

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT 2019



SmithAmundsen

MISSION STATEMENT

SmithAmundsen embraces the diverse perspectives and experiences that exist within our SmithAmundsen community. To that end, the firm is dedicated to nurturing a culturally rich, collaborative and inclusive working environment. Our Diversity Committee is made up of partners, associates and administrative professionals who are committed to that mission. The goal is to enhance recruiting and mentoring efforts, and also empower members of the firm to become active and engaged in their communities for the purpose of furthering these goals. The Committee aims to provide the resources necessary to remain competitive and relevant in an evolving global marketplace.

For a list of committee members, visit www.salawus.com/about-diversity.html

DIRECT SUPPORT FOR DIVERSE GROUPS

Between 2014 and 2019, the Diversity Committee approved over \$81,000 in sponsorship requests for programs and events supporting SmithAmundsen's diverse attorneys. Some of the groups supported by the Diversity Committee budget in 2019 included the Hispanic Lawyers Gala, the Professional Women's Club, the IU Robert H. McKinney Women's Caucus, the Hispanic National Bar Association, Equality Illinois, and the Diversity Scholarship Fund.

\$81,000

EVENT AND PROGRAM
SPONSORSHIPS
APPROVED BETWEEN
2014 AND 2018

Sponsorship requests are open to all attorneys and staff members. The sponsorship request process requires applicants to provide detailed information regarding the basis for the request, including a description of the organization or event to be sponsored, who from SmithAmundsen will attend/participate, and how the event or organization furthers the Committee's mission.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION INITIATIVES IN 2019

LAW CLERK PROGRAM

Through the work of a Diversity subcommittee, the firm formalized a Law Clerk program in 2017. The program springs from a subcommittee recommendation to take a bottom-up approach to diversity amongst our attorneys. The program is run by streamlining the law clerk hiring process so that notice and opportunity for open positions are made known to all law students, including diverse students. Over the course of 2019, continued efforts were made to reach out to diverse student associations at law schools in Milwaukee, Indianapolis, and Chicago.

Particularly in 2019, the Diversity Committee is leveraging our ongoing partnership with Judge Montgomery and the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA) to facilitate a pipeline for CCBA black law students to apply for clerkship positions. Judge Montgomery has worked in partnership with the Diversity Committee for our Black History Month

scholarships and has agreed to encourage scholarship recipients and other contacts through the CCBA to consider SmithAmundsen for clerk positions.

Jennifer Stuart, partner, has been taking the lead in this program, with the support of Diversity Committee outreach to local law schools and their diverse student associations. The program was designed with an eye toward recruitment of law students and long-term retention of successful candidates. Since 2017, the firm has hired as new attorneys, five former SmithAmundsen law clerks. Any eligible law clerk in the program is considered first for any open associate position in any practice group.

In 2019, fifteen (15) clerks were hired through the Diversity Committee’s Law Clerk program, of which one-third are minorities.

SMITHAMUNDSEN IN THE NEWS

In 2019, the *National Law Journal* ranked SmithAmundsen #15 on its Women’s Scorecard. The Women’s Scorecard is produced as part of the annual National Law Journals 500 firm headcount report and only the largest 350 firms are eligible for the Women’s Scorecard.

In 2019, *Law360* named SmithAmundsen #4 on its list of Best Law Firms for Female Attorneys among firms with 150-299 attorneys. SmithAmundsen was previously ranked #10 on *Law360*’s 2018 list.

DIVERSITY AWARENESS & ENRICHMENT

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

SmithAmundsen awarded three scholarships in conjunction with the scholarship awards ceremony held by the Cook County Bar Association Foundation (CCBA) in Chicago.

At this event, Judge Julie Montgomery, co-chair of the CCBA, presented the four \$1,000 scholarships to black law students from DePaul, John Marshall, and Loyola law schools. Recipients were selected on our behalf by the CCBA.



The Diversity Committee also awarded two \$1,000 scholarships in honor of Black History Month at the IU McKinney Law School’s Diversity Dinner in Indianapolis and at Marquette University in Milwaukee.

Black History Month receptions were held in each SmithAmundsen office. In continued partnership with Judge Montgomery, her Honor spoke at our Chicago office’s Black History Month reception to the attendees about the impact of scholarships and opportunities for the students in our legal community. Tickets to the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater and Black Ensemble Theatre were raffled-off at the event.



