

2011

Diversity & Inclusion
Annual Report





Leading by Doing

Managing Partner's Letter

Douglas E. Wagner

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To our colleagues, clients and community friends:

Leadership comes in many styles and forms. It does not always come easily to attorneys. Most often, our job is to be cautious – to tell clients to take it slow and point out the pitfalls inherent in the great, new idea.

At Warner Norcross, we strive to overcome this natural predilection. We want to be the best law firm that we can be – and we want to be recognized as the best law firm in the State

of Michigan. To achieve this goal, we need to make good, wise choices. When I see other law firms adopting initiatives that we have developed, I know we are on the right track because they are looking to us as leaders.

To reach our goals, it is imperative that we as a Firm become more diverse and inclusive. We have focused time, effort and resources to attract and retain women and minorities, making sure they receive challenging assignments that allow them to advance in their careers and become partners. We demand respect, teamwork and professionalism to ensure that everyone feels welcomed and valued.

While our diversity and inclusion efforts are – and will be – a work in progress, we have been recognized by our peers in the community and other businesses throughout Michigan as an emerging leader in this field. Much of that is due to the fine work of Rodney Martin, who has served as the Firm’s Diversity Partner for the last six years.

You will read more about Rodney on page 12, but let me say that I constantly receive positive feedback from people in the community and in the Bar with regard to Rodney’s efforts. He’s been innovative, tireless and patient, and while we are not satisfied with our progress, our Firm has made great strides.

We are proud of that, just as we are proud of Rodney and the other Firm leaders who will be profiled on the following pages of our 6th Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report.

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion

Warner Norcross took a lead role in the past year establishing new programs and enhancing existing programs to promote diversity and inclusion. Perhaps the one that will have the greatest long-term impact on the legal community is the Managing Partners Diversity Collaborative Agreement.

Signed in June 2011, this is a formal commitment between Warner Norcross, 11 other major law firms in Grand Rapids and the Grand Rapids Bar Association to “work together to promote and achieve diversity and inclusion in the West Michigan legal community through education, hiring, retention and promotion.” Through Rodney’s efforts, our Firm has been instrumental in developing this collaborative, which is the first effort of its kind in the state. Its five-year plan will focus on three initiatives: filling the pipeline (which we discussed in last year’s annual report), recruiting and retention.

I serve in the Collaborative’s recruiting working group, which met repeatedly throughout the fall to develop a plan to attract diverse attorney candidates to our region. What has become clear to me is that we not only have to sell our Firm to prospective job candidates, area law firms need to coordinate their efforts to promote the city as a place to live and work. We can do more collectively than we

can individually. It will help all of our law firms – and our entire community – if the Bar Association can become more diverse.

Warner Norcross has improved in its retention of attorneys of color. Since 2006 our average attrition rate among associates of color has fallen by a third and the average tenure of our minority associates has tripled. These are signs that our efforts to improve retention are paying off. Notwithstanding these gains, we recognize the need to improve our efforts to ensure new hires have the tools they need – and an environment they enjoy – to build a successful, lifetime career in serving our clients.

We continue to provide scholarship support for students who want to pursue a career in the law. To date, we have given more than \$110,000 to support study programs for the law school entrance exam and to defray tuition expenses for students studying to become a paralegal or attorney. These programs enhance the possibility that a talented person will become a lawyer and give greater consideration to Warner Norcross as a career destination.

Our financial support goes beyond scholarships. For the fourth consecutive year, we sponsored and fielded teams in the Grand Race Road Rally, a program created for Warner by the Public Museum of Grand Rapids. Modeled after “The Amazing Race,” the Grand Race Road Rally challenges teams to follow clues to locations around the community that highlight the diversity of our ethnic history.

This year, multiple teams from three area businesses – Priority Health, Irwin Seating and Spectrum Health – joined the fun. We are also pleased that the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce has used our rally as a model for a new program it is offering in the community.

Warner Norcross is a leader in the effort to change the face of those practicing law to include more women and minorities. We are committed to preparing women and attorneys of color to be leaders in the Firm and in the communities where we live and work. In the following pages, you will have the chance to read more about our attorney-leaders and the great things they are doing for the Firm – and for Michigan.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Wagner", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Douglas E. Wagner, *Managing Partner*

Women Fill Key Leadership Roles

For some, this is the first formal leadership role they have held at the Firm. For others, this is one in a series of increasingly challenging responsibilities tackled during a long career.

Each works to balance these often demanding non-billable roles with managing her own law practice, mentoring young associates and juggling demands of children and family.

And each of the women we talked with among the leaders at Warner Norcross relishes her current leadership opportunity – and looks forward to more in the future.

