Shaping a Culture of Diversity and Inclusion at Warner
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Dear friends and clients,

Warner Norcross + Judd is made up of remarkable people.

If you ask almost anyone what sets us apart, their answer is likely to be our people. We are fortunate to attract high-performing attorneys and staff who work collaboratively for the best interests of our clients. Rare among law firms, our compensation structure rewards teamwork. Our culture intentionally fosters an all-for-one camaraderie that allows us to attract and retain a diverse team that is single-minded in its commitment to client service.

We were fortunate in 2018 to be joined by a remarkable group of attorneys, including James Liggins and Luke Dillon, who are profiled in this report. We welcomed a talented class of associates who happen to be all women – a first in our history, which you can read about on page 8. While we did not intentionally set out to do this or even notice as it occurred, it’s what happened when we set out to hire the best group of new attorneys entering the profession. We also applauded the remarkable accomplishments of attorneys like Monique Field-Foster, who was tapped by incoming Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to be part of her transition team.

In the last two years, two-thirds of the attorneys we have hired – associates, partners, senior counsel – have been female. Over the same period, 20 percent have been minorities. The days when it was remarkable to hire a female attorney or an attorney of color are gratefully long gone. Today, women hold leadership positions throughout our firm, including four who serve on our Management Committee and 11 who lead practice or industry groups. Our most recent class of associates promoted to partners included three female associates and one male.

Our search for talent is exactly that – a search for attorneys who have the skills, knowledge and experience to best serve our clients. We long ago learned that white males do not have a monopoly on these characteristics.

Recognizing this, we took a new approach to the recruiting process for attorneys this year by moving to behavioral-based interviewing, an approach that allows us to identify the qualities that we believe are necessary to be a successful attorney in our firm.

As you will read on page 6, we deliberately recast the process in favor of a structured approach to focus on questions where candidates could share their experiences dealing with real-life situations that demonstrate the qualities and traits we have identified. Our interviews are now designed to give candidates a better opportunity to tell their stories, which helps us hone in on experiences that will indicate their ability to thrive at Warner – while reducing the potential for unconscious bias in the selection process. We are confident that this new approach will help us to select remarkable lawyers who will thrive at the firm.

In 2018, Director of Human Resources Cheryl Coutchie and Diversity Partner Rodney Martin investigated our potential participation in an initiative of Talent 2025 and West Michigan Works! called HireReach. This program helps employers develop an evidence-based selection process not only to hire the best possible people, but also to increase diversity. We are honored to be accepted into the first cohort that will go through the year-long intensive program in 2019.

Talent 2025 is an organization of business leaders working together to make West Michigan a top 20 employment region in the country. Critical to that goal is attracting, developing and retaining diverse talent. In early 2018, I signed Talent 2025’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion CEO Commitment, pledging the firm’s participation in a “Community of Practice” with other business leaders to identify and share best practices for recruiting and advancing diverse members of our team.

Competition for the best and brightest legal minds remains tough. Maintaining a culture that fosters respect, inclusion and teamwork is critical to our success as an organization – and as a member of the communities we serve across Michigan. We work every day to be intentional about doing so – and that makes Warner an exceptional place to build a remarkable career.

Thank you for being part of our story.
Best regards,

Douglas A. Dozeman
Managing Partner
Managing Partner Doug Dozeman believes creating a culture that fosters respect, inclusion and teamwork is critical to Warner’s success.

Diversity Partner Rodney Martin has been instrumental in driving Warner’s inclusion in new programs which will further intensify our knowledge and efforts.
When Madelaine Lane was a sophomore at Grand Rapids City High School, she was introduced to debate and forensics, which whetted her appetite for the study of law.

But by the time her brother, who was nine years her junior, reached school-age, enrichment opportunities often came with a price tag – and that meant some kids no longer had the opportunity to learn to play an instrument, participate in field trips or travel to debate tournaments.

“I watched some of the opportunities I had fall by the wayside as my three siblings made their way through school, because of funding issues,” recalled Madelaine, a 2000 graduate of City High, partner at Warner and board vice president of the Grand Rapids Student Advancement Foundation. “Yet kids who can’t afford to write the check still deserve the opportunity to go to drama class or voice lessons.

