

DIVERSITY PIPELINE PROGRAM

For Corporate Legal Departments

A national partnership  | 

Evaluation Findings

The goal of the Corporate Legal Diversity Pipeline Program is to diversify the legal profession—ultimately, to have more young people choose to pursue further education and become lawyers. In order to discern whether the program is having an impact, we measured several short term outcomes. These outcomes are based on peer-reviewed career choice and counseling psychology research, and are all things that are indicative of future career choice. They are:

- Are students more interested in the legal profession after participation?
- Do the students have a better understanding of the legal profession and the steps necessary to become a lawyer after participation?
- Do students perceive positive social support from the corporate volunteers?
- Do students have higher confidence in their legal skills after participation?

Highlights:

The Corporate Legal Diversity Pipeline Program is **reaching a diverse group of students** who possess the academic potential to succeed, and many appear be the first in their family to pursue higher education:

- 65% of the students identified their race and/or ethnicity as “Black or African American” or “Hispanic or Latino” or chose more than one category. At three of the six sites, more than 80% of the participants chose “Black / African American” or “Hispanic / Latino.”
- The average GPA for participating students is 2.90.
- Fewer than 35% of the students have parents who have completed a bachelor’s degree. At four of the six sites, less than 25% of the students’ parents have completed a degree.

The students in the program overwhelmingly **intend to go to college**, but three quarters face financial barriers:

- Over 85% of the students reported that they have or intend to apply to a four-year university.
- 77% of the students say that they will need financial help to attend college.

Students are **interested in pursuing legal careers**:

- Nearly 50% report that they are “interested” or “very interested” in becoming a lawyer.
- 57% of the students reported being *more* interested in legal careers after the program.

Students reported **knowing more about legal careers** after the program:

- Their assessment of how much they knew increased from 5.07 to 6.06 on a scale of 1 to 10.
- At five of the six sites, their overall scores did not improve on our test about legal careers, although their understanding of how much time lawyers spend in court and the importance of alternative dispute resolution in solving legal problems did increase.

Students reported that the **lawyers encouraged them** to consider legal careers **and inspired them**:

- 50% agreed or strongly agreed that they “received strong encouragement ... to consider a job as a lawyer.”

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- 61% agreed or strongly agreed that some of the lawyers were “particularly inspirational to me in the career path I am pursuing.”
- At one of the six sites, more than 75% of the students agreed that the lawyers were inspirational.

Aside from one site, the students’ **legal self-efficacy** (the belief that they possess the skills necessary to succeed in the legal profession) did not improve over the course of the program.

Personal interactions with the legal department volunteers are very important:

Students who felt most **inspired by the corporate volunteers** were more likely to:

- express higher levels of interest in becoming a lawyer
- report that they were more interested in legal careers after the program
- believe in their capabilities regarding legal skills (their legal self-efficacy was slightly higher).

Students who felt that **they learned a good deal from the lawyers**:

- were more interested in legal careers after the fieldtrip
- were the ones that received more hours of programming
- reported that they received encouragement from the attorneys to consider legal careers.

Recommendations for Program Improvement

Continue to target the same groups of students – diverse youth with good academic potential in elective law classes (demonstrating some level of interest in the law).

Stress the importance of personal connections between the legal professionals and the students. Encourage the law department volunteers to spend more time interacting one-on-one with the students, both in the classroom and at the one day conference.

Give students more guidance about skills used in the legal profession and give them opportunities to use and to improve these skills (including the ability to identify legal issues, explain information about laws, and write persuasively). When necessary, rework the conference workshops and classroom lessons to expand skills practice.

Develop structured career-fair activities to further introduce students to legal careers and to help increase their understanding about how to pursue legal careers. Consider adding an internship, job shadow, or mentoring component for the few students who are most interested in legal careers.

This evaluation of Street Law’s Corporate Diversity Pipeline Program was conducted at six sites during the 2006-07 school year. The evaluation surveyed 731 students, 368 of whom took both a pre- and post-survey, and 363 of whom took either (but not both) the pre- and post-survey. Results that refer to changes before and after the program measure the impact on those 368 students who took both surveys. The evaluation also included observations of the one-day conferences at all six sites, volunteer reports about the classroom visits, and surveys of the partner teachers. *To obtain a complete report of evaluation results, please contact Megan Hanson: mhanson@streetlaw.org*