



The State Bar of California

State Bar Joins Diversity Partnership

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San Francisco, Aug. 1, 2007 – The State Bar of California is joining forces with the California Public Utilities Commission, the California Public Retirement System and the state Department of Insurance in a united effort to promote diversity in the workplace.

California Aspire Achieve Lead Pipeline Project (CaAAL Pipeline Project) will focus on education and mentoring, starting as early as pre-school, to provide skills and instill motivation in young people who are not well represented in the legal, financial and information technology professions.

“The real winners are the young people of California who will advance from these programs and the entire populace of California that will have the benefit of a diverse and vibrant pool of bright young people from all sectors of our diverse population,” said State Bar President Sheldon Sloan. Sloan beefed up a bar diversity pipeline project put in place by his predecessors that has been embraced by lawyers and jurists statewide.

Bar Vice President Ruthe Ashley, who chairs the bar’s Pipeline Task Force and recently became CALPERS’ Diversity Officer for External Affairs, “has done a fantastic job of moving this initiative forward,” added Sloan. “Now that she has brought in CALPERS and CAL PUC, this program is here to stay for the foreseeable future.”

In large part because of the bar’s experience and success in identifying programs that help young people move on to successful careers in law, CaAAL’s first-year focus will be on diversifying the legal profession. “We have relationships in place. We have best practices. We have done the research,” said Ashley. The second-year focus will be

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on financial institutions and the third year on information technology. Funding for the new nonprofit is expected to come from private partners and public sector grants.

Ashley said the nonprofit will be the umbrella organization that will coordinate activities in five different geographic “centers of excellence.” She is hoping that the board for the new nonprofit will promote replication of proven programs, such as Street Law, Pacific Pathways and the Council on Legal Education Opportunity, and that the new entity “will be a model for other states.”

“The vision is that it will change the face of the future in the workplace and of our leaders,” said Ashley.

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Founded in 1927 by the state legislature, The State Bar of California is an administrative arm of the California Supreme Court, serving the public and seeking to improve the justice system for more than 75 years. All lawyers practicing law in California must be members of the State Bar. In July 2007, membership reached more than 211,800.