“I owe a lot to Grand Rapids Public Schools. When I think about what spurred me on to college and what helped me in law school, it was those types of experiences. Being on the board of the GRSAF is an opportunity to give back to a system that has given so much to me and my family by making sure everyone has access.”

Charles Ash agreed completely with Madelaine. The 1990 graduate of Creston High School had the chance to play football and baseball, participate in debate and student government, serving as president of his senior class. He pointed to “a lot of great teachers and coaches” who challenged him, wrote letters of recommendation and applauded when he was accepted to law school at Stanford University.

So when he was asked to join the GRSAF board six years ago, the answer was an immediate and unequivocal yes.

“What immediately struck me was the passion that the board has for the children of GRPS,” Charles, who serves as board president, explained. “Everything we do is for the children of GRPS – and no one is here to do anything other than good work for the kids.

Established in 1993, GRSAF is an independent nonprofit that serves as the strategic fundraising partner of GRPS, raising funds and other community resources to support the system for the benefit of its 17,000+ students.

Last year, the GRSAF had a more than $1.9 million philanthropic impact on GRPS, which went on to support math and science, environment, physical education sports, literacy and the arts. Funds were raised at the organization’s signature event, MindShare, each April, its Foundation for the Future lunch, each October, and through regular ongoing gifts, both large and small.

Funds raised were used to buy books to update libraries, purchase art supplies and musical instruments, send buses of students to performances at Civic Theatre and the Grand Rapids Symphony, pay sports fees and buy uniforms, purchase calculators for students taking the SAT – the list goes on and on.

“Our students, schools and the district as a whole are so very fortunate to have the Grand Rapids Student Advancement Foundation as our exclusive fundraising partner,” said Superintendent of Schools Teresa Weatherall Neal. “The reality is state and federal funding for high poverty, high needs students is inadequate, it’s inequitable, and we need to seek additional resources to ensure our students reach their greatest potential.

“It is particularly important to us that we have GRPS alumni engaged with the Student Advancement Foundation because they know firsthand the need and the remarkable potential that lies in each and every one of our students.”

Charles and Madelaine are two of the first GRPS alumni to serve on the board of GRSAF. The idea of tapping alums has proven so successful the effort has expanded to include parents and teachers. These connections with students and the classroom are just as critical as raising funds.

“We’re providing the tools necessary for the classroom, but the experiences – those are the colors that help broaden kids’ imaginations and lives,” Madelaine shared. “We’re giving kids the opportunity to experience the broader world around them.”

Charles agreed, noting: “I like to talk with people I meet in the business community and say, ‘This is your future. Think of your investment in the Foundation as an investment in your business. Our community is only as strong as its children.’ ”
Warner Partner Charles Ash Jr. excelled during his youth as a student, athlete and leader while in the Grand Rapids Public Schools. So naturally, he jumped at the chance to lead the Grand Rapids Student Advancement Foundation as board president. He is passionate about ensuring students today have every opportunity to succeed.

Warner Partner Madelaine Lane, a graduate of Grand Rapids City High, knows that her involvement in extracurricular activities beyond the classroom is part of what made her who she is today. Her passion is ensuring every student has access to experiences regardless of their ability to write a check.
What is your personal brand and how did you arrive at it? Describe a project or situation that best demonstrates your analytical abilities. How do you see your job relating to the overall goals of our organization? Tell us about a difficult experience you’ve had working with details.
Attorneys who applied for a position with Warner in the last year were asked these and other similar questions as part of the firm’s move to behavioral-based interviews. This approach, which has been used to select staff for several years, was introduced in January to provide a better framework and process for recruiting lawyers, from summer associates to lateral partners.

Warner tapped global HR consulting firm Right Management to help us develop a framework for the new process. The consultant worked with attorneys to identify competencies essential to success—from teamwork and time management to customer orientation and analytical ability—then developed 10 questions to explore each competency.

