

# Inclusive Engagement

A N N U A L R E P O R T

*it takes all of us*



KUTAKROCK

2022

# From the Office of the Chair



John Petr, Chair



Hilary Jackler, Vice Chair

**Progress is rarely linear.** Every great journey includes thwarted plans, unforeseen obstacles, and challenging terrain, but even seemingly impassable barriers can be overcome with persistence and vision. This past year exemplified that reality, and as we bring our current three-year Inclusive Engagement Strategic Plan (IE Plan) to a close and transition to the next one, we'd like to reflect on a few milestones.

The firm's 2021 IE Annual Report noted that progress toward equity in law requires the efforts of all of us—everyone at Kutak Rock, our clients, our communities, and those who work alongside us toward the same goal. To that end, we have developed the Large Legal Anti-Racism, Anti-Bias seminar (LLABAR) in collaboration with U.S. Bank and [Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training](#). LLABAR has been extraordinarily impactful for the individuals and institutions who have participated in a training session, and its development and implementation are among the highlights of the firm's 2021 diversity and equity efforts. We would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge the contributions to the LLABAR program of Crossroads trainer Derrick Dawson. Derrick co-designed the LLABAR seminars and facilitated nearly all our sessions over the last two years. His sudden passing in July 2022 was a loss not only for those of us who trained under him, but for all who support seeking out and remedying barriers to equity.

Kutak Rock's National Inclusiveness and Diversity Committee (NIDC) creates successive three-year IE Plans with tactics and measurable goals. Throughout this report, you'll see changes to systems and structures as a result of the current Plan. The next IE Plan takes effect in July 2023, and that Plan (like its predecessors) relies on an evaluation of where we are as a firm—our strengths and areas of opportunity. This is accomplished in part through our Inclusive Engagement Survey, conducted every three years. We normally enjoy a high response rate; this year, 84% of the firm responded to the Inclusive Engagement Survey, which included a new set of well-being questions. More on our first-of-its-kind firmwide well-being survey can be found on page 4.

Speaking of firsts, 2022 marked the first full year of our Well-Being Initiative, which kicked off in October 2021. This was also the first year of the Inclusive Engagement Department's new firmwide online gathering titled "All In! Inclusive Engagement Quarterly Connection." It introduces new colleagues to all the ways they can be involved in creating and maintaining the firm's inclusive atmosphere and informs current colleagues of new Inclusive Engagement developments.

Whether this is your first time reading a Kutak Rock Annual Report or you've honored us by browsing in the past, we're sure you'll find something to pique your interest. If so, we'd love to hear your feedback and encourage you to [reach out](#) with ways we can collaborate to increase equity across industries. The journey is anything but straightforward, but it's always rewarding.

The firm's National Inclusiveness and Diversity Committee (NIDC) creates successive three-year Inclusive Engagement Strategic Plans (IE Plan) to continuously put into practice our inclusiveness and diversity core values. As the current IE Plan draws to a close and we begin to create the next iteration, we reflect on the past three years' progress and achievements.

The firm's Forum, created in 2014, supports affinity groups, special-interest and pipeline groups, development and training, and a growing number of other initiatives. Over the last three years, increased participation has led to measurable growth in programs originating from Forum Groups. Forum Group co-chairs meet together quarterly to share ideas across groups, receive trainings on general topics (such as being your authentic self at work) as well as specific issues identified in the firm's periodic Inclusive Engagement Survey.

Despite the limitations and disruptions of a worldwide pandemic, the firm continued to offer pipeline programs that introduce young people to careers in the legal field. We applaud the creativity, adaptability, and tenacity of our colleagues who organized and produced these events.

We're also pleased to report that increased engagement across the firm has resulted in consistent philanthropic opportunities via KutakCares. In the last three years, the firm has raised tens of thousands of dollars for nonprofits, in addition to backpacks stuffed with school supplies and other goods and donations. Equally important, firm members have connected with one another, taken time to care for themselves and their communities, and donated their time, money and talents through KutakCares activities that also serve to increase job satisfaction and overall well-being.

