

Associate Stories

Diversity

As an African-American and openly gay attorney, it's important to me to be at a firm that thinks about diversity issues. It's even better to be someplace that has institutionalized processes and committees to make things happen.

As a recruit, I attended Diversity Weekend to get a sense of the diverse community within Latham & Watkins and to give the firm a chance to get to know me better. It was a really positive experience — informational and a lot of fun. With all the discussions, team-building exercises, group meals and other activities, it was a great chance for me to get to know my future Latham colleagues as well as diverse law students from other schools, and to feel part of the larger legal community.

Now as an associate and a member of the Recruiting Committee, I can appreciate Diversity Weekend as a forum for Latham attorneys to get together with firm leaders as well as recruits and put important issues on the table. We all have a responsibility to help build a community where people can thrive and be happy, and the opportunity to discuss diversity issues openly with senior management is something in which more firms should be engaged.

So what comes of all this discussion? Our formal Mentoring Program is the result of a Diversity Committee study of best practices and follow-up discussions a few years back. And when someone suggested creating an internal firm Web site addressing diversity issues, the Diversity Committee created our diversity intranet site. Since joining the firm I've also seen the creation of our Diversity Scholars Program and the launch of a diversity newsletter for all firm personnel. It's fascinating to watch the firm build on what we've already established in terms of diversity, and it's even better to be a part of it.

But most of all, I think I appreciate the smaller things that demonstrate to me the firm's commitment to diversity. Like when someone cc's me on an e-mail about an event the firm is sponsoring or an organization they think I might be interested in, like the Minority Corporate Counsel Association. Or the time I decided to go to a Cook County Bar Association dinner celebrating the important contributions of African-American attorneys and judges, and the firm volunteered to pay for my ticket. It's one thing to hear talk of diversity goals and aspirations, but it's quite another to experience the firm's support and encouragement first-hand.



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