



The Equity Stop

The Robert E. Slota, Jr. Summer 1L Diversity Program: The Promise of a Truly Bright Future

By **Nancy O. Walsh, Special Consultant to the MBA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee**

The MBA's Robert E. Slota, Jr. Summer 1L Diversity Program has been a key component of its commitment to fostering a more diverse and inclusive association and legal profession for 13 years. The program has continued to expand its reach and vision, with a steady mission to provide opportunities for historically under-represented students and a hope that they will return to practice law and share their talents with the Montgomery County legal community as soon as they complete their law school journeys.

With Covid-restrictions still in force, the program returned for a second year of a predominantly online format, but there were certainly no restrictions on opportunities or enthusiasm from the students or the MBA family. This year, the two-tiered program provided 9 paid internships to first-year law students, who participated in the 8-week online workshop/networking component of the program as well. One additional first-year law student and 8 undergraduate/pre-law students also participated in these workshops, which included presentations from judges and attorneys, a writing workshop, mock interviews and more. In addition, each participant was paired with a mentor (members of the MBA Leadership Academy) and a writing mentor (members of the MBA community). The program ended with an in-person closing reception and award ceremony, at which the sense of excitement was palpable as students, host firms, sponsors, volunteers, judges, friends, and family connected and celebrated a wonderful summer as well as the promise of a truly bright future.

In addition to its commitment to developing opportunities for talented students like this year's program participants, the MBA continues to provide scholarships and financial support to these future leaders of the profession. This year, generous host firms and sponsors made it possible for the MBA to provide nearly \$40,000 in paid internships and \$14,500 in scholarship awards.

Thank you to all our host firms, sponsors, mentors, writing mentors, interviewers, presenters, other volunteers, and MBA staff for demonstrating what makes the MBA the very best there is. Planning for next year's adventure is already underway, and we need you to make it even better. If you are interested in hosting, sponsoring, presenting, mentoring, recruiting, or helping in any way, please contact Nancy Walsh at nancy@tbdnowllc.com.



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THE ROBERT E. SLOTA, JR.
SUMMER 1L
DIVERSITY PROGRAM

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AN ANNUAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM PRESENTED BY THE MONTGOMERY BAR ASSOCIATION DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

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The following essay was submitted by 2021 participant Joshua Dufour as part of his scholarship application.



In 2017, I attended Columbia University School of the Arts to pursue a Master of Arts in Film Studies. I went in to my graduate program right after finishing my undergraduate education, and although I was proud to advance to a new degree, I only chose this path out of a desire to be seen as successful and to postpone adulthood. Consequently, I spent

my time aimlessly taking courses and writing with no direction or purpose.

When I decided to pursue my oldest dream of becoming a lawyer, I promised myself that I would do things differently. My goal was to weave a path to success that will not fade—no matter how many new places or opportunities I discover along the way—and the Montgomery Bar Association Summer 1L Diversity Program became the foundation I needed to carefully outline the next steps in my legal career.

From orientation to our mock interviews, I have had numerous opportunities to explore my future as an attorney before stepping through my law school's doors. Our conversations with Judge Austin showed me how multifaceted and kaleidoscopic a legal career can be. When hearing from Judge Page and Judge Walker, I came to understand that the artistic pieces of me can continue to grow in tandem with my practice. Judge Clifford taught me the importance of living in my truth, and that my queerness can have as much power inside the courtroom as it does in my community.

Under the mentorship of Matt Vahey, Esq., and Nicole LaBletta, Esq., I have had the chance to explore various fields of law (commercial litigation, antitrust law, sports law). Our talks have led me to connect with the legal team at The Rittenhouse Hotel to inquire about hospitality law and how my skills as a bartender and future lawyer can potentially intersect. Additionally, my mock interview with Bruce Pancio, Esq., was so invaluable as a rising 1L because I have been gifted with a model for excellence that I can develop in law school. My favorite session was Marilou Watson, Esq.'s lesson on intellectual property law and how interdisciplinary this area of law is. The affirmation I experienced from this program speaks volumes on the value of early integration into new professions.