A major goal of the current IE Plan involves a holistic approach to improving recruiting and hiring processes across the firm's 19 offices. The result was the development and implementation of formal training, as well as the creation of a hiring guide, which is now being used to incorporate best practices into our hiring processes. We have tracked great progress against our annual tactics, and we're pleased to have met our current goals. We will continue the collection of information for each individual hire across the firm and expect even further improvement over the next three years.

In addition to a general goal of improving our compositional diversity, Kutak Rock has identified an array of specific tactics to address head-on our challenges and their causes, rather than simply treating symptoms. These tactics include (but are certainly not limited to) identifying and addressing barriers to equity and equal opportunity at the firm; developing assessment and reporting tools; training our attorneys and staff; and supporting each individual at every stage of their career. This has required intense collaboration with firm leadership and our Human Resources Department, and we're grateful for their ongoing and unwavering support.

Although it would be easy to spend pages discussing accomplishments of the last three years, we'd like to end by celebrating the creation and launch of an initiative that serendipitously began a year before the pandemic but became instrumental during those long months of upheaval and uncertainty: Career Support. It's an umbrella initiative that encompassed the creation and dissemination of a firmwide Career Support Resources Catalogue in addition to training for firm leadership and communication across the entire firm. The creation process also took into consideration the how of making career support-related decisions and whether they are good for the individual, working group or team, the office, the firm, and clients. This framework has been formative as our workforce continues to navigate a hybrid work environment.

Finally, the firm's Career Support efforts led to the launch of the Well-Being Initiative, meant to address increasing mental health struggles widely reported throughout the legal industry. Since its official debut in October 2021, the Initiative has created and distributed over 60 weekly emails addressing a variety of mental health issues and provided six webinars devoted to well-being. Based on feedback, we know for certain that the impact has been profound and invaluable.

# From the National Inclusiveness and Diversity Committee



**Based on feedback, we know for certain that the impact has been profound and invaluable.**



Winifred Hawkins, Co-Chair



Stuart Hindmarsh, Co-Chair

# Commitment to Anti-Bias and Anti-Racism

## Large Legal Anti-Bias, Anti-Racism Seminar

In March 2022, Kutak Rock's day-long Large Legal Anti-Bias, Anti-Racism (LLABAR) seminar moved out of the pilot phase, opening to anyone in the legal industry and legal departments of large corporations. To date, 105 Kutak Rock employees and 111 employees of other law firms and legal departments have graduated from one or more of 13 seminars. The program has received overwhelmingly positive reviews.

**Background:** In 2020 and 2021, top-level management led numerous activities designed to promote understanding of the anti-bias, anti-racism (ABAR) work of the firm. Following the lead of client U.S. Bancorp Community Development Corporation (USBCDC), the firm's executive committee read and discussed *The Person You Mean to Be: How Good People Fight Bias* by psychologist and professor Dolly Chugh. The result was thoughtful, confidential, and often raw discussion. At the end of 2022, 100% of the firm's Executive Committee and 75% of leadership have completed the dialogue groups, allowing leadership to share a vocabulary and purpose in the firm's ABAR work. In total, 193 people have completed one or more of the 13 dialogue groups.

In 2020, the firm also worked with USBCDC and Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training to design a program aimed at addressing issues within large law firms and corporate legal departments. Specifically, we wanted a seminar that explored how racism and bias in the legal system have impacted and continue to impact equity and equal opportunity. We also wanted to examine what can be done to create change at organizational and industry levels. The pilot seminar launched internally in June 2021.

**Next steps:** In 2023, Kutak Rock plans to expand its ABAR journey with another dialogue group called "Ways of Working: Instilling the LLABAR Transforming Values at Kutak Rock."

**100%**

Of the firm's Executive Committee  
have completed dialogue groups

**75%**

Of leadership have completed  
dialogue groups

**193**

People have completed the 13  
dialogue groups.

**24**

Dolly Chugh Dialogue Group sessions  
offered to staff and attorneys

**13**

LLABAR seminars offered to staff  
and attorneys



## Firmwide Survey

Understanding our employees' experiences is integral to making positive, systemic change at Kutak Rock. In 2022, 84% of firm members took our Inclusive Engagement Survey, conducted every three years. Demographic, inclusiveness, diversity, and engagement questions remained the same to allow for year-over-year comparison of results, but this year the survey significantly expanded to include 38 new questions regarding organizational well-being.

