

## MEMORANDUM

---

TO: Sylvia James, NALP Vice-President for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

FROM: Jennifer Gibert Mencarini  
LaNitra S. Webb  
NALP 2024-25 Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Section Co-Chairs

DATE: January 30, 2025

RE: DEI Section Quarterly Board Report #3

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Section had an active third quarter.

The Section's third quarterly meeting was held on January 16, 2025 and was attended by 49 members online. Our Section Wellbeing Champion, Melanie Rowen, shared a brief [Ruth King](#) meditation, **Holding On - Letting Go**, which segued nicely into the presentation from guest speaker Kori Carew, former NALP member and current DEI consultant who discussed **The Art of Strategic DEI Leadership: Courage, Buy-In, and Self-Care**. The session focused on strategic approaches for not just expanding our allies and sponsors, and winning some of the detractors over, but safeguarding our own well-being as DEIB practitioners. We were pleased to feature Kori following her unexpected conflict with the second quarter section meeting and are currently working to schedule part two of this detailed discussion, likely prior to and independent of, our fourth quarter section meeting.

During the meeting, we announced the formation of the Small & Mid-Sized Law Firm Interest Group to support those professionals in small to mid-size firms with broad responsibilities across recruiting, professional development, and/or DEI.

The Section currently has 700 members, 29 more than at the time of the last Board report. Our next Section meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 20, 2025 at 4 p.m. ET. We are in the process of identifying the topic. Given the current administration's increasing anti-DEI Executive Orders, this is a challenging moment for NALP members DEI profession, and we want to ensure we are providing content that meets their pressing needs.

Following the Board's recommendation to focus on more education during Section meetings we have not noticed increased engagement and are considering ways to create space for dialogue. The Board's input on this potential shift is appreciated.

### WORK GROUP UPDATES:

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

Vice Chairs: **Bijal Shah**, Senior Manager of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Skadden Arps; **Ray English**, Senior Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Snell & Wilmer

Jen and Michael Nguyen's article [Connection, Collaboration and Community](#) was published in the January 2025 issue of the Bulletin+. It highlights the importance, impact, and value of affinity groups in the legal profession and in organizations like NALP.

Ray's article, [Building the Yellow Brock Road: Making the case for Pipeline Programs](#) was published in the December 2024 issue of the Bulletin+ and highlighted the need to focus on developing skills-based pipeline programming.

## **Disability & Neurodiversity Inclusion**

Vice Chair: **Robin Thorner**, Assistant Dean, Office of Career Strategy, St. Mary's University School of Law and **Mary Beth Nielsen**, Director, Judicial Internships, Externships & Post-Graduate Clerkships, Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law

The Disability and Neurodivergence Work Group hosted a webinar on November 12, 2024 as group members discussed takeaways from [Disability Visibility](#) by Alice Wong, [Sincerely, Your Autistic Child: What People on the Autism Spectrum Wish Their Parents Knew About Growing Up, Acceptance, and Identity](#) by Emily Paige Ballou and Sharon daVanport, and [The Center Cannot Hold](#) by Elyn Saks. Members did not have to read the books to attend and/or learn more about disability and neurodivergence. They had about 50 members on the call and due to the success of the meeting, we have planned a second webinar for March as detailed below:

**Bookmarked, Part 2: Narratives of Disability and Neurodiversity** (March 25 at 2 p.m. CST) : Join members of the DEI Section's Disability and Neurodiversity Work Group to learn about lived experiences with disability and neurodivergence through the lens of some of the books we are reading now. Come as you are to learn about [Unmasking Autism](#) by Devon Price, [The Best Minds](#) by Jonathan Rosen, and [How to Keep House While Drowning](#) by K.C. Davis, LPC. No prior reading is necessary!

Additionally, the work group is planning a resource containing interviews with attorneys and legal recruiting administrators who are disabled or neurodivergent to gain a better perspective on how they work and how they have worked with their employers. They are putting together a Bulletin+ article with some of the interviews as a teaser for the resource in the April issue of Bulletin+. The group is identifying attorneys to interview and have generated a list of questions for each.

## **HBCU Pipeline Project**

Vice Chair: **Lauren Jackson**, Assistant Dean of Career Services, Howard University School of Law

We have not received a response from Lauren in response to our outreach, so there is no update from this work group at this time.

## **LGBTQ+**

Vice Chair: **Chris Bostrom**, Associate Recruiting Coordinator, Hogan Lovells

Chris noted he has been out of the office for several weeks (due to the Los Angeles fires) and as a result does not have an update from this work group at this time.

### **Gender Non-Binary Inclusion**

Vice Chairs: **DeShawn Cook**, Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator, Williams & Connolly

Deshawn intends to schedule a meeting to discuss action items they would like to address before the AEC in Cleveland. We will report back upon learning more.

Separately, Deshawn was [featured](#) in the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association's January Brief highlighting their experience with the Bar's Trans in BigLaw (TiBL) Monthly Networking Program, an affirming space comprised of nearly 100 trans and nonbinary attorneys and business professionals from the largest law firms in the world.

### **Diversity Best Practices Guide**

Vice Chairs: **Alison Ashe-Card**, Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity Inclusion at Duke Law and **Nicole Netkin-Collins**, Director for Government & Public Interest Office, University of Colorado Law School

The work group submitted its suggested revisions for the Diversity Best Practices Guide to NALP staff last fall. Depending on NALP's schedule, we remain hopeful this will be published before the conclusion of the first quarter of 2025.

### **Well-Being Champion**

Champion: **Melanie Rowen**, Latham & Watkins

Melanie attended the Well-Being Section meeting on January 27, 2025 to provide an update on the creation of a guide for NALP Well-Being Champions. The meeting was open to all NALP members interested in well-being initiatives for themselves or their organizations.