**DIVERSITY CLE SMALL GROUP SUMMARIES**

**Steps to Take Toward Solutions**

**EDUCATE**

Conversation - While education in a more formal setting is appropriate as well, we focused on education of ourselves and our family/friend and professional circles.

We discussed education related to cultural differences, white privilege, and systemic racism.

Encourage law students and lawyers to take an implicit bias test and participate in training on cultural competency. Discuss the results openly and brainstorm about ways to understand and minimize the effect of biases we identify in ourselves. We discussed that starting with law students allows them to be thinking about these issues early, has the effect of normalizing the training and creates a culture where these issue are readily seen, understood, etc. We learned UT Law is offering diversity training to the 1Ls.

We like the use of facts in Van’s presentation to show that confederate statues were not about heritage but about intimidation to people of color. As attorneys, we are well suited to use facts to confront diversity issues.

We discussed the recent proposal to include 1-2 hours of diversity and inclusion training as a required portion of yearly CLE credits, and our group generally thought the requirement would be beneficial.

Everyone in our group noted that they had witnessed a LOT of obstacles faced by others, particularly clients, based on their race, gender, class, etc.

Diversity and equity programming is very important. Now more than ever is the time for diversity and equity trainings and there is a lot of conversations about removing that. In higher education there are so many opportunities for professors and lawyers to be professionally developed - how are you developing the people in your firms and the diversity around you?

**UNCOMFORTABLE CONVERSATIONS**

Law firms and other legal groups need to take risks. The stakes are high with diversity and people keep trying the same things which leads to the same result. They need to have bold conversations on diversity and hire diverse candidates despite all the excuses such as “they will not stay in Knoxville.”

We acknowledged that we have to learn to be uncomfortable and make those around us uncomfortable. ‘Suck it up butter cup’ said one participant in regards to whether we will offend those in our circles.

It often takes confronting people who are not sensitive to how they are treating others. Example of older white male attorneys who do not create or invite safe spaces to share ideas and offer suggestions.

Our group agreed that inclusivity is at least as big a problem as increasing diversity. We had all observed unintentional exclusion of lawyers of color and women in our workplaces: White males often get the best assignments, are more likely to be consciously mentored by older white males than women and people of color, and are also more likely to be included in informal social events such as going to lunch and attending sporting events.

Hold others accountable - we discussed how it is important to normalize feeling uncomfortable by being open to criticism rather than feeling defensive.

Law students and lawyers of color face a lot of stereotypes. Several reported being presumed by officials to be a visitor or client as opposed to an attorney or law student. Expectation that they have to be an advocate for an entire people - it will move us forward as a race and a gender.

Group agrees that all of us need to be more aware and be willing to stand up and say something when we see any unfairness.

One experience that was more or less universal in our group was that of having male attorneys refer to females as “sweetie” and other names that suggest a lack of respect.

Several law students in our group experienced feelings of being excluded because they were first generation college students and others around them in law school had connections and experiences with lawyers that they did not have.

In a moment of shock, it is hard to get the words out to confront a racist joke or other inappropriate joke. Have some stock phrases you can get out to interrupt that statement and show that you will not tolerate the mistreatment of others, such as I don’t agree with you, what you said is hurtful, do you really believe that, I did not know that you believed things like that, or simply ask a question.

**PURPOSEFUL CHOICES & INVOLVEMENT**

Take action - Lead with positivity and invest more in our cities.

Intentionally build relationships - Our group discussed working with organizations who are concerned about diversity issues. People with lack of resources or education have a hard time and we need to partner with organizations that can help fill in the gap.

We discussed ways we could make more purposeful decisions – in the events we attend, in the small businesses we support, by being more self-reflective.

Involve youth and the faith community to effectuate change.

If your leaders are not listening to you, fighting for you, then they don’t need to be in office. Funnel protest into meaningful and longlasting change.

Increase consciousness of possible resume bias in evaluating potential new hires. Work on ways to reduce or eliminate it.

Lack of diversity on the bench, and the recent applicants for the Circuit Court position being all white males.

Use our voices – they are heard in different settings with more efficacy – these are challenges that we all face. Recognize that human beings are tribal by nature and social exclusion is inherent in all of us and not necessarily evil or malevolent.

Make an effort to reach out and talk through our differences with people who disagree with us. One member of the group noted that Americans are more likely to be confrontational than to try to work with people of opposing points of view. Our history includes so many examples where confrontation – even violence – worked to achieve change. Working amicably together is not what we think of first when we want to work for change. That is why Van Turner’s point about reaching across the divide is so important.

Lawyers as change agents - should work with leaders within the community, and outside of the profession, to increase diversity and inclusion as a whole in Knoxville.

Become very intentional in the hiring process so that the hiring committee can respond to concerns of racial minority candidates.

Privilege of affording law school, and the associated living and other expenses is a barrier to increasing diversity right from the start. Scholarships are few and far between. Organizations and firms can consider creating scholarship(s) for diverse students (for books, etc.)

Several members of our group expressed dismay at the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the Knoxville bar. One noted that the current lack of diversity is itself an obstacle to achieving greater diversity and wondered how to assure lawyers of color that they are welcome here. A group suggested a focus on mentorships for diverse law students and for newly graduated attorneys as a way to encourage their staying here. Another suggestion was to consciously include women lawyers and lawyers of color in social gatherings. Make an effort to interact with them informally during the workday to make them feel part of the team.

Difficulty in retaining young minority lawyers in Knoxville because of the social component, specifically the lack of a dating pool and social events/activities (as compared to larger cities). Suggestion to interview minority law students early 3L year about what would encourage them stay in Knoxville. There was strong opinion in our group that after graduating, new minority lawyers head to Nashville, Memphis or other large cities and don't want to stay in Knoxville. Connecting with them, offering them opportunities to work and be engaged in the community will help retain diverse young lawyers.

Consider the issues within the criminal justice system being biased towards people of color. One member noted that African Americans, even when not intentionally discriminated against, are often disregarded and deprioritized in our community.

Prioritize practice over policy - Systems and structures that keep things status quo, but no one asks, who do they exclude, why do we have such a structure/system?

We discussed the program and the support Van and his group received from local politicians and law enforcement. We talked about the fact that what his group accomplished would probably not have been possible without that support and questioned whether other communities and municipalities across the state would have expressed similar support. Agreed that most people don’t think how lawyers think and you have to be able to meet people where they are.

Partner with the University of Tennessee to encourage undergraduates of color to enter law school; increase the pipeline. Partner with both law schools to attract law students of color to practice in East Tennessee after graduation.