PRIDE MONTH

On June 27, the Diversity Committee hosted SmithAmundsen’s Sixth Annual Pride Celebration in Chicago at Rivers Restaurant. The event was well attended not only by SmithAmundsen staff and attorneys, but also many clients.

The event was also sponsored by local establishments who support the LGBTQ community. The firm is



proud to be involved in and sponsor the LGBTQ community. In addition, the Indianapolis and Milwaukee offices made local LGBTQ donations totaling \$1,000.

INDIANA CONFERENCE FOR LEGAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY (ICLEO)

On June 28, after discussions between Diversity Committee member and partner Laura Bonadies, and IU Maurer Law School’s Admissions Dean, the Diversity Committee hosted a luncheon during the Indiana Conference for Legal Education Opportunity’s (ICLEO) Summer Initiative.

At the event, Laura made some brief remarks about SmithAmundsen’s commitment to and support of diversity in Indiana’s legal community and SmithAmundsen’s support of the ICLEO program.

Steve Stitle, COO, spoke to the students, offering advice and considerations related to law school, practicing law, and possible career paths opened by a law degree. Overall, the students and other attendees were appreciative of SmithAmundsen’s efforts in hosting the luncheon and taking the time to reach-out to them.



The SmithAmundsen attendees were impressed by the students and the experiences they shared. The Diversity Committee anticipates continued sponsorship in 2020.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

On October 10, the Diversity Committee hosted its annual Hispanic Heritage Month celebration for all SmithAmundsen employees at Latinicity. While enjoying traditional food and beverages

from Latin America, SmithAmundsen employees joined together to celebrate the cultural contributions of Hispanic Americans



in this country and the diverse makeup of SmithAmundsen attorneys and staff. As part of its retention efforts, the Diversity Committee also issued \$1,000 scholarships to selected Hispanic Law Students in Chicago, Milwaukee, and Indianapolis.

The Indianapolis office awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to a first generation law student who plans to use the scholarship award for her bar review course.

INSTALLATION OF FIRST LATINO PRESIDENT OF LAGBAC

On January 24, Moses Suarez was installed as the first Latino President of the Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago (LAGBAC). As a member of the Diversity Committee, Moses continues to be committed to our firm’s diversity efforts and will be able to use this position to further the firm’s outreach to diverse lawyers, law students and the broader community.



PERSONS WITH DISABILITY SCHOLARSHIP

The Diversity Committee recognizes the challenges that Americans with disabilities face within the legal profession and has focused its effort on retention and recruitment of attorneys with disabilities at SmithAmundsen. To further the Committee’s goals and mission,

we partnered with the Diversity Scholarship Foundation for a second year in a row. Two disabled law students received \$500 scholarships.

WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION OF ILLINOIS (WBAI) ANNUAL DINNER

The Diversity Committee purchased a table for attendance by SmithAmundsen lawyers at the WBAI Annual Dinner, which took place on May 30. The WBAI Annual Dinner is one of the most well-attended events in the Chicago legal community, drawing over 800 attorneys, judges, and dignitaries. At the dinner, in addition to swearing in its Officers and Directors for 2019-2020, the WBAI installed its incoming president. In conjunction with the Women's Attorney Group (WAG), the Diversity Committee continues to evaluate sponsorship and membership in this association.

ATTORNEY EVALUATIONS

There is a standing agenda item for every Executive Committee meeting. In 2019, the partner surveys asked the following question:



This data will be maintained over the years to identify improvement in participation and programming for Diversity and Inclusion.

2019 ACTIVITIES

MARCH PARTNERSHIP RETREAT

The Diversity Committee presented at the partnership retreat in March 2019 on the subject of diversity recruitment and retention. The partnership was informed of SmithAmundsen's diversity initiatives, including the law clerk program, mentorship and training, and marketing efforts.