Right Management then trained interviewers to both ask the questions and evaluate the responses, diving into determining what differentiated a good response from a great response. Warner then created an interview committee to screen potential attorney candidates who, along with members of the practice group, would meet and calibrate candidates before making a selection.

The results, according to Director of Recruiting and Professional Development Carin Ojala, have been exceptional.

“Our attorney interviews used to be very unstructured,” Carin explained. “We spent more time talking and less time learning about the candidate. Our process didn’t give lateral candidates the opportunity to see our culture, yet everyone identified our culture as what drew them to the firm.

“Behavioral-based interviews encourage us to ask candidates to tell stories about their experiences. This is an opportunity to get to know them a lot better and evaluate their competencies. We’re getting to competencies we never touched on before but are absolutely essential to success.”

Director of Human Resources Cheryl Coutchie concurred.

“Structuring questions that elicit action-based responses rather than your preferences, beliefs and values gives us better information to make decisions,” Cheryl noted. “Past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior, so asking the right behavioral-based questions will be more predictive of success.

“We’re also taking bias out of the interview process and identifying people who meet the needs of the position. It’s easier to have the conversation about who we should pick when you have the right words to frame the conversation around, rather than saying ‘I like’ or ‘I think I would work better with ...’ ”

Carin noted that unintended bias may creep into an interview when an attorney notes similarities in a candidate’s background and makes the leap to either positive or negative characterizations. Using behavior-based interviewing, though, means less reliance on the resume – and more about the experience, background and opportunities a candidate may have.

Improved retention is also an added benefit of behavior-based interviewing. Starting with the right job description that defines the role, then asking hiring managers what competencies are essential for success, allows for the right behavioral-based questions to be asked. And this process leads Warner to candidates who better fit the position and have a greater long-term chance of success.

“You don’t take the art out of the process, but you’re adding an element of science and objectivity in order to be able to level the playing field for a larger number of people in the applicant pool,” Cheryl said.
Welcoming a Remarkable New Class of Associates

Each fall, Warner welcomes a new class of associates, most of whom participated in Warner’s Summer Associate Program while in law school. The summer associates get a taste for what firm life could be like and have the opportunity to tackle interesting projects across diverse practice areas, attend events and work alongside Warner attorneys from multiple offices. During the Summer Program, law students gain an appreciation for the firm’s sophisticated practice and its healthy work-life balance that offers an alternative to the typical large firm experience.

“As a summer and now a first-year associate, I’ve received a wide-range of projects from partners in areas I didn’t even realize I had an interest in. It made me feel appreciated that Warner cares about helping me find the practice area that is best for me, rather than automatically slotting me into a practice group like many firms do,” shared Kaitlin Sheets, a graduate of Denison University and the Maurer School of Law at Indiana University.

Sarah Harper interned with Warner after her first year at the University of Michigan Law School and another firm after her second year. She chose Warner because the firm cared about her as an individual.

“Warner has provided me with the perfect mix of challenging and interesting work – and I can have a full life outside of work. The partners and other associates respect me, my time and treat me like a valued team member. I appreciate that they invest their own time in my professional development.”

Ojone Ameadaji’s experience as a summer associate helped cement her decision: “My first summer at Warner was a pleasant surprise. I wasn’t quite sure what to expect.” Ojone, who is a graduate of Calvin College and the University of Iowa Law School opted to spend both summers while in law school at Warner. Now a first-year associate, Ojone attributes much of her success to her mentor: “The firm assigned an official mentor, Ryan Grondzik, to me on my first day as an associate. His commitment to my success at Warner and in the legal field has been a wonderful source of encouragement to me. What really surprises me is the growing number of ‘unofficial mentors’ who are not only willing to help me navigate this new field, but actively volunteer their time and resources to invest in my growth—I am not walking this journey alone.”

