

# Roadmap to Enrolling Diverse Law School Classes

**VOLUME 2:** Developing a Diversity Plan

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EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAWYERS®

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“Until diversity becomes a central feature of strategic planning efforts, little will change with regard to campus diversity.”<sup>1</sup>

Practically every law school professes a commitment to diversity. Yet, many law schools struggle to enroll diverse classes, often despite tangible efforts. Diversity is necessary and possible; but achieving it is not always easy. Enrolling classes that live up to the lofty pronouncements often made about diversity requires a plan of action centered on clear goals, tangible objectives and measurable outcomes. The purpose of this second volume of the *Roadmap to Enrolling Diverse Law School Classes* series is to provide law schools with tactics for engaging in strategic planning around student diversity.

Strategic planning is the development of steps or objectives that actively serve the purpose of achieving clearly defined goals. Goals express an institution’s values. Strategic plans are how those values are lived. Together they provide focus for your efforts – direction for your resources and energy. Strategic planning around student diversity can be undertaken as a standalone activity or as part of a larger effort to chart the direction of the entire institution. Planning is critical. Diversity is rarely achieved by happenstance. For most law schools, it can be achieved only through deliberate planning and implementation.

This volume will discuss the following steps to effective strategic planning around student diversity:

- Step 1:** Involve the right people in the right ways.
- Step 2:** Set diversity goals.
- Step 3:** Create diversity objectives.
- Step 4:** Identify diversity outcome measures.

<sup>1</sup> Debra Humphreys, Diversity Plans: What Impact Can they Have?, Diversity Digest, Retrieved from: <http://diversityweb.org/digest/F99/divplan.html>

This is the second volume of a multi-part series of guides focused on providing meaningful and actionable tactics for increasing law student diversity. Despite good intentions, the law school shut-out rates for people from underrepresented backgrounds remain high. Law school diversity is both necessary and possible, but it will not happen without a strategic approach. The *Roadmap to Enrolling Diverse Law School Classes* series will provide insights on developing an effective way forward.

Each volume in the *Roadmap to Enrolling Diverse Law School Classes* series will provide tactics for achieving diversity goals. Volumes of the series include: *Developing a Diversity Plan*, *Assessing Recruitment Efforts*, *Contextualizing Admissions Factors*, and *Leveraging Scholarships*, which will be released in its entirety by early 2019.



# Strategic Planning

“Strategic planning is not just a functional exercise . . . Strategic planning takes ideas, inspiration, and down-in-the-dirt hard work to make transformations.”<sup>2</sup>

## Step 1: Involve the Right People in the Right Ways

One of the most important steps in strategic planning is determining who will be involved in the process and the respective roles they will play. As a threshold matter, strategic planning is an inclusive exercise. The composition of individuals taking part in the process guides how the work is framed and executed, which influence the findings and outcomes of the exercise. Therefore, a broad range of stakeholders and constituents should be engaged.

The most obvious participants in the strategic planning exercise are individuals who would be responsible for implementing and monitoring the plan, starting with the dean of the law school. For the greatest chance of success, the dean should sponsor, champion and facilitate the process.<sup>3</sup> Otherwise, efforts may be perceived as invalid, untenable or simply unimportant.

Others who might be responsible for implementation include the chief admission officer, financial aid director, other administrators (e.g. academic dean, student services deans), faculty members, student leaders, alumni leaders, and relevant individuals from the central university.

Another group of strategic planning participants include individuals with institutional knowledge, topical expertise, a stake in the plan and the institution’s future, or other relevant insight. This is a broad group of people, some of whom may not be formally affiliated with the institution. Oftentimes, this group may be identified by broad affiliations. For instance, members of a local bar association may be invited to offer insight.

<sup>2</sup> Paul B. Redman, *Five Essentials of Strategic Planning*, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Retrieved from: [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/five\\_essentials\\_of\\_strategic\\_planning](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/five_essentials_of_strategic_planning)

<sup>3</sup> John M Bryson and Barbara C. Crosby, “Leadership Roles in Making Strategic Planning Work,” in John M Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, Revised Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1995, pp. 211-227

Once individuals have been identified, the next step is to determine the roles that each will play. Typically, the dean should name a committee of stakeholders to guide the planning process. The committee would be responsible for engaging stakeholders, synthesizing information and data, framing outcomes, and drafting the final report. The committee should have a regular meeting schedule and be committed to the charge handed down by the dean. The work can be laborious and is typically uncompensated. But the outcomes can help shape the future of the institution.

The committee will determine from whom to seek insights as well as the methods of engagement. Interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, surveys, and open meetings are all common methods of stakeholder engagement. In determining specific methods, the committee should consider the needs of the individuals or audiences from whom insights are being sought as well as the goals of the engagement.

## Step 2: Set Diversity Goals

“To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you’re going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction.”<sup>4</sup>

Goalsetting is a critical component of achieving any outcome. Efforts to increase diversity must begin with efforts to identify institutional diversity goals. Goals reflect organizational values. In the context of strategic planning, goals should take shape and evolve as part of the process. At the end of the strategic planning process, goals should be shared broadly and cited often by leadership. As a sign of their importance, goals should inform resource allocation and fiscal prioritization. Ideally, the goals will serve as sources of inspiration and shared commitment among stakeholders.

