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## Work in Progress: Diversity Slowly But Steadily Improving at Large Firms in Dallas

Mary Alice Robbins

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Progress toward increasing minority representation among lawyers at the 20 largest law firms in Dallas has been steady, but slow over the past five years, according to a report the Dallas Diversity Task Force (DDTF) released Dec. 13.

"The numbers are moving up, but there's a lot of room for improvement," says DDTF chairman John Trevino, an in-house attorney for American Airlines.

The DDTF — a coalition of the Dallas Asian American Bar Association, the Dallas Hispanic Bar Association and the J.L. Turner Legal Association, which represents African-American attorneys — began surveying the 20 largest firms in Dallas in 2006.

"Over the five years of DDTF reports, minority attorney representation has risen only slightly for all groups, with an overall average of 8.40% in 2006 increasing by just 2.2 percentage points to 10.60% in 2010," according to this year's report.

As noted in the report, the DDTF calculates a composite score for each of the 20 surveyed firms, based on a firm's total number of minority lawyers, its number of minority equity partners and the diversity across minority groups represented in its lawyer ranks. Trevino says the task force weighs minority equity partners more heavily than all other minority attorneys at a firm and considers the firm's record of hiring attorneys from each of the different minority groups when calculating the firm's composite score. The DDTF notes in the report that the composite score also takes into account a firm's most recent successes in hiring minority attorneys.

According to the report, the composite score measures each firm against two benchmarks: the state's population and the racial and ethnic composition of State Bar of Texas members. The DDTF explained in the report that potential values for the composite score range from zero to 100. If a firm scores 100, that means it likely meets the percentages of minority residents in Texas for each minority group, while

a score of at least 70 indicates that a firm likely meets the state's minority attorney percentages.

Among the "disappointing developments" cited in the report is the fact that only 5 percent of the approximately 900 equity partners at the 20 surveyed firms are minorities. The DDTF reported that 60 percent of the firms surveyed have no African-American equity partners, 55 percent have no Asian-American equity partners, 40 percent have no Hispanic equity partners and 75 percent have no Native American equity partners.

The DDTF also noted that the representation of African-American and Hispanic attorneys at the 20 largest law firms in Dallas is below the representation of each of those minority groups in the state's lawyer population. However, the representation of Asian-Americans and Native Americans at those firms exceeds their representation in the state lawyer population and is close to the demographics of the state's general population. **[Read the entire diversity report.]**

Task force member David J. Cho, an attorney at AT&T Services Inc. in Dallas, expresses "guarded encouragement" about the percentage of Asian-American lawyers at the surveyed firms, which he says seems to reflect the growing number of Asian-Americans entering the legal field. "At least with the Asian-American group, there seems to be good progress," Cho says.

Only one firm surveyed this year meets or exceeds the state's minority attorney percentages. The DDTF reported that the Dallas office of Weil, Gotshal & Manges, which has 15 minority attorneys, including two equity partners, among its 79 lawyers, achieved a composite score of 74.22. However, that's down from the composite score of 77.70 the DDTF reported for Weil in 2009.

Ray Guy, a partner in Weil in Dallas and a member of the firm's diversity committee, says, "We're proud of Weil's commitment to diversity and that we continue to rank No. 1 in the task force's diversity rankings."

Guy says the decrease in Weil's composite score this year is not large but that the firm intends to go up instead of down. Diversity is "clearly a continued focus of ours," he says.

According to the report, Carrington Coleman Sloman & Blumenthal had the largest decrease in a composite score since 2009, dropping 13 points from 47.90 to 34.79 this year.

Angelina LaPenotierre, a partner and co-chair of Carrington Coleman's diversity committee, suggests two reasons for the decrease. With only 61 attorneys, every attorney the firm loses can significantly impact the composite score, LaPenotierre says. And because the DDTF weights minority equity partners more than other minority attorneys, a decision by equity partner Christopher Scanlan to leave Carrington Coleman in March to become counsel for one of the firm's clients impacted the composite score, she says.

LaPenotierre says the move was a great opportunity for Scanlan. "It hurts to see us tagged negatively in our composite score for seeing him advance his career," she says.

The DDTF reported that the Dallas office of Andrews Kurth had the most improved composite score, increasing by almost 20 points from 42.20 in 2009 to 61.51 this year.

Elizabeth Campbell, an Andrews Kurth partner in Houston and the firm's chief diversity officer, says the improved score tells her that "all the work we've been doing is taking hold."

Campbell says Andrews Kurth's strategic work on diversity and inclusion is firmwide. Noting that she joined the firm in February 2007, Campbell says that improving the firm's diversity is her entire job. "I visit law schools," she says. "I talk to students."

Campbell says Andrews Kurth is not only recruiting minorities but also developing a workplace environment that encourages them to stay, including a formal mentoring program that pairs each new lawyer with one or two experienced partners as well as informal mentoring efforts. "The bottom line, this is not a quick fix; it's a long-term process," she says.

The report showed Winstead's Dallas office improved its composite score by 10 points from 35.50 in 2009 to 44.79 this year. Jeff Hage, managing shareholder in Dallas, writes in an e-mail, "Our goal at Winstead is to hire qualified candidates of all backgrounds, and we're excited to see our numbers in the Dallas Diversity Task Force Survey improve this year. This is something we strive to accomplish each and every day, and this commitment applies not only to our attorneys but to our staff as well."

The Dallas office of Thompson, Coe, Cousins & Irons, which participated in the DDTF survey for the first time this year, had the lowest composite score at 22.55, according to the report. Jack M. Cleaveland Jr., Thompson, Coe's administrative partner, says, "Our diversity committee has been very active this year in raising awareness and improving our efforts to attract and retain minorities. I think you'll see great improvement next year."

Cleaveland notes that since the DDTF surveyed Thompson, Coe, the firm has hired two female African-American attorneys as associates.

This year's DDTF report also includes checklist scores that measure a firm's efforts to recruit, retain and promote minority attorneys based on answers to 41 different questions. Among other things, the task force asked each firm whether it has a written diversity strategy that is communicated to all attorneys and whether a minority attorney is on the firm's managing body or heads a practice group. The checklist scores range from 31 for Baker Botts to 16 for Carrington Coleman. A firm's checklist score is not used in calculating its composite score, according to the report.

Although Trevino says more needs to be done to improve diversity at the surveyed firms, he believes progress is being made. "I think the fact there's an incremental increase each year, that is a positive," he says.

*Mary Alice Robbins is on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/maryarobbins](http://www.twitter.com/maryarobbins).*

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