The experience that the 2018 Associate Class has had is not unusual. However, something is different about this class – all eight 2018 Associate Class members are women. “This kind of took us by surprise,” said Carin Ojala, Warner’s Director of Recruiting and Professional Development. “We make our associate offers to the most capable and talented candidates without regard to race or gender. This year, eight bright and conscientious women accepted offers with us, and we couldn’t be more thrilled.”
New Hires (left to right):
Ewelina Sawicka | Southfield
Alex Chitwood | Grand Rapids
Ojone Ameadaji | Grand Rapids
Kaitlin Sheets | Grand Rapids
Sarah Harper | Grand Rapids
Nicole Samuel | Grand Rapids
Nina Lucido | Macomb County
Not Pictured:
Brianna Richardson | Grand Rapids
Lisa Zimmer can see her high school from the 27th-story windows of Warner’s office in Southfield – but it took 27 years for the benefits attorney to finally “come home.”

After graduating from Southfield High School in 1981, Lisa enrolled at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor with no real thoughts of a career path – only getting a good job after graduation. So, in her sophomore year, she applied to and was accepted into the business school.

With her first job after graduation, Lisa discovered the field of human resources – and found her niche. She was particularly intrigued by the ever-changing nature of employee benefits and the numerous challenges associated with them.

“With benefits, the rules are constantly changing, so you always have to learn something new,” Lisa shared.

After working in Michigan for a year, she moved to metropolitan Washington, D.C., where she worked for a trade association, a drug store chain in Virginia and an insurance company in Maryland, continually building her resume in employee benefits.

For one of her employers, she created the process for implementing the newly issued COBRA regulations. When the company fired an employee for threatening a supervisor, Lisa was faced with the question of whether or not the employee qualified for COBRA.

“I had read the new regulations and got into a debate with my manager,” Lisa recalled. “She sent me upstairs to talk with an attorney in our legal department. I laid out my case to the attorney. He thought a minute before saying, ‘yes, that makes sense to me.’

“As I was walking back to my cubical, I started thinking about our interaction. I had done all the research and was the one who came up with the answer, yet he was the one in the office. Hmm! I thought to myself, if he can do that, so can I.”

Shortly thereafter, Lisa returned to Michigan and enrolled at Wayne State University Law School, with the specific goal of becoming a benefits attorney. Unlike her peers, she knew exactly what type of law she wanted to practice from the very beginning, selecting a practice area none of them had ever heard of before (ERISA – what’s that?).

During her third year of law school, Lisa got permission to take an employee benefits class offered in the Master of Laws program. She was hooked – she loved the complexity and the analysis that employee benefits law required.

She worked with a couple of well-respected Detroit law firms before she got the opportunity to join Honigman, where she spent 10 years honing her benefits skills, working on retirement plans, welfare plans, executive compensation and other matters. It was at Honigman that Lisa began to work with Mary Jo Larson. Lisa loved Honigman’s team approach to its employee benefits practice, sharing clients and files and working collaboratively.

Over time, Lisa and Mary Jo recognized they needed to make a change if they were to expand and enhance the team-based approach of their employee benefits practice. They both knew and admired Warner benefits attorneys George Whitfield and Tony Kolenic and, in 2008, the duo, along with Jennifer Watkins, joined Warner, transitioning their benefits practice to Southfield.

“Warner was the perfect fit for how we practice law,” Lisa explained. “We could practice as a group. With Warner’s lock-step compensation model, we didn’t have to worry about origination credits anymore – we could focus on our clients and what we liked about practicing law. We knew our practice was valuable and Warner agreed. It was a whole different feeling.”

When new lateral attorneys join the Southfield office, she tries to make their transition a bit easier by sharing her experience with and knowledge about Warner. She knows moving to a new firm can be stressful but does her best to reassure them that they made the right choice.

In addition to her work at the firm, Lisa was recently elected to the board of the Automotive Women’s Alliance Foundation as vice president and general counsel. AWAF is a nonprofit dedicated to the advancement of women in the automotive industry and to raising funds to award scholarships for women seeking to enter the automotive industry or advance their automotive careers.

She also serves on the Local Agency Planning Division of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. The division has full responsibility for allocating dollars to all local social service agencies and congregational schools, providing oversight to ensure fiscal responsibility and effective use of funds.

