

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sylvia James, NALP Vice-President for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
and DEI Section Board Liaison

FROM: Laké Laosebikan-Buggs (Elon University School of Law)
LaNitra S. Webb (O'Melveny & Myers)
NALP 2025-26 Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Section Co-Chairs

DATE: January 29, 2026

RE: DEI Section Quarterly Board Report #3

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Section's third quarter meeting was held on November 20, 2025 and attended by **52** members of the section. We were pleased to be joined by immigration attorneys Kristy Uyen Le, Associate at Munsch Hardt, and Sophia Mai, Senior Counsel at Plunk Smith, to discuss the U.S. administration's immigration actions related to H-1B visas and the proposed implementation of a \$100,000 fee. The imposition of this new fee could have dramatic impacts on law schools and law firms' ability to afford to recruit and retain specialized talent, particularly those with STEM backgrounds.

As of January 2026, the DEI Section has 680 members, which is approximately less than a 1% decrease from October 2025 when there were 681 members.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING

AEC 2026 (Florida Location)

[Please refer to our previously submitted Q1 report proposal for consideration of the upcoming AEC in Florida] NALP members, particularly those in the LGBTQ+ community and those who work in DEI, have expressed concerns about the Florida location given Gov. DeSantis' explicit attacks on LGBTQ+ rights and anything painted with the "woke" ideology brush. While some members are committed to representing their identities and supporting local equity-seeking businesses while in attendance, others are fearful of what traveling to Florida may mean for them. While the LGBTQ+ and Gender Nonbinary Inclusion workgroups, as well as the DEI Section, can offer support, *messaging from NALP leadership that recognizes the concern and proactively communicates activities that are being conducted to support equity-seeking organizations in Florida, or resources available to impacted members*, would be immensely helpful for those that are feeling unwelcomed in the state.

AEC 2026 Session Proposal Process

During the call for proposals for 2026 AEC, several DE&I related sessions were submitted, but because they were not submitted under the DEI Section, we as Co-Chairs were unaware of the specific topics until they were made available for selection at AEC registration. We understand historically the process has been to only notify section leaders of sessions submitted under their Section; however, we respectfully ask the Board to consider whether relevant session topics could be shared with Section Co-Chairs regardless of submission category. Such a change would

increase transparency and enable Co-Chairs to connect with presenters to explore additional opportunities, such as *Bulletin+* articles or follow-on Section programming, particularly when proposals are not selected for inclusion in the AEC agenda. The DEI Section Co-Chairs appreciate the NALP Board and administrative team’s consideration of this request.

Ruling Reinforces the Legality of DEI and Protections for Higher Education

On January 21, 2026, the Trump Administration agreed to [withdraw its appeal](#) of a federal district court ruling that vacated the Department of Education’s February 14, 2025 [Dear Colleague Letter](#) (DCL) and a related requirement that schools certify that they do not engage in “illegal DEI” practices. The Education Department’s withdrawal of its own appeal means that the district court decision will stand.

The court found that the Department exceeded its legal authority bypassing required processes and attempting to regulate classroom and campus speech. The decision was issued under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) and also held that the DCL violated the First Amendment and was unconstitutionally vague. The withdrawal of the appeal leaves those conclusions intact.

While we are cautiously optimistic, this development represents a meaningful step forward. While the ruling applies specifically to the two measures by the Department of Education, it reinforces those lawful efforts to advance diversity; equity, inclusion and belonging remain central to the mission of higher education. It also affirms that the federal government cannot lawfully use funding threats to restrict the ability of colleges and universities to lawfully protect and expand fair access and opportunity nationwide, underscoring the importance of collective action in defending civil rights and academic freedom.

WORK GROUP UPDATES:

Annual Education Conference/*Bulletin+* Article and Webinar Planning

Vice Chair: **Ray English**, Senior Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Snell & Wilmer

- No report submitted.

Disability & Neurodiversity Inclusion

Vice Chairs: **Beka Anardi**, Senior Recruiter, Davis Wright Tremaine LLP and **Marti McCausland** Assistant Director, Center for Career Planning & Professional Development, University of Oregon School of Law

- On November 12, Aaron Baer presented “My Reality of Being Neurodivergent in Big Law” as a NALP webinar.

- Julie Remer and Mary Beth wrote “*How to Be a Resource for Lawyers Who Have a Disability or Who are Neurodivergent*” for the January 2026 issue of NALP Bulletin+.
- On January 27, we have a webinar, **Bookmarked, Part 3: Narratives in Disability and Neurodiversity**. Six readers will be discussing "Being Huemann" by Judy Heumann and Kristen Joiner, "Faster than Normal", by Peter Shankman, and four children's books.
- Next quarter we plan another article in NALP Bulletin+ highlighting interviews members have conducted with lawyers who have disabilities or are neurodiverse.

Gender Non-Binary Inclusion

Vice Chair: **Deshawn Cook**, Senior Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator, Williams & Connolly

- The Gender Nonbinary Workgroup has identified a new co-chair, **Jasper Katz**.
- The work group is confirming members of the group. To date, seven (7) people have agreed to continue working with the group.
- We are currently finalizing the membership of the work group, with seven individuals having already agreed to continue their participation.
- The next step is to schedule the group's first meeting of 2026, which we anticipate will take place before the end of February.

LGBTQ+

Recently, a NALP member expressed interest in potentially taking on the LGBTQ+ Vice Chair role. We will confirm once Section Co-Chairs have had the opportunity to connect with the interested party directly. However, at this time, there is nothing additional to report.

Native and Indigenous Peoples in the Legal Profession

Vice Chair: **Jennifer Mencarini**, Director of Cultural Engagement, Fox Rothschild

The Native and Indigenous Peoples in the Legal Profession Task Force disbanded following the *Glossary of Terms* published in the December *Bulletin*+. There are no further updates at this time, nor forthcoming.

Well-Being Champion

Champion: **Nada Llewellyn**, Chief Inclusion Officer, US, Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer (US) LLP

Wellbeing Champion Nada Llewellyn led a visualization exercise at our November meeting meant to ground participants as we neared the end of the year, and also connected to the power we have, including the power to treat ourselves with kindness.

Black Men's Sub-Affinity Group

Vice Chair: **Christopher Neal**, Director for Career Services, Temple University Beasley School of Law

The Black Men's Sub Affinity Group is making outstanding progress. The group had a scheduled meeting on **Wednesday, January 21, 2026**.

- The meeting agenda included: 1) 2026 NALP AEC Presentation, 2) 2026 NALP AEC Meet-Up/Connect, 3) Revisiting the Objectives for the group and; 4) Open Forum for Challenges, Comments, Updates and Questions

All NALP members were encouraged to attend and share their unique perspectives and questions. The sub-group values all voices and invites participation that helps strengthen a supportive NALP community for all.