Survey results were gathered anonymously and compiled by Dr. Andrew Smith of Cardiff University in Wales. The data will be used to shape the firm's next three-year Inclusiveness and Diversity Strategic Plan in addition to the firm's Well-Being Initiative (see p. 9 for more information).



Dr. Andrew Smith,  
Cardiff University in Wales



**To our knowledge, our firmwide well-being survey is the first—and remains the only—of its kind for the legal industry.**



## All In! Inclusive Engagement Quarterly Connection

In April 2022, Kutak Rock's Inclusive Engagement Department launched "All In! Inclusive Engagement Quarterly Connection," an hour-long virtual meeting held four times per year to introduce—and reintroduce—firm members to the amazing things happening throughout the firm to support and improve inclusiveness, engagement, diversity, and career support at every level.

Newly hired colleagues meet with the co-chairs of the National Inclusiveness and Diversity Committee to learn about opportunities to get involved and share in the responsibility of creating a welcoming culture at Kutak Rock. Those who have been with the firm longer hear news about recent and upcoming events from members of the Inclusive Engagement Department.



# Affinity Groups



## African Descent/Black Affinity Group

In honor of Juneteenth, affinity group members Charisse Matthews of our Richmond office gifted the firm with a cooking class, and Gabrielle Lewis of our Rogers, Arkansas office added a special touch with a cocktail pairing. Dishes included Hoppin' John, creamy corn cornbread, and an Arnold Palmer cocktail. The firm's African Descent, Black Affinity Group also posted the following message to social media along with a PDF copy of their Meals of Joy Juneteenth Recipe Collection:

"One-hundred fifty-seven years ago on June 19, the Union Army took control of Texas and delivered at the tip of a bayonet the message that slavery had been abolished in accordance with Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation of Proclamation signed two years prior. It is important to recognize our African American ancestors who sacrificed their lives and families in order to provide us freedom. While one year ago the federal government declared Juneteenth a federally recognized holiday, it is hard not to reflect on how much more work this country as a whole still has to do. Just last month 10 elderly Black individuals went to a supermarket to go shopping and did not leave alive, simply because of the color of their skin. In the wake of more mass shootings in our country, the African Descent, Black Affinity Group would like to offer some comfort this year for Juneteenth. We have put together a book full of heartfelt, warm, soulful recipes and would like to invite you into our kitchens to reflect and welcome the Juneteenth holiday."



## Women's Initiative

The firm's Women's Initiative hosts several gatherings each year including topical programming and/or speakers for women attorneys and staff. In March, the Initiative arranged a virtual happy hour in conjunction with the firm's annual partnership meeting. It included small-group discussions, prizes, and time to reconnect.

Shortly afterward, they created and distributed a firmwide Women's History Month message regarding the war in Ukraine and its disproportionate effect on women and children. They also provided suggestions on how to assist Ukrainian women.

In April, in collaboration with the firm's LGBTQIA + Allies Affinity Group, the Women's Initiative invited Omaha attorney Gretchen McGill to speak to the firm, particularly our Nebraska colleagues, about proposed changes to the state's ethics rules. The changes addressed research revealing gender-based inappropriate conduct, harassment, and discrimination in Nebraska's legal communities and workplaces. Ms. McGill was instrumental in the research survey and proposed rule changes.

In June, the Women's Initiative encouraged firm members to attend one of two trivia sessions, which focused on women in the law and America's First Ladies.





## LGBTQIA + Allies Affinity Group

In addition to meeting throughout the year to discuss current issues, the firm's LGBTQIA + Allies Affinity Group published several messages to social media. The first, which appears below, marked Pride Month:

"No longer willing to live in silence and shame, brave members of New York's LGBTQ + ally community built on the momentum of the 1969 Stonewall Riots to organize a 'Gay Pride' march to Central Park in June 1970. Today, Pride Month activities are celebrations of the progress made in the ensuing decades toward equal rights, tributes to those we've lost along the way, and visibility for those of us who are thriving. This Pride Month, we urge you to look beyond the rainbows to the people behind them. We are your family, friends, coworkers and neighbors. We're also grateful to and proud of Kutak Rock for offering equal benefits to same-sex partners years before it was industry standard; consistently maintaining a higher percentage of LGBTQ partners than industry average; and earning a perfect 100 score on HRC's Corporate Equality Index year after year."