“I appreciate the opportunity to contribute – to build our firm and our community,” Zimmer said. “Being at Warner truly is like ‘coming home’ in many ways.”
Indianapolis practicing labor and

After college, James spent two years in grassroots community service projects. "That carried over into my practice. I jumped right in and got very engaged on a number of community service and the law.

He was hooked.

"I knew then I was going to pursue a career in law," recalled James, who joined Warner in the fall of 2018. "I loved the advocacy – being a voice for people, organizations and entities who need help."

"My mantra is to help people who help people. If I can help people and organizations whose mission and goals are to help others, that exponentially magnifies my impact."

That passion motivated James through an undergraduate degree in political science at the University of Michigan and then a law degree at Michigan State University College of Law. During his first year in East Lansing, James focused on his studies. He got great grades, but was pretty miserable.

"I realized I needed to be a resource for the community," James recalled. "A fundamental part of me wants to give back so I got really active in social awareness, community services and other extracurriculars. I became more balanced and was excited to get involved.

"That carried over into my practice. I jumped right in and got very engaged on a number of grassroots community service projects."

After college, James spent two years in Indianapolis practicing labor and employment law before returning home to marry his college sweetheart, Jyllian Cunningham. He jokes theirs was a "match made in heaven," although four years her senior. The parishioners in their church encouraged the pair as James was wrapping up his studies in Ann Arbor and Jyllian was beginning hers at Western Michigan University.

The newlyweds moved to Jackson where James took a job with Consumers Energy as a litigator – and found his true career passion. Working for the utility company, he cut his teeth on litigation – leading his first trial, running his own docket and diving into a broad range of topics.

When the couple was pregnant with their first child, the pull of home began to call – and Miller Canfield recruited James back to Kalamazoo. Over the past decade, James has focused on construction litigation, property disputes, real estate concerns and business contractual issues, as well as criminal cases and emergency manager matters.

James also dove into community projects, joining boards of causes that spoke to him, networking with other business leaders and reconnecting to his community.

"It’s funny how when you’re doing what you’re passionate about, it has a way of fulfilling and energizing you," James recalled. "When you are genuine and your goal is to do the best you can, that resonates with people. People want to do business with people they trust.

"I can be passionate about my community work and it can be good for my career, too? That’s an epiphany I had eight or so years ago – and I haven’t looked back since."

It’s that same passion that attracted James to the firm. In talking with attorneys and employees, he felt Warner "truly desires to be a resource to the community."

The fact that this organization does a lot more doing and a lot less talking about it, that turned my head," he called. "At its core, I see a true desire to do good – and make a profit at the end of the day, although that’s not the overriding lens through which decisions are made.

"Warner is very focused on growing its profile in Kalamazoo and doing so in a grassroots way that allows the community to see how authentic it is. There’s a lot of energy and genuine-ness about being in this community – and I’m all in."

James is winding down his tenure as capital campaign chair for United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region, but looking to remain on the board and move into a greater leadership role. He also serves on the board of Bronson Healthcare Group, a health system that serves a nine-county region with a population of more than one million.

James serves on the board of the Harold and Grace Upjohn Foundation, helping to guide funding decisions that support the community. And James still has a soft spot in his heart for the Douglas Community Association, which he chaired in 2013. This social service organization provides health, behavioral and recreational programs for underserved families and children on the north side of Kalamazoo.

The transition to Warner has brought James full circle – perhaps nearest and dearest to his heart is the opportunity to serve as coordinator of the entire high school mock trial program in Michigan. Working with others in the state, he’s helped land the rights for Michigan to host its first-ever national high school mock trial tournament in 2021 – right here in Kalamazoo.

"It’s the gift that keeps on giving," he smiled. "It gave to me in the beginning, now it allows me to give back. I love the idea that others have the same – or greater – opportunities to learn and experience what I have experienced."
Roquia Draper

Born in the United Arab Emirates and raised with five siblings in Jordan, Roquia Draper journeyed to the United States at the age of six to settle in Michigan, with little understanding of how her life would drastically change. “While not thrilled at the thought of leaving my life and extended family in Jordan, looking back on my family’s decision to immigrate to the United States,” Roquia reflected, “it is without a doubt the best thing that could have ever happened to me and my siblings.”

