

Inclusiveness Diversity Engagement

Annual Report 2021



Inclusive Engagement: It takes all of us.

A Message From the Chair and Vice Chair



Jay Selanders, Chair



John Petr, Vice Chair



It's time to embrace our differences. From our founding in 1965 to today, Kutak Rock has consistently striven to promote equity and effect meaningful systemic change for and among the attorneys and staff who comprise our firm, and the communities in which we live and serve.

The past few years have demonstrated (if any demonstration was needed) that our society's long, painfully slow journey toward substantive equity has not reached its objective. Centuries of oppression and injustice can't be wished (or talked) away, and the courageous activism of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s couldn't provide a social reset that magically erased the corrosive and cumulative opportunity deficit accumulated over those centuries. Nor could it eradicate the subconscious biases that every member of our society has developed by daily exposure to deep-rooted social stereotypes. The challenge is all the greater because of its ubiquity and its subtlety. As "progressive" and well-intentioned as any of us think we are, we don't arrive at adulthood in a vacuum. None of us is really oblivious to color, or religion, or ethnicity, or gender, or sexual orientation, or any other aspect of our modern existence, in the way we aspire to be (and like to think we are). And ignoring these things is not the true path forward. It's time to embrace our differences.

From our founding in 1965 to today, Kutak Rock has consistently striven to promote equity and effect meaningful systemic change for and among the attorneys and staff who comprise our firm, and the communities in which we live and serve. We've been sensitive to the dangerous attraction of declaring our dedication to equity and diversity without having to do the hard work involved in helping to achieve it, and we've challenged ourselves to recognize and act on that distinction.

This past year was no exception. We're grateful for and proud of the work and collaboration that helped us launch the first Large Legal Anti-Bias Anti-Racism (LLABAR) Seminar created to educate and inform members of private law firms and in-house corporate legal departments about how racism and bias in the legal system have impacted and continue to impact equity and equal opportunity and to explore what those large legal institutions can do to identify and confront bias and racism so as to create meaningful change at organizational and industry levels.

You'll find more information about the LLABAR Seminar on page 5.

The firm has also continued its facilitator-led small group discussions using Dr. Dolly Chugh's book *The Person You Mean to Be: How Good People Fight Bias*. Now in our second year offering the program, three more groups completed the course. A total of 139 people have now engaged in a six-week program of collective engagement in the ways all of us internalize social and historical bias and how we can recognize and effectively respond to that bias. We believe giving attorneys and staff the opportunity to learn and providing them with tools to make an impact is critical to creating forward momentum.

And finally, we continue to provide training, leadership and career development opportunities in addition to enhanced education and attention to health and well-being—mental, physical, financial, social, and professional. *You'll find information on our Career Development Resource Catalog, Well-Being Initiative, and Mindfulness Group on page 9.*

We invite you to browse our annual report and we welcome your feedback on our progress and where we're headed. Further, we invite you to reach out with ways we might collaborate to keep pushing the needle forward toward equity in law and in our communities. After all, it takes all of us.

- Jay Selanders and John Petr, Chair and Vice Chair of the Firm



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National Inclusiveness and Diversity Committee

The National Inclusiveness and Diversity Committee (NIDC) focuses on systems, structures and strategy, reviewing firm systems for gateways to diversity and pathways to inclusiveness, equity, and equal opportunity. The NIDC also actively seeks out barriers and structural/systemic roadblocks to reduce and remove them. This requires the support of firm members, which is achieved first through training people to see the systems differently and then empowering them to offer solutions to systemic shortcomings within the firm.



Winnie Hawkins



Stuart Hindmarsh

NIDC Co-Chairs

Strategic Plan

The 2020-2023 Inclusiveness, Diversity and Engagement Strategic Plan supports securing and retaining a diverse group at Kutak Rock, ensuring equal opportunity for all people at the firm, and supporting retention through inclusiveness, development, engagement, and professional wellness.

The plan, developed based on feedback and research every three years, is structured to include overarching goals broken down into actionable annual tactics and quarterly target dates for achievement. This process serves as a benchmarked roadmap for legitimate progress within the firm in specific areas:

-  01. FORUM GROUPS (ERGS)
-  02. ENGAGEMENT
-  03. TRAINING AND EDUCATION
-  04. RECRUITING AND HIRING
-  05. MONITORING AND TRACKING
-  06. WORK ENVIRONMENT
-  07. INCREASING RESPONSIBILITY
-  08. LEADERSHIP
-  09. INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION, MESSAGING
-  10. CAREER SUPPORT

Large Legal Anti-Bias, Anti-Racism Seminars

After several years of collaboration on anti-racism, anti-bias workshops and discussion groups with U.S. Bank Community Development Corporation and Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training (“Crossroads”), Kutak Rock reached out to the U.S. Bank Law Division and Crossroads about collaborating to design a seminar specifically for people who work in large legal organizations (in particular, Am Law 200 law firms and corporate legal departments of over 150 attorneys).

