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SCE Senior Attorney Selected for Prestigious Leadership Council on Legal Diversity Fellowship



Kris Vyas, senior attorney at SCE, was recently selected by the law department as this year's Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCDC) fellow.



Kris Vyas will have a chance to meet some of the top attorneys in the legal profession and train alongside his peers.

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As a [law student at the University of California, Los Angeles](#), Kris Vyas quickly learned how knowledge of the law can help people. During his studies, he got involved with [Street Law](#), a program that teaches practical legal concepts to grassroots audiences.

"Before going to law school, I didn't understand how our system of laws controls so many aspects of our behavior, even little things that you don't notice," said Vyas.

As a student teacher he [taught law at Camp David Gonzales](#), a probationary facility and school for male youth sentenced by the Los Angeles County probation system.

"They told me I was the first student to come teach there regularly. It was an eye-opening experience," said Vyas, who still participates, along with other Southern California Edison (SCE) attorneys, in the teaching component of Street Law.

Today, Vyas is a senior attorney at SCE and he was recently selected by the law department as this year's [Leadership Council on Legal Diversity](#) (LCDC) fellow. The organization's mission is to help increase diversity in the legal profession and, as a fellow, Vyas will have the chance to meet successful attorneys from across the country.

"I think that, from what I've seen of the program, it's outstanding because it's very substantive," said Vyas, who was gratified and humbled to be selected. "I got to know an incredible cross-section of people at the [first conference] in Texas — different lawyers from different backgrounds who are trying to be outstanding professionals in their field. What you find is that everyone has had to struggle with some real or perceived 'otherness,' and everyone there has had varying degrees of success while remaining very humble."

SCE has participated in LCLD since its inception in 2009. The organization encourages a commitment at both law firms and private companies to identify diverse, high potential candidates in the legal profession. The group also helps those organizations follow through on that commitment by providing those candidates with valuable networking opportunities while developing their leadership skills.

"It started with a document called the 'call to action,' which was spearheaded by a number of Fortune 500 companies in order to get corporate law departments to rally around the idea that there's a real lack of diversity in the legal profession," said **Russ Swartz, SCE senior vice president and general counsel**. "Out of this, LCLD was formed. Its mission is focused on promoting diversity in the profession as a whole."

Like many of the LCLD fellows, Vyas comes to the table with an impressive resume. A **political science major at UC Berkeley**, he pursued a legal career with an interest in working on policy that affects quality of life for people. He started his legal career with a small, two-attorney firm in Oakland doing the very basics of cite checking, process serving and paralegal work.

"They didn't pay a lot, but I learned a lot," said Vyas.

He then went on to work several years with the law firm of Morrison and Forrester before he joined SCE. The transition has suited him.

"I have found [working for one client] really gratifying," said Vyas. "You're working for one company and you can really understand the business in more detail."

Part of the LCLD fellowship includes in-person conferences, training in the fine points of legal practice, peer-group projects to foster collaboration and building relationships, and extensive contact with LCLD's top leadership.

For many of the LCLD fellows, the fellowship experience has been enriching. When Jane Lee Cole was selected by SCE to be the LCLD fellow in 2013, along with Walker "Al" Matthews, she attended her first meeting without knowing much about the program.

"After attending the first meeting in Washington, D.C. last spring, I was so impressed," she said. "I felt they had the right mission, which was to develop diverse talent."

Mike Montoya, Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer at Edison International, was an early supporter of the LCLD program during his time in the law department at SCE.

"Unlike any other diversity pipeline groups I'm aware of, [LCLD] limits representation to the senior leaders in the law firms and companies — general counsels and managing partners," he said. "They're communicating to the decision-makers, and asking for a commitment from the decision-makers, and that's how you get things done. I think you see this reflected in the participation in, and the commitment to the program."

LCLD is important to the law department at SCE, not only because of a commitment to the professional growth of SCE attorneys, but in part because of its larger mission.

"We are firmly committed to diversity in general — we have a highly diverse department here — but we are also committed to diversity in the legal profession as a whole," said Swartz. "We have many good lawyers that we can select for this program, and plan to select going forward. Kris had just assumed the lead attorney position on the General Rate Case, which is a big step in his career, and we felt that the [LCLD] fellowship would complement that."

For his part, Vyas is looking to get the most out of the opportunity.

"I think what I hope to get out of the experience is growth," said Vyas. "I like to believe that whether you've been practicing law for one or 10 or more years, there's always a chance to grow."

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