Decades after immigrating, Roquia values her family’s strong cultural ties, but has found a way to carve her own unique path in life. She actively takes the best of both worlds—the values of her United States home combined with the cultural ties and heritage of her birth home—which has given her an exceptional perspective on life. When she started school in the United States as a second grader, Roquia was afraid to speak up because she did not speak English. She quickly grasped the language and became a social butterfly by the end of the school year. She recalled fondly the trouble she got into for talking to her classmates during class: “I was so excited to talk to everyone! It was difficult for me to hold back.” Roquia attributes her mastery of the English language as the catalyst to her passion for academia.

Roquia credits her success partly to her mother’s personal sacrifice, and to the hard work ethic she learned from her father. At a young age, Roquia witnessed her mother sacrifice her own pursuits for her family, for which Roquia is grateful. “My mother is one of the smartest women I know. I listen to and learn from her—her sacrifice helped fuel my desire to continue my education and become an attorney,” Roquia shared.

Roquia’s path was unconventional, but she is grateful for the real world legal experience she had prior to attending law school. Upon graduating from Wayne State University with a psychology honors major, Roquia thought she wanted to be a clinical therapist. Instead, she took a job as a legal assistant, a career that lasted over seven years. She was exposed to numerous exciting and high-profile cases, one of which involved a major whistleblower case in Detroit. Based on her real-world experience, she was confident that she had found her calling.

With her three-year-old son in tow, Roquia took the LSAT and was accepted into Wayne State University Law School with a full ride scholarship. When Roquia is asked how she accomplished success in law school while raising a young child, she responds “I took it one day at a time.” After her summer at Warner, she graduated with a J.D., magna cum laude, in 2011 and began her legal career with Warner as a new associate attorney that same year. “I chose Warner because the attorneys and staff are exceptional, and the colleagues are sincerely interested in your success here. Your success becomes their mission,” Roquia said. Roquia credits much of her success at Warner to having great mentors in both a formal and informal capacity. “My mentor at Warner, Nazli Sater, has been my champion since day one. I could not have achieved the success I have at Warner without her promoting and including me in every opportunity she had.” Roquia looks forward to providing that same vital service to younger associates at Warner.

Roquia has built a significant legal practice around family law where she helps resolve complex disputes in divorces. Her practice impacts the lives of clients during one of the most difficult transitions in their lives. In addition to her courtroom advocacy, she seeks alternative resolutions where clients can feel the influence of her advocacy, but in a less emotional and disruptive way. “I empower clients to be an informed participant in the resolution of their divorce. This is your life. If you have a problem, there is always a solution. My goal is for you to be a part of this process that affects your life,” said Roquia about her practice.

Being solution-focused has earned her the trust of many clients and a new role as a partner at Warner. Roquia, along with three other associates, was voted into partnership as of January 1, 2019.

Reflecting on her practice, Roquia is proud of her accomplishments. However, she is most proud of raising her now 14-year-old son to be a conscientious, intelligent, hard-working individual who values helping people. “He sees that I am helping kids like him and families like ours. He understands when I get a phone call during dinner, that people need my guidance to get through difficult situations. It’s good for him to see the positive impact I’ve made in their lives. This has helped me be a better mother and role model for my son,” said Roquia.
“Catholic, tough, funny, motivator” – these are words Ryan used to describe his mother who, along with his grandparents, raised him in Saginaw, Michigan. He fondly remembered his childhood in the industrial small town he called home. His mother was an administrative assistant for the Saginaw Public School system. “My mom was my biggest inspiration and still is to this day,” Ryan shared. “She likes to make up funny Irish sayings like, ‘boil things to babby rags,’ which I never entirely understand. But she’s always in my corner, and I think the point is to not take oneself too seriously,” said Ryan, who takes his mom’s perspective to heart.

