

AGENDA ITEM

July 2009

**Council on Access & Fairness -
Status Report**

Date: June 9, 2009

To: Members, Board Committee on Stakeholder Relations

From: Luis Rodriguez, Chair, Council on Access & Fairness
Patricia Lee, Director, Office of Legal Services,
Access & Fairness Programs

Subject: Council on Access and Fairness – Status Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On November 17, 2006 the Board of Governors approved a recommendation to create a new 25-member Council on Access & Fairness, to be appointed at the March 2007 Board meeting. It was envisioned that the new Council would address all issues along the Diversity Pipeline (e.g. pre-school through law school, bar exam issues, and recruitment, retention and advancement in the profession). The Council was also to incorporate interests from all stakeholder groups, including the constituent interests represented by the Access & Fairness Committees (sunsetting March 1, 2007) and the other pipeline areas of interest, including law firms, bar associations, corporate sector, government/ public sector, public interest, courts, and the full education pipeline (pre-school through law school). The Council held its initial meeting in June 2007. This marks the 2nd anniversary of the Council. Council Chair Luis Rodriguez will provide a status report on the initiatives undertaken by the Council.

BACKGROUND

In November 17, 2006 the Board of Governors approved a recommendation for the creation of a new Board-appointed Council on Access & Fairness (COAF) to consist of twenty-five members, reflecting the breadth of the diversity pipeline, reflecting the broad-based diversity stakeholder constituencies, and the State Bar's Access & Fairness programs. The Council was appointed in March 2007 and has become the primary advisor to the State Bar Board of Governors on issues related to diversity in the profession and serving as the State Bar diversity "think tank". Its work was modeled after the substantive work of the Diversity Pipeline Task Force and is designed to enhance diversity opportunities and advancement within the legal profession.

COUNCIL INITIATIVES:

The Council has divided its focus on key sections of the diversity pipeline, including Early Education, College/law School, Legal Profession and the Judiciary. Ad hoc working groups are also created to address initiatives that could benefit from a Council-wide focus. Current Ad Hoc Working Groups include: Law School Rankings, Law School Training, and Diversity Coalition. Highlights of current Council initiatives are found in **Attachment A**.

Upon review and discussion of all possible initiatives, the COAF engaged in two Retreats to confirm its vision and goals. The current Vision Statement is found at **Attachment B**.

The Council also held its second Annual Diversity Stakeholder forum to further inform the work of the Councils and to conduct outreach among the diversity stakeholders. The program outline and preliminary feedback is attached at **Attachment C**. A report and recommendations will be created and presented to the Board at its November 2009 meeting.

Finally, the Council has embarked upon a full Outreach Initiative designed to engage all Council members in making contact with various local and minority bar groups to present information about the work of the Council and to develop collaborative partnerships between the Council and these entities for ongoing diversity pipeline activities. As part of this outreach effort the Council will be encouraging various groups to recruit their members to apply for appointment to State Bar Entities. The Council will be developing its appointments outreach and will be evaluating various approaches for increasing diversity among the State Bar applicant pool and among State Bar appointments. The Council will present its Appointments report and recommendations to VIC in November 2009.