Another of the affinity group's public messages wished community members and allies a happy—and safe—National Coming Out Day and included resources for those wanting to come out and/or support a loved one who takes that leap.

In between Pride and National Coming Out Day, the firm again attended the LGBT Bar Association's National Conference and Lavender Law Career Fair in Los Angeles. Members enjoyed interacting with attorneys seeking jobs, talking about Kutak Rock's welcoming culture, and handing out colorful treats.

## Servicemembers, Veterans, and their Families Affinity Group

April is the Month of the Military Child, and this year Kutak Rock's Servicemembers, Veterans, and their Families Affinity Group honored military children by educating firm members about the unique struggles they endure when a parent is serving. The group highlighted the "Purple Up!" campaign and shared resources for military families.

The Office of the Chair sent the following message, excerpted below, on behalf of the Veterans Affinity Group in honor of Memorial Day. It included an internal link to a seven-page document described as follows:

*As you develop plans for a joyful and relaxing Memorial Day weekend, we wanted to encourage each of you to reflect on and acknowledge the dedication and sacrifice of veterans and their families which we commemorate each Memorial Day. To assist you in that effort, the firm's Servicemembers, Veterans and Families Affinity Group has prepared a history of the holiday, which includes a list of commemorative events occurring nationally and in a number of our local communities. Please take a moment to review it. On behalf of everyone at Kutak Rock, we extend our thanks and our appreciation to the firm's veterans and military families for their selfless service to our nation.*

A similar message was created and distributed via social media on Veterans Day.

## Asian American, Asian, Southeast Asian Affinity Group

To celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month in May, the Asian American, Asian Southeast, Asian Affinity Group met May 19 for fellowship and to pay tribute to the achievements and contributions that generations of Asian American and Pacific Islander Americans have made in the United States. All firm members were encouraged to attend and were provided information for online programs hosted by the National Archives, Library of Congress, and Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center.



National Coming Out Day Resources

The Trevor Project  
Coming Out: A Handbook for LGBTQ Young People



Honoring All Who Served

The Importance of Veterans Day

It's a chance to thank people for risking their lives to defend America and her ideals.

An estimated 20% of veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder or major depression, according to government statistics. You'd be surprised at how much it means to veterans to feel valued by civilians for their services and sacrifices.

It's a chance to reflect on the importance of peace.

While our military is often thought of in a war context, most veterans will tell you that they risked their lives to defend our fundamental freedoms and that they value peace much more highly than war. Very few who have seen the real horror of war are anxious to rush into it, and Veterans Day encourages all of us to reflect on the value of harmony in our daily interactions and lives.

It draws attention to the ongoing challenges facing many veterans.

Veterans face disproportionate rates of homelessness, deficits in educational achievement, a struggle to find employment, and must often deal with devastating wounds, both physical and mental. In many cases, post-traumatic stress disorder makes it hard for them to reintegrate into regular society. By understanding these challenges, we can all reach across those divides and make sure veterans have the best possible chance of having a healthy and fulfilling life after their service.



Month of the  
Military Child

Military Children and Youth:  
Standing Strong and Proud

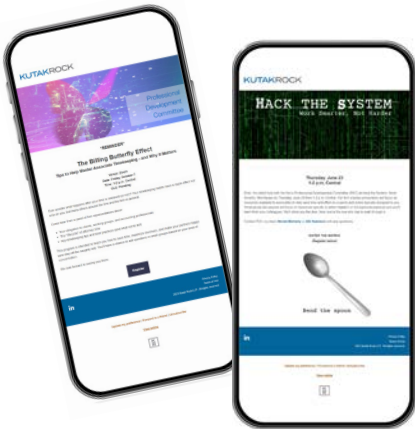
KUTAKROCK



# Career Support and Well-Being



Career support at Kutak Rock provides benefits and activities that allow employees to be successful at every stage of their careers. This holistic approach encompasses traditional career development activities, and over the course of the pandemic has expanded to include such things as mental well-being. Following are updates on a few of our programs.



