

Staying True and On Course

The Diversity Clerkship Program's continued operation is a victory for Wisconsin's law students and future lawyers, employers who participate in the program, and consumers of legal services in Wisconsin.

BY LARRY J. MARTIN

Three decades ago, the State Bar of Wisconsin's Diversity Clerkship Program (DCP) was established for the purpose of creating summer employment opportunities for law students. The program allows participants to build their legal practice skills and expand their practical knowledge of the legal profession. It has proven to be a wise investment in their future, and that of the profession, and thus far, helped to open doors to 676 future lawyers. The DCP remains as relevant and critically needed today as it was at its founding.

I am proud that despite recent litigation efforts, the DCP remains true to its

commitment to ensure that all students have an opportunity to participate and that no one is excluded from consideration. The State Bar continues to be steadfast in its commitment to creating a culture of belonging for everyone through diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, such as the Diversity Clerkship Program.

Let me be clear. Neither race nor ethnicity has been used, nor will be used, as an eligibility factor or requirement at any point in the selection process. All are welcome and eligible. The program has been and continues to be compliant with the law. And the State Bar will continue to support DEI initiatives. That is not ending.



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In summer 2023, 25 employers provided 26 1L law students from the U.W. and Marquette University law schools with paid summer internships via the Diversity Clerkship Program. Photo: Shannon Green, 2023.

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What I think opponents of DEI don't fully grasp is that these efforts are intended to include *everyone*. Through learning, communication, and action, lawyers can learn how to be more inclusionary, not exclusionary. And those members who see the State Bar

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as a leader on how to be inclusionary feel welcome to step into these spaces, apply for these opportunities, engage with the State Bar, our committees, sections, and divisions – to lead the future of the legal profession and help improve the quality of legal services. Of course, the Diversity Clerkship Program is competitive, and employers must choose who will best fit within

their culture and working environment. But race and ethnicity are not factors in those decisions.

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and viewpoints to the practice of law and thereby improve the quality of legal services to the people of Wisconsin and beyond. We will continue to encourage law students to participate, including those who may not have access to similar opportunities elsewhere.

I am excited that the DCP will continue to enhance law student academic education with practical and hands-on

legal work experience; expose law students to varied legal employment opportunities; provide full-time, limited-term summer clerkship experiences with premier legal organizations; and provide a program-wide networking opportunity for students and employers to connect.

The Diversity Clerkship Program's continued operation is a victory for Wisconsin's law students and future lawyers, employers who participate in the program, and consumers of legal services in Wisconsin. The State Bar is committed to moving forward and doing good by creating opportunities for law students who are the next generation of lawyers. **WL**

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