

# RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

By Michele Wojciechowski



## Russell McClain '95 remembers exactly where he was when his dream job was mentioned. About 18 months ago during a faculty meeting, Dean Donald B. Tobin said that he was considering appointing a new dean — one for diversity and inclusion.

As soon as he returned to his office, McClain, who has been teaching at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law for more than a decade and graduated from the school in 1995, emailed Dean Tobin saying, "If you do, I want to do it." For the next six months, they talked about the position and what it would entail. "I was eager to take on the role," says McClain. One year ago, he officially became Maryland Carey Law's first Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion.

McClain couldn't be happier. "Since I was in law school here, I've been keenly aware of issues relating to race and ethnicity, as they relate to the law school experience," says McClain. Now in his 12th year of teaching at Maryland Carey Law, McClain adds, "by teaching, I've also become more acutely aware of issues relating to gender and sexual identity and all of the things we group together under this umbrella of diversity."

When speaking of diversity, Maryland Carey Law includes perspectives of people shaped by race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, economic or cultural background, and philosophical outlook. "Our Dean cares really deeply about these issues," says McClain. "That's one of the reasons this position was established."

"As the Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, my job is to address these issues for the entire law school community — that means students, faculty, staff, alums, and even the community, not just in and around our campus, but in Baltimore City," says McClain. "One of the joys of the position is that nobody has done it before, and it gives me an opportunity to work with a blank slate and to think about how I can best serve the needs of the community."

Part of McClain's responsibilities is to be an advisor to Dean Tobin on issues involving diversity and inclusion. "If there are circumstances that warrant public communication, I help the Dean work on how to respond effectively," says



*Professor Russell McClain was named Maryland Carey Law's first Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion in 2016.*

McClain. Another big part of McClain's duties is to listen to students and their issues and help Maryland Carey Law take action to respond to their needs.

Earlier this year McClain held a speaker series open to the students, faculty, and staff. One speaker talked about understanding

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PHOTO BY PETER HOWARD

microaggressions, and a panel discussed what the law profession's ethical responsibilities are as they relate to diversity, inclusion, discrimination, bias, and prejudice, and how lawyers should conduct themselves. They looked at the topic from an academic viewpoint as well as from moral and social-norms perspectives.

The speaker series continues in the fall with a training session called Transgender 101, designed to provide cultural competence for people who are unfamiliar with transgender terms and how to speak and interact in ways that are inclusive rather than exclusive. Another speaker will address veterans' issues. McClain is excited about two book-related events in the spring of 2018 that will feature law school professors who have written significant books addressing race in America, policing, and the judicial system, as well as other related issues. The book events will be open to everyone involved with Maryland Carey Law, as well as the community at large.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKFORCE

With the support of four top law firms, Maryland Carey Law has started a Diversity and Inclusion Scholars Initiative to further promote diversity and inclusion in the legal workforce (see below). Although there have been efforts to increase diversity in the industry, there is still much to be done.

John Frisch '83, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at Miles & Stockbridge P.C., has observed that there are still "diversity gaps" in terms of the number of lawyers of color, women, and LGBTQ lawyers in law firms. "The concept of diversity is sometimes thought of too simplistically, as it ignores inclusion — another important aspect of achieving a richer, more effective and equitable workplace culture," Frisch says. "Workplaces

## MARYLAND CAREY LAW AND FOUR TOP LAW FIRMS LAUNCH DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

This fall, 10 high-achieving students who demonstrate a commitment to diversity will start their legal careers with vital financial and professional support, thanks to a new collaboration among four top law firms and the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law.

DLA Piper; Gallagher, Evelius & Jones; Miles & Stockbridge, and Pessin Katz Law have joined forces with Maryland Carey Law to launch the Diversity and Inclusion Scholars Initiative, a

must continue to take steps to close the gaps in becoming more diverse and creating more inclusive workplace cultures.”

“Despite various efforts within the legal industry over a long period of time to diversify our ranks, most would agree that the results haven’t measured up to expectations,” says Guy E. Flinn, Partner at DLA Piper LLP. The global law firm is also supporting the Diversity and Inclusion Scholars Initiative. “We, as a profession and as individual firms, therefore have a lot more work to do if we are to achieve and maintain the levels of diversity and inclusion that we expect of ourselves.”

Mark Maneche, Member at Pessin Katz Law LLP, views the gaps from a generational standpoint. “While a younger, more diverse population of lawyers are replacing the older, less diverse population, the process has been a slow one,” says Maneche. Pessin Katz Law leadership hopes that by joining the initiative they will “help attract a new group of diverse and skilled lawyers to the legal work force in Baltimore.”

“Although there have been improvements over the years, I think that there still remains a significant underrepresentation of certain socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, gender, cultural, and religious groups in the legal profession,” says Camille A. Parker ’00, Partner at Gallagher, Evelius & Jones LLP, another firm supporting the initiative. “The other gap is the fact that these diverse professionals are not always provided with the tools that will enable them to develop adequately, so that they can advance and be promoted at the same level and at the same pace as their counterparts ... If there is a focus on inclusion and equality, not only will there be more successful legal professionals, but these professionals will also enrich the quality of services provided to clients.”

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## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

McClain says that if he had an unlimited budget and free rein, he would do exactly what he’s doing now, but on a larger scale. He does, though, have some other hopes for the future. “I would love, for example, to do some work with our undergraduate campuses across the state where we can encourage diverse participation in law schools,” he says. “A big part of what I try to do is be as inclusive as I can be.”

McClain says he wants to cultivate diversity and inclusion at Maryland Carey Law now so that there will be more diversity and inclusion in the legal workforce in the future. “But I think there’s more complexity to it. I think one piece is certainly to have a more diverse workforce,” says McClain. “It’s also not just to get more women, African-Americans, and Latinos in the profession, but really to influence everybody’s thinking, to at least challenge everyone to consider how they are affecting others in their daily activity in ways that they might not have anticipated.” ♦

new effort to ensure that Maryland’s legal community becomes as diverse as the population of the state itself.

The Diversity and Inclusion Scholars Initiative will offer financial and professional support every year to 10 academically talented first-year students at Maryland Carey Law.

“We are incredibly grateful to these firms for their leadership in addressing

this challenge,” said Dean Donald B. Tobin. “Together, they have provided us with almost \$700,000 to launch this program. Our profession has talked about the importance of increasing diversity for years. This new collaboration is a significant step toward achieving that goal here in Maryland. I hope every law firm in the state will join us.” ♦