The result is a seminar for those in the legal profession looking for more information about how racism and bias in the legal system have impacted and continue to impact equity and equal opportunity, particularly in asset development, financing transactions, and the day-to-day work of large legal organizations. The seminar explores what each of us can do to impact and create change at the organizational and industry levels.

The firm piloted the 7.5-hour seminar with Crossroads, members of the U.S. Bank Law Division and Kutak Rock attorneys and staff in June 2021. Since the initial pilot, 60 Kutak Rock and 59 US Bank employees have participated in six additional seminars. The seminars have received overwhelmingly positive reviews.

Learning from Dr. Dolly Chugh



Kutak Rock has hosted 10+ six-week dialogue sessions about the book *The Person You Mean to Be* by Dr. Dolly Chugh. Over 170 people at the firm have attended or signed up for a dialogue group, including over 75% of firm leadership and all of the firm’s executive committee. Over 200 attorneys and staff members joined Dr. Chugh herself for the 2021 annual inclusiveness and diversity educational program, which discussed the importance of both individuals’ and the firm’s commitment to inclusion, diversity and equity in the legal profession. It was followed by a live question and answer session.



U.S. Bank 2021 Invested in Diversity Award

In December 2021, Kutak Rock was awarded U.S. Bank Law Division’s “Invested in Diversity” Award, which recognizes one of the Law Division’s preferred law firms for advancing diversity in the legal profession. Jim Chosy, U.S. Bank’s senior executive vice president and general counsel, cited four specific areas that earned Kutak Rock this recognition: the development of a Large Legal Anti-Bias, Anti-Racism (LLABAR) seminar in conjunction with Crossroads; the firm’s successive three-year DEI strategic plans; percentage of women lawyers; and year-over-year growth of the number of diverse partners.





Veterans, Servicemembers and their Families Affinity Group

The Veterans, Servicemembers and their Families Affinity Group sends messages to the firm and via social media throughout the year to remind us of important events, educate us on certain aspects of military life, and offer support and resources. This year, in addition to marking Veterans Day and Memorial Day, the group also recognized PTSD Awareness Day: “Since 2010, June 27 has been designated PTSD Awareness Day to honor the birthday of North Dakota National Guard Staff Sergeant Joe Bidel, who took his own life in 2007 after returning from two tours in Iraq. Although Sgt. Bidel’s PTSD led to suicide, many people experience a broad range of symptoms that disrupt everyday life, even decades after the initial trauma. Others only experience acute symptoms when confronted with a specific trigger. To learn more or to seek help, please see a mental health professional or visit At Ease USA: <https://ateaseusa.org/>.”

Women’s Initiative

Impact of the Pandemic on Women Webinar

It’s no surprise that the ongoing pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on women. On October 6, 2021 Kutak Rock’s Women’s Initiative held an educational webinar titled, “The Impact of the Pandemic on Women.” Kutak Rock partners and Women’s Initiative co-chairs Jill Goldstein and Ellen O’Brien moderated with four speakers including: Malliga Och, associate professor of Global Studies at Idaho State University and an expert on women and politics; Stephanie Scharf, founder of Scharf Banks Marmor LLC and a leading authority for the advancement of women in the legal profession; Roberta “Bobbi” Liebenberg, a senior partner at Fine, Kaplan and Black, R.P.C. in Philadelphia and one of the nation’s leading authorities for advancing diversity and inclusion in the legal profession; and Winnie Hawkins, Kutak Rock partner, Co-Chair of the NIDC, and co-author of [“Creating Inclusive Legal Industry Workplaces in COVID-19.”](#)





Affinity Groups

African Descent/Black Affinity Group

The African Descent, Black Affinity Group produced the inspiring Black Women Ceiling Smashers presentation in April and after several requests reprised the presentation, along with a forward about Juneteenth and the importance of commemorating African American freedom from slavery. The affinity group is proud of the work involved with ensuring Juneteenth is represented as a firm holiday.