Academics always came easy for Ryan in high school, as he breezed his way through with little studying. College proved to be a little more tumultuous, however. After two years at Michigan State studying English, Ryan left to work at Kmart in its freight department. Taking time off from college allowed Ryan time to regroup and to set a new course for his life. After three years at Kmart, Ryan was ready to go back to college with his sights set on a two-year degree from Delta College to pursue a career as a corrections officer. He is grateful that a professor convinced him to attend Saginaw Valley State University and pursue a four-year degree instead. He initially had an interest in social work, but ultimately majored in economics and graduated from Saginaw Valley State University, magna cum laude, in 2008.

Ryan knew he wanted to help people. It became clear upon graduation that pursuing a career in law would allow him to do so. He enrolled at University of Michigan Law School shortly after graduating – right as the 2008 financial crisis came to life. The financial meltdown added an interesting element to how law firms and law schools interacted. Only a few law firms came to the University to interview law students for summer associate positions – a drastic decrease from years before. Luckily, Warner was one of those few firms, and Ryan found a home as a summer associate after his first and second years in law school. “I knew I wanted to work for Warner right away. It was a natural fit for me—exciting work, outstanding colleagues, and a great legal market to practice in. It just made sense,” shared Ryan.

Ryan admitted that after he received his first paycheck as an associate, he saw his career in a whole new light. “I realized that I could help people and also get paid pretty well to do so. This meant that the harder I worked, the more options I had available to me,” said Ryan. He credits his mentor, Andrea Bernard, for getting his start in employment litigation. At Warner, associates have the opportunity to try many different practice areas from a “job jar” to determine what area of law they prefer – combined with Warner’s mentor program, this was the perfect fit for Ryan.

Ryan’s persistence paid off, as he has become an integral member of Warner’s Employment Litigation and Criminal Defense Practice Groups, and was recently voted into partnership at Warner – a promotion that took effect January 1, 2019. “They are both dramatic practice areas with interesting facts and situations. I really like the human element of the cases and helping people through challenging times,” shared Ryan. “Every day is new and exciting and that keeps me very engaged.” Ryan loves figuring out how to win. He’s a problem solver and he knows what his role is in each case. In five years, Ryan would like to be a member of the Criminal Justice Act Panel and expand his practice into the Kalamazoo community. Ryan is also a member of the recruiting committee at Warner and enjoys being a champion for underdog employment candidates – something he plans to continue for years to come.
Celebrating a Year of Success

2018 proved to be a year of great accomplishment. Here is a snapshot of some of the noteworthy honors and awards for our diverse attorneys.

Malachi Alston | Selected for Leadership Detroit Class XL
Peter Kulas-Dominguez | Appointed Chair-elect of the State Bar of Michigan LGBTQA Section and Co-chair of the Court Rules Committee for the State Bar of Michigan Family Law Section
Peter Kulas-Dominguez | Recognized as an Outstanding Young Attorney by Grand Rapids Bar Association, 3 in 10 Award
Sara Eastman | Elected President of Midland County Bar Association
Amanda Fielder | Named to Grand Rapids Business Journal’s 40 Under 40
Dawn Garcia Ward | Named to Top 50 Latinas of Michigan
Susan Gell Meyers | Recognized by Chambers High Net Worth Guide for Excellence in Private Wealth Law
Laura Morris | Selected for Leadership Grand Rapids 2018 Class
Sara Nicholson | Selected for Leadership Kalamazoo 2018 Class
Linda Paullin-Hebden | Recognized as Top Women Lawyers by Michigan Super Lawyers Magazine
Linda Paullin-Hebden | Named to Crain’s Detroit Business “Notable Women Lawyers” List
Jennifer Remondino | Named to Grand Rapids Business Journal’s 40 Under 40
Jennifer Remondino | Recognized as Top Women Lawyers by Michigan Super Lawyers Magazine
Jennifer Remondino | Honored by Michigan Lawyers Weekly as 2018 Leading “Women in the Law”
Jennifer Remondino | Named Treasurer of Lakeshore Advantage
Corinne Sprague | Named as Up & Coming Lawyer by Michigan Lawyers Weekly
Lisa Zimmer | Appointed to Automotive Women’s Alliance Foundation Board
Here's a look at where we are today. We are proud of where we are, but we will never stop trying to do better.