

COAF PROPOSAL FOR EARLY EDUCATION

The path from law school to a practicing attorney begins even before law school. COAF has a unique perspective to add. Through various programs and initiatives, COAF has been in the forefront of encouraging students of color and those from underrepresented groups to pursue a legal education. The keys to a successful career in law are financial, social and academic. COAF strongly believes the pathway begins in high school, with students gaining a strong academic foundation, that will carry them through college and on to law school. Therefore, COAF recommends to the State Bar Board of Governors to amend COAF's mission statement to include advancement of programs and initiatives at both the high school and college levels.

BACKGROUND

The California Legislature tasked the California State Bar with encouraging and retaining lawyers in the profession. According to the strategic plan, part of COAF's (and the State Bar's) role is to support and promote the pathway to law widely among the legal profession and judiciary, engaging attorneys and judges at all levels in COAF's pipeline efforts. These efforts include participation in programs in high schools, community colleges, and four-year universities that will both draw in and support students of color and from other underrepresented groups, as these students look towards law school and the profession.

Over the years, COAF has provided, and continues to provide, information and data for publications geared towards civic education. The State Bar now distributes these publications to the K-12 and general adult population. COAF can continue to update the following publications:

“When You Turn 18”-a useful handbook to advise students on their legal rights and responsibilities when they become adults in the eyes of the law.

“Kids and the Law”

“Want to be a Lawyer”

RECOMMENDATIONS

COAF's support of the academic foundations for success in the legal profession can include participation in the following programs:

1. COAF members should engage with and support California LAW efforts. COAF should appoint a member to serve as liaison to CalLAW (in addition to the State Bar staff liaison to California LAW). Support should include State Bar staff, administrative, and other in kind support as determined and confirmed by COAF and the State Bar Board of Trustees.

The State Bar, and COAF were early partners in efforts to develop the idea of the pipeline to the legal profession. The State Bar's participation adds stature and credibility to the California LAW and other pathway programs. Further, the State Bar's ongoing promotion and

involvement among lawyers and judges helps to maintain the importance of the pipeline program to the future of the legal profession and justice system.

2. COAF is the perfect resource for Law Partnership Academies' Advisory Council volunteers. COAF, supplies a pool of mentors; assists with financial resources from law firms to sponsor Law Academy Student attendance at conferences, Academies at the Capitol, and the Annual Pathway Summit in February; provides ideas for curriculum for the Law Academies; sponsors polo shirts or blazers for Academy members; provides classroom speakers; and, of course, arranges for internships and career shadowing days.

California LAW can provide data on Law Academy student enrollment as well as the study conducted by education researchers outlining the success rate of Academy student alumni in college and workforce activities. COAF is the perfect organization to continue to work with California LAW to provide diversity and inclusion work.

3. COAF could annually books about the law or diverse lawyers to to each of the 22 Law Academies. Michelle Obama's autobiography, for example, would be a wonderful book to donate to each school. COAF can encourage the Law Academy members to read the book and even write reports/essays and send to the Obama Foundation or the ABA Office of Diversity. Activities to engage high school students with members of COAF and the legal profession have significant impact.

4. COAF can offer presentations to college and law school students of under-represented groups on work-life balance. There is a mistaken belief that the college and law school students are well served in the educational pipeline. There are four-year colleges that do not have pre-law associations. Many under-represented students become over whelmed with the financial and student/work life obligations. COAF can serve a vital support at this level.