## Professional Development Committee

Kutak Rock's Professional Development Committee (PDC) was created to address the unique needs of associates navigating their path to partnership and those who work closely with them. In 2022 the PDC hosted quarterly trainings on billing best practices, setting goals, and time- and effort-saving resources. The PDC also hosted a networking event for new partners in February and a new retreat for associates in September.

## KutakCares

KutakCares was born out of a desire by firm members to coordinate relief for people suffering natural disasters. It has fulfilled its mission through a variety of firmwide and office-specific giving opportunities including an annual event at the firm's partnership meeting for a local children's nonprofit in the community in which the meeting is being held.

This year's firmwide efforts have raised thousands of dollars for the Child Safety Education Program of The Victim Center in Springfield, Missouri, victims of Hurricane Ian, the Kids in Need Foundation, the Boulder County (Colorado) Wildfire Fund, and Feeding America. Individual offices also coordinated and/or participated in local food drives, angel trees, fun runs, and other charitable giving events.





## Well-Being Initiative

This year the firm celebrated its first full year of the Well-Being Initiative, which included 47 weekly, themed emails delivered to all firm members, plus five training programs covering timely topics: suicide awareness and prevention; tips and tricks for better workplace well-being; the importance of connection and transformational relationships; and a closer look at the results of the firm's latest Inclusive Engagement and Well-Being Survey (see p. 4 for more information on the survey). The fifth program, titled "Little Fires Everywhere: A Partner's Role in Supporting Well-Being at Kutak Rock," was presented at the firm's 2022 Annual Partnership Meeting and featured Chris Newbold of ALPS Corporation and President of Institute for Well-Being in Law.

Later in the year, three of the firm's attorneys collaborated to provide an educational program on workplace-related features of the Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (Dobbs) decision. Erin Thompson explained healthcare law aspects; Brian Bartels discussed healthcare coverage and ERISA issues; and Kasey Cappellano provided insight on how to discuss Dobbs and related issues in an appropriate, sensitive, and civil manner in the workplace.



## Mindfulness

Launched in April 2020, our Mindfulness Group provides attorneys and staff with a way to manage stress, improve well-being, boost performance, and connect with others. Already in the works when the firm began working remotely due to the pandemic, the group offers weekly mindfulness resources, including live guided meditations which are archived for on-demand use. In 2022 the group presented 50 mindfulness sessions to the firm at-large, plus two sessions at the Annual Partnership Meeting titled "Mindfulness for Attorneys: Building Resilience" and "Take Good Care: Mindful Self-Compassion."

47

Themed Well-Being Initiative emails

50

Mindfulness sessions presented to the firm at-large

# Awards



## Human Rights Campaign

The Human Rights Campaign once again awarded Kutak Rock a perfect score on its 2022 Corporate Equality Index (CEI), the national benchmark on corporate policies and practices impacting LGBTQ employees. Earning a score of 100 distinguishes Kutak Rock as one of the “Best Places to Work” for LGBTQ Equality.



## Bloomberg Law DEI Framework

In 2022 Kutak Rock was named to Bloomberg Law’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Framework. The firm was one of 43 U.S.-based law firms recognized for its level of disclosure of diversity-related metrics and distinguished performance against six core pillars: demographics; leadership and talent pipeline; recruitment and retention; business innovation and strategy; marketing; and diversity and inclusion in the community. Of particular note, Kutak Rock scored 18 points above the average score for diversity in “Leadership & Talent Pipeline.”



## Diversity and Flexibility Alliance

At the Nov. 3, 2022 Diversity and Flexibility Alliance’s Annual Meeting, Kutak Rock was recognized with a “Tipping the Scales” Award for having 50% or more women out of the 26 new partners in its 2022 class.

**LAW 360**  
Ceiling Smasher for  
**WOMEN**

## Law 360 Ceiling Smasher

Once again, Kutak Rock earned the title “Ceiling Smasher” among U.S. law firms for its outstanding record of promoting women attorneys to equity partnership, according to a report from Law360. The report states that, industry-wide, while women may be promoted to partner, they are less likely to be equity partners. Among law firms with 251-600 total attorneys, Kutak Rock ranked seventh with 30.3% of our equity partners being women.



