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## LCLD/ALM Panelists and Audience Commit to Action List for Development of Diverse Legal Talent

NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--The Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD), with co-sponsor ALM, the legal media group, convened a panel of GCs and MPs in New York City on April 17 that not only unearthed insights about the development of diverse talent in the legal profession, but also sent attendees away with an action list and a commitment to complete “at least one thing” on that list.

The meeting, the first in a series of regional miniconferences to be convened by LCLD, was billed by LCLD Chair Rick Palmore as “a candid conversation” among leaders in the profession. Said Palmore: “We can’t wait for anybody else. There *is* nobody else.”

The panelists included:

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- Sharon Bowen, Partner, Latham & Watkins LLP
- Eric Friedman, Executive Partner, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher, Flom
- Louise Parent, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, American Express
- Amy Schulman, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Pfizer

ALM Editor-in-Chief Aric Press presented what he characterized as a “blizzard” of statistics about legal diversity, emphasizing that the numbers can be misleading without breaking them down by categories. Asian-American attorneys, for instance, show relatively strong numbers that mask weaker numbers of other groups, including African-Americans. “When you take out Asian-American numbers,” said Press, “minority percentages plummet.”

Press, whom Palmore called “the conscience of the profession,” challenged the group to respond to an impression “...that when you talk to managing partners there is a lot of cynicism [about legal diversity], and the stats go into the drawer.”

Panelist Eric Friedman of Skadden, Arps, which is recognized for performance in the area of legal diversity, said his firm is “a little bit above the stats...but still a long way from declaring success” and added “there is a business imperative for diversity that resonates with our colleagues.”

Louise Parent of American Express told the group it is important to work toward a profession that is “more just, more open. We need to work,” she said, “for a higher purpose. It’s fundamental to why we’re in the legal profession.”

“The question to ask,” said panelist Amy Schulman of Pfizer, “is ‘Does the firm have the tolerance for discussion? Is there diversity in terms of tolerance for different voices?’”

“Statistics,” said Schulman “don’t speak to where the power is and how work gets allocated and how institutional relationships are formed.”

Sharon Bowen of Latham & Watkins observed that firms “tend to go to the same persons over and over.” She urged sessions between firms and clients “that bring diverse associates to the table, to get to learn the business and get to know new people on

a 'one-to-one' basis. "

LCLD Executive Director Robert Grey picked up on that theme, emphasizing that the development of legal talent has "got to be personal." In response, the panelists and those in the audience compiled a list of "to-do's" and a commitment to report back on the success in accomplishing "at least one" of those action items.

Among those actions to take:

- Match diverse associates with inhouse counsel early on.
- Create informal opportunities (e.g., luncheons) to allow relationship exercises between clients and associates.
- Provide secondments at client organizations for attorneys from diverse backgrounds, an area where tools are provided by LCLD ([www.lclldnet.org](http://www.lclldnet.org)).
- Win the commitment of law firm leadership.
- Hire 1Ls for corporate summer programs to help build resumes.
- Hammer out career development plans for diverse associates, beginning as early as the second or third year.
- Commit to "sponsorship" ("expend some political capital"), not only "mentorship."
- Encourage diverse leadership to visit law schools to "model" what's possible.
- Broaden the pool of law schools for recruiting.
- Make it personal. Reach out and motivate peers in leadership positions.
- Meet again to report progress.

The meeting was co-hosted by A.B. Culvahouse, Jr., former Chair of O'Melveny & Myers and by Sandra Leung, General Counsel for Bristol-Myers Squibb, both members of LCLD.

Culvahouse, who said he admires "LCLD's bias toward action," closed the meeting, saying that he has, over the years, seen that "the numbers have gotten better, but that management is not materially more diverse."

"Progress has been evolutionary," said Culvahouse. "We need it to be revolutionary."

For more information about the LCLD, visit [www.lclldnet.org](http://www.lclldnet.org) or contact: [joe.slay@slaycommunications.com](mailto:joe.slay@slaycommunications.com) at 804.350.7089.

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