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# Crowell's Dwyer to Head Leadership Council on Legal Diversity

The organization said its focus will broaden in 2020, looking more at how the legal industry as a whole can be more inclusive of diverse talent.

By **Samantha Stokes** (https://www.law.com/americanlawyer/author/profile/Samantha-Stokes/) | November 26, 2019 at 06:00 AM

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Ellen Dwyer, incoming chair of the Leadership Council for Legal Diversity. Courtesy photo

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The Leadership Council on Legal Diversity has named the leader of Crowell & Moring's executive committee as its new chair.

The group appointed Washington, D.C.-based Ellen Dwyer, who is also a member of Crowell's management board and partner in its labor and employment group, to take the organization's reins Jan. 1, 2020. Dwyer will succeed Laura Stein, executive vice president and general counsel for The Clorox Co., who led the organization for two years.

Kim Rivera, president of strategy and business management and chief legal officer for HP Inc., has been named LCLD's chair-elect.

Founded in 2009 to provide networking, career advancement and leadership opportunities to women and diverse attorneys, LCLD counts more than 300 law firm leaders and in-house counsel among its members.

In an interview, Dwyer said the group has directed its energy toward building relationships among lawyers and potential clients and mentors.

"This is really core and, to me, the foundation of all of our work—amazing programs we're very proud of, which provide tremendous opportunities for women and diverse lawyers," she said.

LCLD's original goal was to create 10,000 legal role models through various initiatives, including a fellowship program, which provides high-performing diverse attorneys with support to work toward leadership in their organizations; the Pathfinder program, which focuses on diverse, early-career attorneys' relationship-building, leadership skills and career development; the 1L Scholars Program, which gives students the opportunity to work closely with attorneys in LCLD member organizations; and the Success in Law School Mentoring program, which caters to diverse, first-year law students.

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The target of 10,000 role models was reached this year in time for the organization's 10-year anniversary, Dwyer said, meaning that her role as LCLD chair will focus on more outward-reaching goals.

"Going forward, we need to focus on the other side of the equation: what leaders of [LCLD's] member organizations are doing to rethink and further advance the career trajectories of diverse talent," she said. "Each individual [involved with LCLD] tries to ensure we're sharing best practice across our membership, so that others can take advantage of what we see as working."

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Dwyer said that in her 20 years recruiting and developing talent at Crowell & Moring, she's seen the importance of not only recruiting, but also retaining diverse talent by increasing their opportunities to succeed.

"In my current role, chair of the executive committee, it's my job to retain the best talent," she said. "I've seen firsthand the power of ensuring that women lawyers and diverse lawyers in particular have the opportunity to develop relationships important to their career progression."

Crowell & Moring became involved with LCLD within a few years of the organization's founding and has been an active participant ever since. Dwyer said the organization does a great job of tracking which diversity initiatives are working, supporting members who want to implement changes in their firms, and scaling initiatives across the legal industry.

"We've actually seen the progression we're looking for, in terms of digging in and developing the potential [of diverse attorneys]," Dwyer said. "At Crowell & Moring, we've seen that too."

The law firm highlighted the experience of Chahira Solh, a former LCLD fellow who has risen through the ranks at Crowell & Moring. She is currently managing partner of the firm's Orange County, California, office.

In an email, Robert Grey Jr., LCLD's president, praised Dwyer's leadership both within her own firm and in the legal community as a whole.

"One reason that [Dwyer] has been so successful and respected in her career is that she understands the value of relationships," he wrote. "As a leader, she has always brought a deeply personal level of commitment to those with whom she works. That shows up, for example, in the way she views the sponsorship of diverse attorneys at her firm, and I have no doubt that same personal level of commitment will be a hallmark of her tenure as chair of LCLD."

Dwyer said she also wants to focus on something she doesn't hear discussed as often when it comes to diversity in the legal profession: understanding the lived experiences of diverse attorneys at their firms and working to improve them.

"As we move forward from 2019 and ask, 'What can organizations do to propel progress?' it starts with a fundamental understanding of how our lawyers are experiencing our organization," she said. "Speaking truth to power can be intimidating and uncomfortable, but with LCLD we're building relationships that allow us to share more enriched information with each other."

"We need to listen to the experiences that our lawyers are having, especially when they're participating in great [LCLD] programs but not seeing the progress they aspire to in their own personal careers. It's crucial to understand potential barriers and move past them by working together."

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