



By Alison Ashe-Card

First-Year Diversity Fellowship Common Application

4 min read

NALP is committed to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive legal profession that is accessible to all. While progress has been made since NALP's inception more than 50 years ago, inequalities still exist and there is still much work to do. One of the ways in which law firms seek to advance diversity and inclusion is through First-Year Diversity Fellowship Programs. To increase the efficacy of these programs and to remove the strain that applying to multiple programs at one time causes students during their first year of law school, NALP's First-Year Diversity Recruiting Task Force was created, and is pleased to make available, a common application. This article outlines the creation of the Task Force, its work to date, and the reasons behind the creation of the common application.

In the 2023-2024 NALP Business Plan, then-NALP President Tony Waller created the First-Year Diversity Recruiting Task Force in response to concerns expressed by both firms and schools regarding the timing and reported stress of students who apply for multiple fellowships during their final exam season. The Task Force's charge was to investigate and research the current state of first-year diversity hiring in order to provide guidance to law schools and law firms.

In January 2024, the Task Force issued the [“Best Practice Guide for First-Year Diversity Fellowships,”](#) that provides recommendations for law school and law firm members in the following areas: (1) diversity fellowships/ programs, (2) timing, (3) applications and supporting documents, and (4) interviewing. This month, the Task Force is pleased to announce

that it has completed its work with the introduction of the common application.

The common application is intended to simplify the recruiting process for diversity fellowship programs for firms and for students by reducing the workload of students during a particularly stressful time of the academic year. First-year students often apply to many firms (>50) offering such programs and, because firms regularly solicit applications on or around December 1, students draft their applications while studying for their exams. This is a critically stressful period for students and the Task Force is hopeful that the common application will decrease the workload on students applying for these fellowships.

In addition, while firms solicit the same information on their applications, students

must input this information multiple times, in multiple systems, with multiple logins and forms. By reducing the burden of completing individualized applications for each firm, it is anticipated that firms will receive a greater number of applications to their programs, which should enhance their applicant pools.

Firms should anticipate that students will submit this common application to many firms and, as such, it is not tailored to each individual firm. The Task Force anticipates that firms may develop a secondary application process or use the interviewing process to solicit additional information from candidates in whom they are sincerely interested.

The common application will reside on the NALP website as a downloadable, fillable PDF on the Diversity Fellowships & Scholarships

page under the Diversity & Equity tab. The Task Force hopes that firms will incorporate the common application as part of their 2024-25 diversity fellowship application process.

First Year Diversity Recruiting Task Force:

- Chair:** Alison Ashe-Card, *Duke University School of Law*
- Elisabeth Beal, *William & Mary Law School*
- Marredia Crawford, *Baker & McKenzie LLP*
- David Diamond, *Northwestern Pritzker School of Law*
- Gary Greener, *UCLA School of Law*
- Donna Harris, *Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP*
- Benson Lee, *White & Case LLP*
- Maureen Reilly, *previously at University of Pennsylvania Carey School of Law*+

New Functionality Brings Fellowship and Scholarship Information to the NALP Directory of Legal Employers

In conjunction with the launch of the new [Common Application for First-Year Diversity Fellowship Programs](#), NALP has made the listing of fellowship information available as part of the [NALP Directory of Legal Employers](#). Employers can now provide information about fellowships and scholarships they sponsor directly on their employer profile in the NALP Directory, and students will be able to use these fields as search and comparison criteria.

To update your organization's fellowship information, [log in to the NALP Directory](#) using your employer ID and password, then navigate to the Recruitment & Hiring tab to enter the program description, along with opening dates and application deadlines.

Students can search for fellowships right from the landing page of the NALP Directory of Legal Employers by selecting their class year from the “Offers Fellowships For” dropdown menu or refine their search further using the search filters on the results page.