Throughout this entire process, every person we have spoken with has emphasized the importance of keeping an open mind. Initially—after my time in graduate school—this notion seemed frightening. I feared that if my mind was too open, I would end up aimlessly taking courses and writing with no direction or purpose, just like before. However, as this program comes to a close, I have evolved. The support from Nancy Walsh, Jimmy Chong, Esq., the judges, and all of my mentors has shown me how much you all believe in my ability to succeed and are diligently leveraging your resources to allow more diverse students the chance to exist in the legal profession.

I have spent this summer getting to know myself through intersectional lenses and am able to respectfully facilitate discussions with people from various backgrounds without compromising my integrity. My character has been imbued with the principles of the Montgomery Bar Association, and I am confident that—no matter how many new places or opportunities I discover along the way—the path we have woven together will never fade.

The Honorable Mark A. Kearney Hosts Summer 1L Interns

By Jimmy C. Chong, Esq.

Prior to Judge Mark A. Kearney becoming a United State District Judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, he was a Montgomery County attorney. His ties to Montgomery County are strong; not only is he a longtime resident, he was also an attorney at Elliot, Greenleaf & Siedzikowski, PC in Blue Bell, PA, a Past President of the Montgomery Bar Foundation, and a permanent part of our history books as the Montgomery Bar Association President in 2009. That year was special because it was the MBA's 125th anniversary as well as the first year of the Robert E. Slota, Jr. Summer 1L Diversity Internship program.



Since I have been involved with the MBA, Judge Kearney has brought the summer 1L interns to his Chambers and in 2020, he held a Zoom conference with the interns due to Covid-19. This year, the interns went back to Philadelphia on the insistence of Judge Kearney. They first visited his Chambers and were given sweets and snacks to munch on while he answered all their questions. He spoke about the history of our country, American law, and the Montgomery Bar Association. Afterwards, the interns

were taken to a courtroom to listen to a panel of diverse attorneys speak about their journeys and experience in the legal world. The interns sat with other summer 1L students who were clerking for Judge Kearney and two other Federal Court Judges. After the panel completed their presentation, the judges held a question and answer session. As Judge Kearney responded to a question, he couldn't help but speak about the MBA and the DEI Committee. He spoke with immense pride about his experience with the MBA and our great history. As the summer interns left the Courthouse, they were so grateful for the experience and one stated, "this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

It is no coincidence that Judge Kearney was president when the Diversity Summer 1L program launched. Judge Kearney's long history and involvement with the Montgomery Bar Association has provided invaluable experiences for the Summer 1L interns, the Leadership Academy students, and all Montgomery County attorneys. Judge Kearney, thank you for everything you do. I am grateful to have the honor to escort the interns every summer and have the "once-in-a-lifetime" experience annually and look forward to it in the summer of 2022.

DID YOU KNOW?

By **Jessica L. Chapman, Esq.**



Since the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's May 9, 2018 Order creating Emeritus Status, very few attorneys have taken advantage of this status. Part of the reason why attorneys are not taking advantage of the Emeritus Status is because it is difficult for attorneys to acknowledge when it's time to retire from the practice of law. Another reason is because attorneys have no idea this status is an option. We

should know about it as it has been in existence for over three years but let's be real . . . we are all just too busy.

Here are some of the main points for you to know and mull over as the birthdays pass along. Emeritus Status allows you to practice law in a limited capacity while on retired status. Specifically, this status allows an attorney registered in Pennsylvania to provide pro bono services through an eligible legal aid organization. See Pa.R.D.E. 403.

Some of the benefits of the Emeritus Status are:

1. Registration fee is only \$35.00.
2. 8 hours of CLEs, 6 substantive credits and 2 ethics credits.

3. No need to handle client fees.
4. No need to carry private malpractice insurance.
5. Stay busy as you transition to a full retirement.
6. Reduce those ever-increasing levels of stress.
7. Warm and fuzzy feeling inside knowing that you are aiding people who desperately need help.

After a lifetime of hard work, it becomes hard to make the decision to start winding down the practice of law. Hopefully, this status will provide attorneys with an option for a smooth transition from full time practice to doing good for their community as they get ready to enjoy the fruits of their life-long labor. Allow yourself to be in charge of the important decision of when to retire. Don't wait for somebody to kindly bring up that it might be time. Remember, it is better to be known for your legacy than for your downfall.

IN THE WORKS

Please join us for our remaining committee meetings, to be held via Zoom on November 9, 2021 and December 14, 2021. ■