## WILEF Gold Certification

Kutak Rock has been recertified as a Women in Law Empowerment Forum (WILEF) Gold Standard firm for the seventh consecutive year. The WILEF Certification recognizes law firms with significant percentages of women who are equity partners, in the highest leadership positions, on governance and compensation committees, and among the most highly compensated partners. Law firms with 300 or more practicing lawyers in the United States are eligible for consideration for the WILEF Gold Standard Certification. A firm must meet four of WILEF’s six criteria to be certified; Kutak Rock met all six.



# It Takes All of Us

## Leadership Council on Legal Diversity

Sarah Elsden from Spokane and Michelle Rigoni from Tallahassee were chosen to participate in the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD) Pathfinders Program, a seven-month professional development program designed to train early-career attorneys in critical career development strategies including leadership and the building of professional networks. The program culminated with an in-person meeting in Washington, D.C. September 18-20. Ms. Elsden and Ms. Rigoni are now part of the LCLD Alumni Program and remain committed to advancing diversity and cultivating other leaders at Kutak Rock.

The LCLD Fellows Program was created in 2011 to identify, train, and advance the next generation of leaders in the legal profession with a focus on mid-career lawyers. The goal of this program is to provide Fellows with professional and personal development opportunities, leadership training, relationship-building opportunities, and access to LCLD members. Kansas City Partner Anna Berman was chosen as Kutak Rock's 2022 Fellow.

# 100

Kutak Rock's 2022 HRC Score

# 18

Points above the average Bloomberg Law DEI Framework score for diversity in "Leadership & Talent Pipeline"

# 13%

LGBTQ+ partners and equity partners at 13% above the industry average

# 42%

Of the firm's equity partners are women or members of other diverse groups

# 50%

Percentage of women in the firm's 2022 partner class



Michelle Rigoni



Sarah Elsden



Anna Berman





# It Takes All of Us

[inclusiveengagement@kutakrock.com](mailto:inclusiveengagement@kutakrock.com)

## National Inclusiveness and Diversity Committee

Winnie Hawkins – Co-Chair  
Stuart C. Hindmarsh – Co-Chair  
P. Brian Bartels  
Jennifer M. Blunt  
Tasha N. Cycholl  
Mia K. Della Cava  
Ashley S. Dennis  
Leslie A. Powell  
Ellen M. Rosenstiel  
Jessica I. Shaham  
Meredith A. Webster

## Chugh Dialogue Group Facilitators

Tory Bishop  
Miriam Blair  
Sisera Daniel  
Ashley Dennis  
Deborah Froling  
Rita Garrett  
Jill Goldstein  
Winnie Hawkins  
Stuart Hindmarsh  
Pat Krebs  
Kim McKelvey  
Cara Nesbitt  
Ellen Rosenstiel  
Stephanie Thompson  
Amy Van Horne  
Geneice Warga  
Margot Wickman

## Professional Development Committee

Nicole Pszczolkowski Moriarty – Co-Chair  
Allison Hirohata Swenson – Co-Chair  
Tomi E. Ajibodu  
Reshma A. Amin  
John H.T. Bales  
P. Brian Bartels  
Destiny L. Bounds  
Kelsey E. Fohner  
Meaghan M. Gandy  
Kevin J. Grochow  
Hilary Jackler  
Leslie A. Powell  
Justin A. Reppe  
Chase R. Waters

## Career Support Committee and Well-Being Initiative Group

Miriam J. Blair  
Samantha Blassingame  
Tasha N. Cycholl  
Rita F. Garrett  
Winnie Hawkins  
Stuart C. Hindmarsh  
Hilary A. Jackler  
Beenish Khan  
Rebecca Kim  
M. Courtney Koger  
Frederic H. Marienthal  
Mariza E McKee  
Kimberly A. McKelvey  
John L. Petr  
Leslie A. Powell  
Ellen M. Rosenstiel  
Stephanie B. Thompson  
Geneice I. Warga  
Margot J. Wickman

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