

Minutes of BLSA, SBA, and Deans Discussion of the BLSA “Action Plan Timeline”

The Black Law Students Association (BLSA) presented the Deans a document titled “Demands for Racial Justice: Action Plan Timeline” with eighteen proposed action items divided into three categories: “Immediate,” “Intermediate,” and Visionary. Makela Hayford (BLSA President), Isaiah Pinckney (Student Bar Association President), and Sally Enoh (BLSA Chair for Academic Affairs) met with Dean Jessica Berg, Dean Michael Scharf, and Associate Dean of Diversity and Inclusion Bryan Adamson for an hour over Zoom every two weeks during July and August to discuss these proposed action items. These Minutes follow the order of the action items on the BLSA and memorialize the discussions.

Immediate

Create a permanent position for one BLSA member on the hiring committee and the admissions committee by Fall 2020

BLSA will discuss their specific request at their presentation to the faculty (see below). The Faculty Bylaws stipulate that there shall be student representatives on the Appointments Committee and Admissions Committee and that the SBA shall appoint all students to faculty committees. The SBA will consider how best to achieve this goal.

Establish a seat for a BLSA student representative at faculty meetings by Fall 2020

The Deans agreed to institute two changes to facilitate faculty-BLSA discussion:

- The BLSA President will be invited to present to the faculty at a Faculty Meeting in the late fall of 2020 (yearly).
- The Deans will schedule a less formal “discussion” zoom between the members of the BLSA and the members of the Faculty sometime during the fall semester or early spring semester to discuss any issues or concerns (yearly).

Provide complete funding for the BLSA’s Mock Trial Team by Fall 2020

The Deans are seeking endowment funding for the BLSA Mock Trial Team (sufficient also to allow for a Student Diversity Case Competition Team and a Negotiation Competition Team). In the meantime, the school will fund a BLSA Mock Trial team at the same level as our other teams for this academic year (i.e., coaching, and up to \$1000/student for travel expenses up to a total of \$4000). Coaches have been obtained for the 2020-21 academic year.

Provide a larger space for BLSA by Fall 2020

There was extensive discussion about the needs of the BLSA (including a door that can be closed, a safe space, more external visibility, etc.). The Deans are committed to making space improvements, and are exploring different options. The Deans committed to having a space identified by the time student spaces reopen.

Provide financial support for the BLSA Peer Mentorship Program beginning in Fall 2020

Financial support goes to cover meal costs, estimated at \$2,000 per year. The Deans will seek external funding for this, but in the meantime the Deans commit to providing this support.

Encourage faculty to hold one critical legal studies class session as part of their curriculum by Fall 2021

Associate Dean Adamson is working on a broader proposal to integrate discussion of race and law into most of the courses in the curriculum. He led discussions of this at two faculty meetings in June and provided written resources to the faculty. This is an ongoing initiative to which the Faculty is committed.

Match BLSA funding of members' books and emergency funds, beginning in Fall 2020

Costs were identified to be \$500 per semester. The Deans will seek more permanent funding, but for now the Deans commit to providing this support. The Deans are also exploring providing needed course materials more generally, including providing a book fund as part of some scholarship packages (currently we provide books for the first semester to incoming 1Ls who choose to make a "first choice" deposit). The Deans also recognized initiatives such as facilitating cohorts and making incoming students aware of the bar prep stipend program would enhance the student learning experience more generally.

Intermediate

Increase the number of Black students enrolled to 10% of each cohort, each application cycle, beginning with the cohort of Fall 2021

The Deans have been working on this for many years and continue to look for ways to increase our applicant pool and thus resulting enrolled students. Details of their most recent efforts are set forth on the Racial Justice Plan website. The Deans are seeking funding for increased scholarships for minority students. The Deans and Associate Deans will work with BLSA on recruiting efforts.

Associate Dean Adamson is actively reaching out to some of the HBCUs with whom we do not yet have agreements to facilitate 3+3 programs and other recruiting efforts.

Match BLSA contributions to sponsor Black students to attend networking and professional development conferences, beginning in Spring 2021

The Deans have launched a new fundraising effort to endow what is envisioned to be the “Cheryl Lauderdale Professional Development Fund” for this purpose.

Add one professional development seminar per semester that engages with issues experienced by under-represented minorities in the legal field, beginning in Spring 2021

The Deans agreed that the Career Development Office will undertake to implement this proposal.

Actively promote the creation of internship placement programs for Black students by Fall 2021

The Deans said that the Career Development Office is working on this.

Dean Adamson will also champion this with the new Deans’ Cabinet for Diversity and Inclusion.

Pay for bar prep courses for underrepresented students, beginning with the class of 2021

The Law School currently has a bar stipend program that provides \$1,000 to pay for a bar prep course, conditioned on the student completing 90 percent of the online practice questions. The program is open to all students. The Deans said they would do more to advertise the availability of this program.

Replace Legislation and Regulation with Critical Race Theory by Fall 2021

The Deans are looking into options of how to achieve goals of integrating the discussion of race throughout the curriculum and providing expert instruction without removing LegReg or adding additional requirements for students.

The Deans committed to making sure that at least one of the 1L electives offered each year addresses critical perspectives on issues of race, including its intersectionality with ethnicity, gender, disability and sexual orientation.

Associate Dean Adamson is taking the lead in this area.

Sponsor, in conjunction with the Social Justice Law Center, a Critical Legal Studies student organization by Fall 2021

The Deans explained that the creation and funding of new student groups are handled through the SBA. Interested students may create this organization and work with Professor Hardaway in the Social Justice Law Center on joint efforts.

Create a \$20 million endowment for full-ride scholarships for Black students by 2025
Endowments of this level take many years to obtain, so the timeline is likely to be considerably longer. Deans Berg and Scharf will continue to make substantial scholarships for Black students a priority and consider new and innovative ways to achieve this goal.

Increase the number of Black full-time faculty to 15% of the total full-time faculty by Fall 2025

The Deans said they share the goal of hiring more full-time faculty from historically underrepresented groups, including Black faculty. At the same time, a goal described in terms of percentages can be self-limiting or run afoul of the law. The timing depends on whether the University allows us to open new full-time faculty spots. In addition, we will continue to pursue this goal in the context of other faculty hires (e.g., adjunct, grant funded).

Hire two additional Black Associate Deans and/or Directors by Fall 2025

The Deans said they will continue to focus on expanding the number of historically underrepresented professionals on the School's senior administrative staff. They understand that the ideal would be to focus on senior staff positions which have a high number of touch-points with students.

Create a paid Competitive Edge Program for underrepresented groups by Fall 2025

"Competitive Edge" is a form of "Zero L" or "Jump Start" program designed to give students a boost before starting the fall semester of 1L. The Deans said they are excited about the possibilities here and have been exploring different options. Next steps would focus on:

- Refining the goals: introduction to Law School and study/preparation best practices.
- Selecting the course and professor (it could be for credit, but perhaps offer it for P/NE so the stakes aren't too high).
- Identifying and recruiting a cohort in a way that avoids stigmatizing participation. While it could be open to all students, there is concern about widening the performance gap between groups. If we do make it open to all students, we could offer a scholarship and/or stipend for specially identified students to encourage their participation.