These Committees are comprised of volunteer attorneys from SDCBA Board, CDI, and other attorney members of the legal community.

**CONFLICTS POLICY**

The SDCBA is charged with mediating any unresolved conflicts between the Fellows and law firms/corporate legal departments/public sector agencies that cannot be handled internally. Contact Nima Shull, the DFP Director at nshuldfp@outlook.com or (949) 945-4071.

**STUDENT CONCERNS**

During the application, interview, and placement process, student concerns should be brought to their assigned law school career services liaison, which will bring the concerns to the attention of the DFP Director to be addressed.

**Conflicts Policy for Law School Staff**

Law School Liaisons should bring any concerns to the attention of the DFP Director, Nima Shull at nshull@outlook.com or by phone at (949) 945-4071 to be addressed.

**EXPECTATIONS OF FELLOWS**

**Time Commitment**

The Diversity Fellowship Program is intensive and requires the full-time commitment of the Fellows. Upon acceptance of a fellowship position, Fellows shall neither 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, including all mandatory events.

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 Program and 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. Those events may include some or all of the following: reception/mixer at the commencement and conclusion of the Program; educational seminars covering a variety of topics such as time management, professionalism in the workplace, networking, creating mentoring relationships and/or other topics relevant to professional development and advancement. Attendance at these events is mandatory; failure to attend a mandatory event without the DFP Director’s permission in advance can result in the removal of the Fellow from the Program.

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

Communications
Fellows are expected to timely communicate with DFP Director, SDCBA staff, employers, and law school career service office about DFP matters, which includes but not limited to, responding to emails and keeping appropriate parties apprised of anything that may interfere with your obligations to the Program.

Employer Training Programs
Fellows are expected to participate in the same manner and to the same extent as any student training program conducted by the participating employer. In addition, participating employers are encouraged to ask their attorneys to provide supplemental support, guidance, and mentoring to their Fellows; it is anticipated that this process may be informal. 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; this includes, his/her/their work involvement and participation in social activities of the participating employer, which are expected to be identical to that of any other summer clerk.

Participating in the DFP helps remind us of where we all started as attorneys (young, inexperienced and eager to learn) and keeps us connected with the law school community. It is a great opportunity to reflect on what we wish we would have known earlier in our careers, and provide insight and guidance accordingly.

Edwin Boniske
Attorney, Higgs Fletcher & Mack, LLP
There is a possibility that due to Covid-19, California will remain in a partially shut-down phase during the Summer 2023. As a Fellow, you are agreeing to perform in-person or potentially remote/virtual work, or a combination thereof. Fellows should be prepared to perform as circumstances require.

**WHAT ABOUT COVID-19?**

Important takeaway is that the law is vast and diverse. New fields of law continue to develop, so law students should keep an open mind when it comes to opportunities that come our way. It may not be what you had in mind, but it can change your mind - and that is not a bad thing.

*Elmira Yousufi*

*USD School of Law, 2019 DFP Class*