Goals that come out of the strategic planning process should be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-sensitive.<sup>5</sup> Some goals will have shorter term deadlines, while others will be long-term in scope. The operative questions are: “What do we want to achieve and by when do we want to achieve it?”

An example of a SMART law school diversity goal is: *Increase the number of students from underrepresented racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups who enroll in the 2019 entering class, compared to 2018.*

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic*, New York: Free Press, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Anne Conzemius, and Jan O’Neill. *The power of SMART goals: Using goals to improve student learning*. Solution Tree Press, 2009.

## Step 3: Create Diversity Objectives

Goals cannot be achieved without related objectives. Objectives transform the vision set by goals into tangible plans of action.<sup>6</sup> While an institution may have a goal of increasing student body diversity, related objectives would reveal how the institution plans to achieve that goal. A single goal may have multiple objectives associated with it.

Examples of objectives associated with the goal listed above include:

- Develop differentiated recruitment materials targeted at underrepresented students.
- Conduct at least five targeted CRS mailings to students attending minority-serving institutions (MSIs) or other institutions enrolling large numbers of underrepresented students.
- Give application fee waivers to students who attend MSIs or other institutions enrolling large numbers of underrepresented students who receive the five targeted CRS mailings.
- Develop frameworks for making admission and scholarship awarding decisions that properly contextualize admission factors (e.g. LSAT).
- Increase need-based scholarship funding by 30%.

In devising objectives, the operative question is:

*“What specific steps are necessary to achieve the stipulated goal?”*

## Step 4: Identify Diversity Outcome Measures

Results matter. Outcomes answer the basic question: “Were goals and objectives achieved?”

The monitoring of outcomes creates heightened accountability for stakeholders. A well-conceived strategic plan will lay the ground rules for how outcomes will be measured. In many cases, the manner in which outcomes are measured are self-evident. Did underrepresented student enrollment increase? Was the need-based scholarship budget increased by 30%?

But not every goal will have an obvious means of measuring associated outcomes. For example, if the goal is to increase perceptions of inclusion on the parts of underrepresented students, what does achieving the goal look like? Through the strategic planning process, means of measuring student perceptions of their law school experiences (like the Law School Survey of Student Engagement) can be identified.

Measuring outcomes is about more than accountability. It is also about adaptation and course correction. Measuring progress towards goals should be a continuous process. If it becomes clear that progress is inadequate, then objectives and possibly goals should be revisited. A well-conceived strategic plan will provide opportunities for this type of ongoing assessment.

<sup>6</sup> Goals and Objectives, The NCJA Center for Justice Planning, Retrieved from: <http://ncjp.org/strategic-planning/overview/where-do-we-want-be/goals-objectives> (last visit on August 6, 2018).

An example of a student diversity outcome measure could include: Did underrepresented student enrollment increase?

Outcome measures should also be tied to objectives. Examples may include:

**Objective:** Conduct at least five targeted CRS mailings to students attending MSIs or other institutions enrolling large numbers of underrepresented students.

**Outcome:** At least 5% of eligible prospects who received the targeted mailings submitted complete law school applications.

**Objective:** Give application fee waivers to students who attend MSIs or other institutions enrolling large numbers of underrepresented students who receive the five targeted CRS mailings.

**Outcome:** Fee waivers were provided and contact information for as many recipients as possible was gathered for tracking and engagement purposes.

**Outcome:** The yield (or matriculation rate) among admitted applicants who received application fee waivers will be higher than the overall yield.

**Objective:** Develop frameworks for making admission and scholarship awarding decisions that properly contextualize admission factors (e.g. LSAT).

**Outcome:** Conduct a predictive validity study of admission factors and adopt application and scholarship review rubrics based on findings.

**Outcome:** Diversity among applicants who are admitted and applicants receiving scholarship offers is higher than in the previous admission cycle.

To ensure that diversity efforts are being monitored and progress measured along the way, implement a strategic-performance management system.<sup>7</sup> By evaluating progress, staff responsible for implementing the strategic plan can adjust strategies and tactics as needed to yield desirable outcomes.

<sup>7</sup> Renee Dye & Olivier Sibony, How to improve Strategic planning, McKinsey & Company, Retrieved from: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/how-to-improve-strategic-planning>

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## Conclusion

Diversity is rarely achieved by happenstance. For most law schools, enrolling diverse classes requires a plan of action centered on clear goals, tangible objectives and measurable outcomes. Engaging in strategic planning around student diversity can be an effective way of setting diversity goals and developing plans to pursue and achieve those goals. Effective strategic planning fosters institutional alignment that can lead to transformational change in law school student body diversity.

This is the second volume in a five-part series on increasing diversity in legal education, and in turn the legal profession. *Volume 3: Assessing Recruitment Efforts* will focus on evaluating recruitment strategies to meet diversity goals and objectives.



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