Hispanic Affinity Group

Several members of the Hispanic Affinity Group participated in the Hispanic National Bar Association's Corporate Counsel Conference in March of 2021.

LGBTQIA and Allies Affinity Group

Kutak Rock's LGBTQIA + Allies Affinity Group presented a webinar July 27 featuring University of Nebraska - Lincoln professors Emily Kazyak and Kelsy Burke. The session explored the evolution of cultural beliefs and case law when it comes to religious freedom and LGBTQ people in the United States. Ms. Kazyak and Ms. Burke described findings from an ongoing research project that includes surveys and interviews of Americans' beliefs, quantitative and qualitative analysis of opinions, and summaries of federal court cases related to religious exemption and nondiscrimination laws.

Pipeline: Richmond Law Day 2021

This year's annual Law Day event was held August 12, 2021 at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Organized by Richmond-based staff members Charisse Matthews and Nicky Conyers, the event focused on art as a form of expression that can effect change. Attorney Peter Barrett opened the day's event with a discussion on justice and art and tied it to recent events of the area, specifically the "Art for Justice" installation on Monument Avenue and the controversy surrounding the Lee Monument. Ten Richmond-area middle school and high school students participated this year and were joined by Sharon Brown, a retired Richmond Public Schools art teacher. Charisse Matthews created activity packets for the group to use to help guide discussions as everyone moved throughout the exhibit. The discussions were insightful and enlightening and kept everyone engaged. The outing ended with lunch at the museum followed by a Q&A, gifts, school supplies and treats.



Charisse Matthews and Nicky Conyers

Career Support

Career support has long been a hallmark of the firm’s culture and includes five categories: financial health, mental health, physical health, firm and community involvement, and personal and professional goal-setting and development. The Career Support Committee promotes the firm’s numerous career support resources, along with professional development, volunteering, well-being, and mindfulness

Professional Development Committee

Kutak Rock’s Professional Development Committee was created to address the unique needs of associates navigating their path to partnership and those who work closely with them. The committee developed programming for new partners and associates through the year including:

	<p>01. PUBLIC SPEECH AND MEDIA: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TOOLS FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT</p> 
	<p>02. TIPS AND STRATEGIES</p> <p>Tips & Strategies to Improve Your Legal Writing</p>
	<p>03. STRATEGIC PLANNING</p> <p>PLAN - A - PALOOZA</p>



KutakCares

KutakCares designs initiatives to help people in need. KutakCares hosted its fourth Partnership Meeting charitable event with a virtual silent auction supporting the Chicago Urban League Youth Investor & Entrepreneurship Project.

In June and July, KutakCares raised funds for First Book, a nonprofit that provides new books and reading resources to educators and children in low-income areas across the United States.

Now in its second year, the KutakCares Caring Campaign took place in November and December. Over 250 firm members participated by getting physically active and/or making donations of time, talent, money, and even blood! The firm and its members contributed to Feeding America and the GlobalGiving Midwest US Tornado Relief Fund, along with donations to numerous other local organizations.

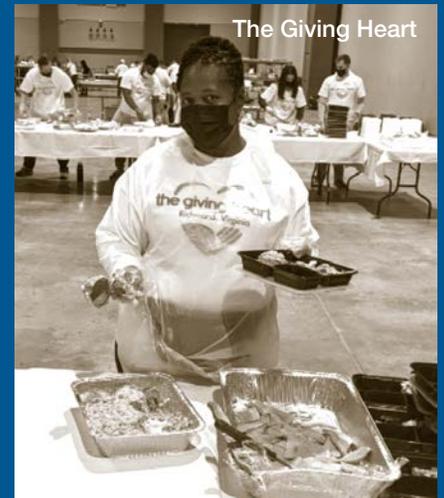
At the very end of December, Boulder County, Colorado was struck with the most destructive wildfire in the state’s history. Firm members again stepped up to contribute through the Community Foundation of Boulder County.



Lantern Walk



Mariza McKee and Family



The Giving Heart



Well-Being Initiative

Since its founding, Kutak Rock has recognized the importance of encouraging its members to find balance in their lives. Beginning in October 2021, the firm officially launched the Well-Being Initiative to emphasize the need to attend to individual well-being and highlighting the tools and resources available at the firm to address personal issues and support mental and physical health. To kick off the initiative, the firm hosted Jill Kluesner, MA, CRC and Soumya Palreddy, PhD, who led a Nov. 1 webinar titled “Foundations of Mental Well-Being in the Workplace.” They focused on increasing mental health literacy in the workplace and increasing self-awareness and identifying one’s role in workplace well-being.

