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LCLD Fellows Program Creates a Community Of Future Leaders

By Shira Baratz • July 03, 2015 • Careers, Firms and the Private Sector

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Since 2009, **Leadership Council on Legal Diversity** has worked on the premise that the most effective way to boost diversity within the profession was to involve its leaders, identify promising diverse attorneys, and provide them with career tools they need to succeed. In just 6 years, the council has grown to an organization of more than 220 Members, who serve as either general counsel of major corporations or managing partners of the nation's leading law firms.

In 2011, LCLD launched the **Fellows Program**. The program identifies attorneys from diverse backgrounds and sets them on the path to leadership within their organizations. The Fellows Program is a yearlong program that encourages midcareer attorneys to assume professional leadership roles. During the yearlong program fellows have the opportunity to participate in various elements of the program. There are In-Person Meetings, Learning Experiences, Alumni Networking, Leadership Lunches, and 1L Scholars Mentoring, all focused on strengthening the important skills necessary to achieve leadership positions. More than 600 attorneys with eight to ten years of experience have gone through the fellows program.

Ms. JD reached out to Lori Lorenzo, Director of Programs at LCLD, who points to the community created by Fellow alumni as their success. She explains they were very successful

in developing a community of mid-level lawyers rely on each other for support, career advice, professional growth, and training. Though the fellowship is from March to March, the experience goes beyond the yearlong program. There are 630 alumni in over 80 cities.

Ms. JD also spoke with Zohra Tejani, Director of the Alumni program and a Senior Attorney at Microsoft, who describes the program as transformational. The Alumni Program works to give the alumni access to social incubation, career and leadership training, support for transition challenges, access to role models, support from members, and serve the greater good to improve diversity in the legal profession.

The program creates a hand-selected community where, Tejani explains, there is an immediate connection. As a female attorney, Tejani found the alumni community as a complete confidence booster. “I can raise my hand and take on leadership roles,” she explains. Additionally, she is able to gain recognition from leaders of the field, another confidence booster. Lastly, the community of alumni gives Tejani access to other female attorneys and working moms. It is a support network and a safe outlet to speak freely.

The American Bar Association found the social isolation of women and minorities, and especially African-American women, in law firms. LCLD surveyed Fellows on the indicators of social isolation adapted from the “After the JD” study done by the ABA. Analysis of LCLD Fellows responses by ABF Director, Bob Nelson, shows little evidence of isolation in Fellows. Moreover, Fellows continue to cite the relationships developed through the program as the most significant benefit.

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