

## Merritt College Resolution

### California State Bar's

#### Community College Pathway to Law School Diversity Pipeline

WHEREAS, the State of California is a majority-minority state with approximately 60 percent of its population made up of persons from racial-ethnic minority groups, while the California State Bar is made up of approximately 20 percent racial-ethnic minority lawyers.

WHEREAS, the community college system, with 112 community colleges, has the largest and most diverse student population of the three post-secondary public systems in California, with 60 to 70 percent of its population are students of color.

WHEREAS, studies show that diversity in the legal and judicial system is a priority for public trust and confidence and the appearance of fairness in the courts. Attorneys make up the majority of elected officials and other key local, state, and national leaders, and it is equally important that those leaders represent the rich diversity of California. In an increasing global economy, attorneys representing key entities should embody and have sensitivity to clients from diverse backgrounds in order to respond to global business demands. Attorneys directly representing clients should also reflect the rich diversity of the state population to the extent possible in order to maximize cultural sensitivity and public faith in the legal profession.

WHEREAS, the State Bar of California through its Council on Access and Fairness (COAF) established the *Community College Pathway to Law School Diversity Pipeline Initiative* (also referred to as "2+2+3") to create a pathway for community college students. The model requires the development of or affirming of existing articulation agreements between community colleges and the four-year undergraduate institutions, and developing an admissions agreement between the community colleges and law schools. Twenty (20) community colleges will be selected for this ten (10) year pilot program. Students regardless of ethnicity/race from the selected community colleges would be guaranteed admission or priority enrollment if they achieve specific criteria such as completing certain community college courses that are based on the Shultz-Zedeck Lawyering Competencies (Effectiveness Factors), achieving specified grade point averages, and obtaining predetermined Law School Admissions Test (L.S.A.T.) scores. Support for the students, including mentoring, pre-law activities, counseling, internships, and possibly scholarships, would be developed as part of the Initiative in order to provide students with the best possible chance for success on the L.S.A.T., in law school, and in the legal profession.

WHEREAS, the State Bar of California through its Council on Access and Fairness developed this Initiative through the work of Peralta Community College District's General Counsel Thuy Nguyen who volunteered as chair of the College and Law School Committee for the State Bar's COAF, Ms. Sheila Lau (College of Alameda) who was hired as the consultant on curriculum through a State Bar Foundation grant, Trustee Nicky Gonzalez Yuen who originally served on the "Think Tank" of prominent community colleges with Juris Doctorates, and Trustee Meredith Brown who recently joined the "Think Tank" and independently coordinated law-related activities with the "Trial of the Century" events at Laney College and Merritt College.

WHEREAS, Merritt College has a strong legacy of activism, social justice, and diversity. It was at Merritt College that the Black Panthers were founded -- hence, the current Student Center is named the Huey Newton/Bobby Seale Student Lounge. Recently, the college hosted a successful event and discussion on the book "Trial of the Century", that argues the Huey Newton trial is the trial of the century due to its political impact on America's social consciousness. Many lawyers and judges attended and supported the college, and it is anticipated that the college will tap into the well-established relationship it has with the legal profession to provide the necessary support for its success with this Pathway Initiative.

WHEREAS, Merritt College also has two particularly strong learning communities, Puente and "Maximum Achievement Program" (MAP). Puente is a statewide program that serves Latino students with college success, including transferring to four-year institutions. MAP is a program particular to Merritt College, and provides a comprehensive program of instruction and support services for African American males. It was designed to increase retention and graduation rates of African American males by providing targeted support services and creation of a student support network for the targeted students. MAP was a huge success and has been acknowledged as such by Members of Congress as well as the United States Secretary of Education during a site visit.

WHEREAS, Merritt College has a long-standing Administration of Justice Program and a Paralegal Studies Program that can also serve to anchor this initiative. The Administration of Justice Program is run by Ms. Margaret Dixon, a former Oakland Police Officer who is highly respected in the college District and in the community. The Paralegal Studies Program is run by Attorney Linnea N. Willis, who not only practices law as a civil litigator and runs the Paralegal Program at Merritt College, but is also active in the legal community and several state bar associations. The Paralegal Studies Department at Merritt College is very well-respected in the community and serves as a regular pipeline for students who are considering attending law school, studying for the LSAT, or who are in the process of obtaining their AA.

WHEREAS, Merritt College is one of the few community colleges in California teaching Street Law. The instructor, Ms. Margaret Dixon, attended the training by Street Law Inc. in November 2012 and immediately implemented the curriculum at Merritt College. She also utilized the small stipend provided by Street Law to organize an all-day conference at Merritt College earlier this year. The conference was focused on the Innocence Project which is a movement to exonerate wrongfully convicted individuals with DNA tests. The conference also included panelist lawyers, judges, and law school admissions officers talking about law school and the legal profession.

WHEREAS, Merritt College has always been committed to providing our students with educational opportunities beyond their time at our college, which includes pursuing a meaningful

career in the legal profession. Merritt College also shares the State Bar's goal of a diverse legal profession to serve the needs of our diverse state and diverse communities.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustee strongly supports Merritt College's submission of a Letter of Interest for selection among the 20 community colleges for this innovative initiative.

12/06/13