

AccessLex Institute and the Southern Education Foundation Announce New Diversity-Driven Fellowship Program for Law School Professionals

West Chester, PA (December 21, 2021) - Leading education nonprofits, AccessLex Institute and the Southern Education Foundation, have partnered to create the Professionals in Legal Education Developing Greater Equity (PLEDGE) Fellowship, an 18-month professional development program and problem-based research project, launching in June 2022. The fellowship is premised on achieving the following goals:

- Cultivate evidence-based experimentation and assessment in legal education;
- Contribute to the development of best practices for fostering access and success among aspiring lawyers from underrepresented backgrounds;
- Increase the law school enrollment and academic success of people from underrepresented racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds;
- Expose fellows to principles and concepts underlying DEI, statistical methods, experimental design, and evidence-based decision making; and,
- Build partnerships with and among legal education stakeholders, particularly law schools that enroll disproportionate numbers of underrepresented students and those that seek to increase the enrollment of these students.

Targeting experienced law school administrators, faculty members, and other similarly situated professionals, the fellowship cohort will comprise three teams of two fellows, each undertaking problem-based research projects, called Capstones. Each Capstone will focus on one of three topical strands: Admission and Access, Academic Performance, or Bar Exam Performance. Teams will have a Capstone budget of up to \$25,000 for research activities, and each fellow will receive a \$5,000 stipend.

By the end of the 18-month fellowship, each team will have successfully conducted a problem-based research project, likely focusing on evaluating a student-facing program or intervention. Fellows will also take part in a comprehensive professional development program centered on gaining expertise in using data to support diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

“The PLEDGE Fellowship is a historic effort to support law school professionals,” said Aaron N. Taylor, Executive Director of the AccessLex Center for Legal Education Excellence. “It represents the continued commitments of both AccessLex and SEF to fostering educational environments rooted in diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

“Data can be a powerful tool for developing and sustaining diversity initiatives,” said Raymond C. Pierce, President and CEO of the Southern Education Foundation. “The PLEDGE Fellowship will equip participants with the information and expertise they need to support people from underrepresented communities in entering the legal profession.”

The application cycle will open January 20, 2022, and the deadline to apply is March 27, 2022. Fellowship teams will be announced May 13, 2022. The first in-person fellowship meeting will take place June 22-24, 2022, at SEF’s headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia.

[Learn more about the fellowship and how to apply.](#)

About AccessLex Institute

AccessLex Institute is a nonprofit organization committed to helping talented, purpose-driven students find their path from aspiring lawyer to fulfilled professional. In partnership with its nearly 200 Member law schools, improving access and positively influencing legal education have been at the heart of the Company's mission since 1983. AccessLex Institute is headquartered in West Chester, PA. Learn more at AccessLex.org.

About Southern Education Foundation

Originally founded in 1867 to educate Black children and children from low-income families in the South, the Southern Education Foundation also has a long history of developing leaders in education and was a pivotal source of research and data to support legislation and litigation aimed at fighting inequity in education during the civil rights era. The organization today conducts leadership development, research, and advocacy to improve educational opportunities for Black students, other students of color, and students from low-income families and achieve educational equity in the Southern U.S. It is based in Atlanta, Georgia. Find out more at <https://southerneducation.org>.