

**The State Bar of California
Council on Access & Fairness
PRE-LAW ADVISORS FOCUS GROUP
December 12, 2008**

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

BACKGROUND

On December 12, 2008, members of the State Bar's Council on Access & Fairness (COAF) College/Law School Committee met at Golden Gate University with undergraduate college/university pre-law and admissions professionals from Northern California to better understand the needs of pre-law advisors and how the COAF can assist in providing resources for diverse students interested in attending law school. The summary below arose from that joint meeting.

COMMENTS:

Pre Law Advisors:

- come in all forms, filling various roles within the institution, including general academic advising and career counseling.
- devote varying percentages of their overall job responsibilities to pre-law advising and are involved in various pre-law activities, including coordinating pre-law societies and conducting admissions workshops.
- lack institutional support and are under-resourced and under-funded.
- are members of PCAPLA (Pacific Coast Association of Pre-Law Advisors), an organization of pre-law advisors from colleges and universities in California, Washington, Oregon, Nevada and Hawaii.
- are generally unaware of diversity pipeline issues, but are interested in learning about the lack of diversity in the profession and how to increase the number of diverse students interested in law school, and in participating in diversity outreach efforts.

Potential Law Students:

- need more information on the admissions process, financial assistance resources, insights into the legal profession and careers in the law, and guidance on networking and professional development.
- would benefit from speakers, internships, mentors, and court visits. Any outreach to students should utilize computer technology, not printed materials.

DISCUSSION:

To enhance pre-law counseling services and facilitate support for students, and consistent with comments provided above, Pre-Law Advisors should consider the following:

- Collaborate through their Association of Pre Law Advisors, to provide assistance to and share resources with pre-law advisors, so that they can conduct admissions workshops, provide LSAT preparatory information and coordinate pre-law advisory societies.
- Familiarize themselves with local minority-focused organizations and disability resource centers on academic campuses. The academic campuses should also include community college campuses and non-feeder schools.
- Extend outreach to parents and the local community so they understand and “buy-in” to legal education as an option and are well versed on what it takes to help a student succeed.
- Utilize college faculty adjuncts with law degrees to recruit, speak to and mentor students.
- Host open houses on campus, taking advantage of local and minority bar associations, as well as the COAF network, to identify speakers

To broaden the scope of support provided to potential law students, and to the extent not already done, Law Schools should consider the following activities:

- Expand their outreach to non-feeder schools.
- Host open houses on campus, taking advantage of local and minority bar associations, as well as the COAF network, to identify speakers
- Designate contacts for students to call.

To address the diversity pipeline issues raised through dialogue with the Pre-Law Advisors, the Council on Access and Fairness should consider the following in its ongoing planning:

- Compile a list of resources for use by pre-law advisors in counseling undergraduate students re preparation for law school, including good web links. (Note: The COAF has identified a list of resources, which it is referring to as the “Pre Law Tool Kit”, that it can compile for use by Advisors and Pre Law Student Clubs including the following items:

- Identify existing pre-law resources (e.g. Law School Admissions Council, Pre Law Advisor Association Resources, etc)
 - Provide contact information with State Bar Office of Admissions to provide information on the law school application process (also refer to State Bar Website)
 - Identify the type of classes that students should consider taking as part of undergraduate coursework – (skills including: critical and analytical thinking, oral/written communication, logical thinking are important. Possibly cite to the study re list of majors and LSAT score averages)
 - Identify events, workshops that students can attend
 - Identify available speakers to talk about applying to law school
 - speakers should address types of law school and factors to consider in making a choice about attendance
 - invite law schools administrator presentations (financial aid, admissions, academic programs, etc)
 - Provide information re the status of diversity in the legal profession
 - Provide practical information about the practice of law
 - Identify speakers on practice areas within the profession (“Day in the Life of a Lawyer” events)
 - Field trips to the courts (Judicial Council is working on a tool kit for these court visits)
 - Provide contacts to coordinate Law school visits
 - Highlight pre-law programs run by law firms, corporate law depts., government agencies, etc - experiential programs
 - Suggestions for creating more interest among students to consider the law as a profession
- Conduct outreach and provide information regarding diversity in the legal profession. (Note: this information could also be provided through a link on the Electronic Toolkit website).
 - Prepare suggested readings and on-line information for interested students.
 - Coordinate with local bar associations and other diversity stakeholders to develop lists of attorneys and judges willing to mentor pre-law students and compile a list of speakers willing to go out to the campuses.
 - Provide information on law school costs, including financial aid for law school, public service loan repayment options, etc.
 - Identify and develop funding resources for scholarships for LSAT preparatory courses.
 - Conduct outreach to student groups, including pre-law clubs.