SMITHAMUNDSEN LAW CLERK LUNCHEON



On August 1, the Diversity Committee hosted a luncheon in Chicago and law clerks from a number of SmithAmundsen offices attended. Larry Schechtman, managing partner, made remarks at the beginning of the luncheon regarding the import of diversity at SmithAmundsen, followed by lunchtime networking between SmithAmundsen attorneys and law clerks.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB OF CHICAGO

The Diversity Committee sponsored membership for the Professional Women's Club of Chicago (PWCC). PWCC offers an exclusive opportunity to build brand loyalty and market to a highly educated and successful group of women executives, while providing networking with professional women to build relationships and meaningful connections. Many of SmithAmundsen's partners and associates attended monthly luncheons hosted by PWCC.

WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING IN 2020?



2020 CO-CHAIRS
Molly Arranz and Joe Trevino

- **INCREASED EFFORTS** to recruit diverse attorneys at all offices. Throughout 2019, the Diversity Committee worked on outreach to law student associations to post law clerk opportunities and to advise of associate positions open at each office. These efforts will continue in 2020.
- **CONTINUED DIALOGUE** with third party organizations and resources aimed at assisting SmithAmundsen in its diversity and inclusion initiatives as to recruitment and retention.
- **CONTINUED PROFILE-RAISING** of different groups, through events hosted by the Diversity Committee and spotlights on different cultures in monthly emails and other events.
- **CONTINUED COLLABORATION WITH WOMEN'S ATTORNEY GROUP (WAG) AND ASSOCIATE COMMITTEE** toward the objectives of recruitment and retention. In the final quarter of 2019, the Diversity Committee invited Danessa Watkins, Chair of the Associate Committee, to provide general updates on their work with interviewing and assessing associate concerns and attitudes of associates toward training and membership. Anne Fishbeck, Vice Chair of the Women's Attorney Group, regularly attended meetings throughout the year to ensure partnership on efforts for programming.

SMITHAMUNDSEN'S WOMEN'S ATTORNEY GROUP (WAG)

The Diversity Committee relaunched the Women Attorney's Group (WAG) in 2018. WAG had its inaugural year in 2019, and the **events, efforts and proposals proffered by this Committee can be found at the end of this report.**

SMITHAMUNDSEN'S WOMEN'S ATTORNEY GROUP (WAG)

WOMEN'S SOCIAL EVENT

On March 21, WAG hosted a social event for all women attorneys at SmithAmundsen's Chicago office. WAG timed the event in coordination with the Associates' Symposium, in an effort to allow SmithAmundsen's women attorneys to make connections to empower each other in furtherance of WAG's mission. The event was attended by women attorneys from the Chicago, Indianapolis and St. Louis offices, and a member of WAG addressed those at the gathering.

BALANCING THE SCALES SCREENING

The Women's Attorney Group hosted Sharon Rowen, filmmaker and trial attorney, for a private screening of Balancing the Scales, her documentary, which explored the struggles and triumphs of women in the law.

The event had the **highest attendance of all time for a non-mandatory firm event**. WAG received positive feedback about the event from attendees. The film screening sparked an important conversation regarding the topics covered in the documentary. Afterwards, the WAG hosted a reception in each office for all attorneys who attended.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN 2020?

- **CONTINUED AWARENESS RAISING** events to advance WAG's Mission Statement and to support opportunities for connection amongst the SmithAmundsen community.
- **ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES** for SmithAmundsen's women attorneys to build important connections with each other, which in turn will strengthen SmithAmundsen.
- **PARTICIPATION IN COLLABORATIVE** efforts with the Diversity Committee and Associate Committee to assess and highlight the needs of the women attorneys at SmithAmundsen for advancement and overall well-being at the firm.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Women's Attorney Group (WAG) is to empower, encourage and support the female attorneys of SmithAmundsen through recruitment, retention, development and progression of our women lawyers and leaders. We are dedicated to providing a positive and supportive environment for our women attorneys to empower all women to grow strong, sustainable legal practices and to become leaders within the firm and the legal community. To further our mission, we are committed to creating an inclusive culture that supports the growth and development of talented women lawyers. When our women succeed, we succeed as a firm.

*For a list of WAG members, visit
[www.salawus.com/
about-womensgroup.html](http://www.salawus.com/about-womensgroup.html)*

CONCLUSION

The Diversity Committee hopes for diversity at SmithAmundsen to be about a broad collection of perspectives. Of course, diversity is meaningless without inclusion. This means that we strive for an environment where different people all feel like they belong at the table and have the same opportunities as everyone else.