Each week, firm members receive a supportive themed message such as “Gratitude” that provides tools, resources, links to timely and informative articles, quizzes, challenges, and opportunities to connect with each other as well as self-reflect.



What gratitude looks like at Kutak Rock:

“Everyone here looks out for each other and steps up when one of us needs help.”

“People show their appreciation throughout the year, not just on holidays or special occasions.”

“I’ve attended meetings where everyone (partners, associates, staff members, management) shares something wonderful or helpful another person in the group has done.”

What gratitude feels like at Kutak Rock:

“Kutak Rock actually makes me feel like a human being by showing concern for any health or family issues I encounter. This firm is by far the best place I have worked.”

“The attorneys and paralegals here are the most kind and supportive people, both personally and professionally. I feel blessed to work for this firm.”

“I am grateful to work at a firm that has such strongly shared values and a caring and supportive culture.”

Mindfulness Group

Now in its second year, Kutak Rock’s Mindfulness Group continued to provide weekly guided meditations to all firm members on Fridays at noon. The group is focused on creating a virtual Kutak Rock community where members can engage in present-moment awareness and acceptance—a simple, accessible practice to help build resilience, reduce stress, and improve well-being.



Awards

HRC

Human Rights Campaign (HRC) awarded Kutak Rock a perfect score on its 2021 Corporate Equality Index (CEI) for the sixth year in a row. Over the past five decades, Kutak Rock has reinforced its commitment to LGBTQ rights through its inclusive Equal Employment Opportunity policy, the extension of equal benefits to all employees—including transgender employees and LGBTQ employees in domestic partnerships—and the work of the firm’s LGBTQIA + Allies Affinity Group to provide networking, engagement and educational opportunities. Today, the firm has 35% more LGBTQ partners and equity partners than the industry average.

Bloomberg Law Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Framework

Kutak Rock was named to Bloomberg Law’s inaugural Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Framework (Framework). The firm was one of 28 U.S.-based law firms recognized for its level of disclosure of diversity-related metrics and distinguished performance in six core pillars: demographics, leadership and talent pipeline, recruitment and retention, business innovation and strategy, marketing, and diversity & inclusion in the community.

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 Law360 report. Kutak Rock ranked fourth among law firms with 251-600 attorneys for percentage of women equity partners, and eighth among all firms with over 250 attorneys.

Currently Kutak Rock’s number of women partners is 7% above industry average, while women equity partners are 8% above industry average.



7% ABOVE
INDUSTRY
AVERAGE



NUMBER OF
WOMEN
PARTNERS

8% ABOVE
INDUSTRY
AVERAGE



NUMBER OF
WOMEN EQUITY
PARTNERS

WILEF

In 2021, Kutak Rock was recertified as a Women in Law Empowerment Forum (WILEF) Gold Standard firm for the sixth 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. Of particular note, the firm is well above benchmarks and national averages in all areas related to women in leadership including percentage of women serving on governance committees and as heads of offices.



Leadership Council on Legal Diversity Pledge

Jay Selanders, chair of the firm, joined the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity's (LCLD) Leaders at the Front initiative, designed to create enduring organizational change within law firms and companies. As an LCLD member, [he and Kutak Rock created a pledge](#) detailing specific actions—both personal and organizational—to take in order to advance diverse lawyers within the firm.

LCLD Pathfinder and Fellow; Challenge Club Participant

Kutak Rock chose Marceda Starks to be a member of the 2021 class of Fellows of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD). The Fellows Program was created in 2009 to identify, train, and advance the next generation of leaders in the legal profession with a focus on mid-career lawyers. Ms. Starks is a healthcare attorney in the firm's Kansas City office.

Tomi Ajibodu, a public finance associate in the Omaha office, is Kutak Rock's 2021 Pathfinder. The program was launched in 2015 and is designed to train early-career attorneys in critical career-development strategies including leadership and the building of professional networks.

Heather McKee, Partner in the Denver Office, as the Firm's National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) Challenge Club participant for 2021. The NAWL Challenge Club was created in 2006 in order to better achieve NAWL's goal of least 30% women equity partners industry-wide. Challenge Club participants connect with and present to corporate attorneys, creating opportunities for promotion to equity partners.



Marceda Starks



Tomi Ajibodu



Heather McKee





It takes all of us.

inclusiveengagement@kutakrock.com