

10-21-1993

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Recommended Citation

"Golden Gate Law School Wins Diversity Commitment Award" (1993). *Press Releases*. Paper 2.
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For Immediate Release
Mailed: 21 Oct. 1993

Golden Gate Law School Wins Diversity Commitment Award

SAN FRANCISCO — Efforts at the Golden Gate University School of Law to increase diversity among faculty and students are being recognized tomorrow (Friday) when Dean Anthony J. Pagano accepts the Law School Racial and Ethnic Diversity Commitment Award at ceremonies in Los Angeles.

"Over the past several years, Golden Gate has made a concentrated effort to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of its students and faculty, and has ambitious plans to continue its efforts in this area," said Pagano. Enrollment by racially diverse students grew to 44 percent this fall — up from 28 percent last year. While in 1990 there were no minority faculty members, this year 11 percent of the full-time law faculty, 25 percent of the visiting faculty and 13 percent of the adjunct faculty members represent diverse ethnic groups.

In the last few years, Golden Gate has launched several programs to recruit and retain minority law students. In addition to participating in minority-student receptions and conducting workshops at the Law School Forum, to organizing panelists for the minority-student workshop at the Los Angeles Law School Forum, the law school also actively recruits at historically African American colleges and universities in the South and participates in the Annual Law School Admissions Fair for Students of Color.

The law school also considers race and ethnicity as a factor in its admissions process, the dean said. The Admissions Office annually studies national minority admissions trends and implements admissions guidelines that take into consideration variations in LSAT and grade point average performance. "Recognizing that minority law students can provide valuable insight into applicant backgrounds, the Admissions Office asks members of the Black Law Student Association, the Latino Law Student Association, and the Asian and Pacific Island Law Student Association to review and comment on applicants within their racial and ethnic groups prior to sending the applications to the Admissions Committee," Pagano said.

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Diversity Award
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To increase admissions opportunities for minority students, the law school implemented a conditional admissions program two years ago. "The program is designed to identify those minority students whose LSAT and grade-point-average profiles do not necessarily reflect their potential to succeed in law school, but whose overall application demonstrates considerable promise." Students in this program spend six weeks during the summer before entering law school receiving special training in two substantive areas and in legal writing. They also meet minority law students and alumni. "At the end of the six-week session, students are offered admission based upon their success in the program, which is free to the participants," the dean said.

Golden Gate Law School also has two scholarships for which only minority students are eligible, and it earmarks one-third of its annual scholarship budget for minority candidates. This year, a quarter million dollars in merit tuition assistance was disbursed to minority candidates.

The law school also attempts to enhance minority-student success through an extensive academic assistance program in which first-year students participate in a series of workshops that are designed to increase basic skills required to succeed in law school, such as briefing cases, outlining and exam-taking. The program also gives students the opportunity to take mid-semester practice examinations, which enables them to monitor their progress and make adjustments prior to taking final exams. The dean said that in the spring plans call for expanding this program specifically to target minority students. The academic assistance program is supplemented by mentoring activities, funded by the law school, to minority-student organizations. "As a result, upper-division minority students receive stipends for tutoring and counseling lower-division students in an effort to ensure their success," Pagano said.

The award, now in its second year, is sponsored by the California Minority Counsel Program, and cosponsored by the San Francisco, Los Angeles, Orange County and San Diego Bar Associations, and the California State Bar, with support from a partnership of corporations, majority- and minority-owned law firms. It carries a \$1,000 award, which is to be used for the work of minority law-students' organizations.

The GGU Law School is located on the San Francisco Campus at 536 Mission St. It is approved by the American Bar Association.