

## MEMORANDUM

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

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

DATE: October 17, 2024

RE: DEI Section Quarterly Board Report #2

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

The Section's second quarterly meeting on September 19, 2024, was attended by approximately 46 members online. Our Section Wellbeing Champion, Melanie Rowen, conducted a brief centering exercise for attendees at the beginning of the meeting. We had invited former NALP member and current DEI consultant Kori Carew to be our guest speaker to talk about best practices for decentering majority identities in DEI work. She unfortunately had a last-minute conflict, so we invited Michelle Silverthorn to give a presentation, **A More Perfect Union: How to Talk About Politics in a Divided World**. Her talk focused on how DEI professionals can build a more perfect union where everyone can belong, succeed, and thrive.

The Section currently has 681 members, 98 fewer than at the time of the last Board report. Our next Section meeting is scheduled for January 16, 2025, at 3 p.m. ET. We have again invited Kori Carew to be our speaker and are awaiting her confirmation.

In collaboration with several of the affinity group co-chairs, the Section is co-presenting a webinar, **Let's Get NALP-y**, on October 23 at 4 p.m. ET. Jenny Li, AAPI affinity group co-chair, will moderate a panel intended for newer professionals and NALP affinity group members to discuss NALP engagement, especially as nomination season will soon begin. Both Jen and LaNitra will serve on the panel, as will Jenny's co-chair Michael Nguyen, and Hispanic/Latinx affinity group co-chair Julia Anna Alvarez Rivera. As of last week, there were already almost 50 registrants. We will continue to market the webinar on NALP Connect leading up to October 23.

Earlier in October, Jen and NALP Executive Director Nikia Gray served as faculty at the Cutting Sign to the Legal Profession Conference for Native American/Indigenous law students. The conference, at the University of Utah's S.J. Quinney College of Law, provides students with career development educational opportunities. Nikia and Jen presented together about how law students can build their professional paths. Several other NALP members served on the faculty, including Arturo Thompson, Travis Pietila, Jana Matthews, and Eric Stern.

### 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

Bijal recently connected with Cindy Stevens about potential space for DEI content in the February and March issues of the Bulletin+. Bijal and Ray plan to do some member outreach via NALP Connect this fall to gather interest. Ray recently submitted an article for the December Bulletin+ entitled, **Building the Yellow Brick Road: Making the Case for Pipeline Programs**. It highlights the need to focus on developing skills-based pipeline programming.

Jen and Michael Nguyen submitted a proposal to write an article about the importance and impact of affinity groups in the legal profession and in organizations like NALP. It was accepted for publication in the January 2025 issue of the Bulletin+. The draft is nearly complete; they are waiting for some quotes from current affinity group leaders about the impact of their participation to date.

### **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

As a reminder, this Work Group's title and focus has expanded beyond disability to also include neurodivergence. In this next quarter, the Disability and Neurodivergence Work Group is hosting a webinar on November 12 at 3 p.m. ET. Work group members are reading books about disability and neurodivergence and discussing takeaways with NALP members. Members do not have to have read the books to attend and/or learn more. The work group is currently in the process of marketing the webinar:

- **Bookmarked: Narratives of Disability and Neurodiversity:** 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 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. No prior reading is necessary!

Additionally, the work group is planning a Spring 2025 Bulletin+ article with interviews from attorneys who are disabled or neurodivergent to gain a better perspective on how they work and how they have worked with their employers. This will be in the April issue (due date in February). The group is identifying attorneys to be interviewed and has generated a list of questions for each.

### **HBCU Pipeline Project**

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

After emailing Lauren to check in about her work group's report, we received a bounce-back email advising that she is out on leave and unavailable for meetings or correspondence. We are not sure when she will return to the office, and therefore do not have a current update from this work group.

## **LGBTQ+**

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

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

## **Gender Non-Binary Inclusion**

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

The Gender Nonbinary Workgroup completed its guidebook of best practices for law schools and employers, and this valuable resource has been published on the NALP website.

The work group has not met since the publication of the guidebook, but Deshawn plans to schedule a meeting in the fourth quarter of 2024 to discuss action items they would like to address before the AEC in Cleveland. Deshawn further reports that members of the NALP LGBTQIA+ Affinity Group had a small meetup at the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association's Lavender Law Conference. That group also had a follow-up meeting in September to debrief the conference and to discuss the RFP process for NALP conferences. It was a fruitful discussion for those in attendance.

## **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 is in the final stages of editing/formatting the updated edition of the Diversity Best Practices Guide and should have the final version submitted to NALP staff by the end of October. Depending on NALP's schedule, we hope this will be published in the first quarter of 2025.

## **Well-Being Champion**

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

Melanie attended the Well-Being Steering Committee's Quarterly Meeting and will be helping that group to develop a best practices tip sheet for Well-Being Champions going forward. In the next quarter, Melanie will be reaching out to DEI Section members to gather feedback about the specific well-being needs of NALPers with DEI roles.