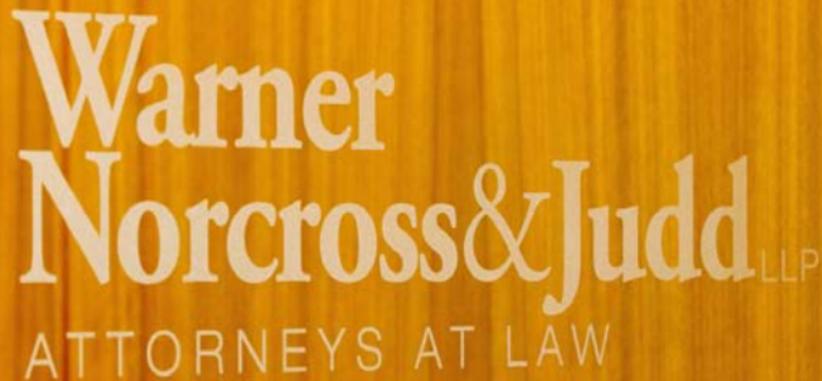
Andrea J. Bernard

Current leadership position: Associate General Counsel, representing Warner Norcross attorneys and staff as the firm's lawyer, working on legal matters in which the firm is an interested party

Additional roles: Member of the Management Committee, Professional Staff Committee, Nomination and Evaluation Committee and mentor

"You have to approach leadership from the perspective that you are there to serve. The best leaders have a mindset of service. I try to treat my internal clients in the same way that I do my external clients. Anyone embroiled in a legal matter can find it all consuming. It's easy to lose perspective. Sometimes the best thing we do as lawyers is to say, 'Give that to me. I'll take care of it for you.' I try to do that for my colleagues as well."





Melissa N. Collar

Current leadership position: Chair, Real Estate Service Group

Additional roles: Member of the Recruiting Committee, Nomination and Evaluation Committee and mentor

"Good leaders have to be great listeners, excellent communicators and well organized. As chair of the Real Estate Service Group, my role is to inspire people to do their best, encourage them to develop business and allow them to be the best attorney they can be. I try to be supportive, build consensus and provide our attorneys and paralegals with the right tools to develop a great practice. The key is to encourage creative thinking that ultimately contributes to the strategic vision of our practice group and the Firm."

Sarah Riley Howard

Current leadership position: Chair, White Collar Criminal Defense and Compliance Group

Additional roles: Mentor

"Warner let me start the White Collar Criminal Defense Group when I was still an associate. My biggest challenge in launching and then growing this practice was to

explain to my own colleagues the business reason for doing criminal defense work and why clients would benefit. Indeed, most people consider themselves and their companies as law-abiding, so they didn't understand why they might need criminal defense. I look at it this way: Nobody ever plans to get a cavity, but sometimes you need a dentist. The great thing about Warner is that the Firm was willing to make the investment to see if I could make a go of it and develop a profitable and appropriate practice – which I have done."

Susie G. Meyers

Current leadership role: Chair, Trusts & Estates Group

Additional roles: Member of the Management Committee, Professional Staff Committee, Recruiting Committee and mentor

"The work the Trusts & Estates Group does is very personal, and the way we get our clients is very different from other practice groups. This presents internal leadership challenges that are different from other practice groups. As practice group chair, one of the biggest issues I have faced is figuring out how to challenge members of our practice group to be the best they can be so that our practice is at the absolute highest level it can be. We have a larger practice group – 19 attorneys and seven

paralegals – and I strive for us to develop policies together as a group. I prefer a leadership style that is very collaborative."

Linda Paullin-Hebden

Current leadership roles: Management Committee, Chair of the Women's Business Enterprise Group, Co-Chair of the Venture Capital Group

Additional roles: Member of the Professional Staff Committee and mentor

"One of the biggest challenges I have faced is to grow our business in the current economy, and to do that in a way that preserves the culture of the Firm. Warner is very collegial, and the partners are very supportive of one another. It is embedded in our culture that everyone is working together for the same goal. Any time you take on a leadership role in the Firm, it can take away from billable time. But it is some of the most important time you can spend to assure the continued growth of the Firm – to ensure that what we are doing today is not just for today, but for the future."

Nazli Sater knew she was destined to be a lawyer from the time she was a toddler.

Her physician father, who moved the family to the United States from Egypt when Nazli was 2, gave his eldest daughter two career paths: Medical school or law school.

“Try being the first generation immigrant daughter of someone who is motivated,” Nazli joked. “Being a professional was ingrained. I always knew I wanted to be a lawyer.”

And more than 25 years later, she is still practicing – and loving – the law. Nazli joined Warner Norcross after more than two decades of working for her friend and mentor, Leonard Hyman, at a boutique law firm in Oakland County. She had developed a thriving practice in family law, intrigued by helping clients sort through the “overlapping puzzle pieces” of finance and emotion that divorce inevitably brings.

Nazli occasionally found herself on opposite sides of cases from Ric Roane (see story on next page), the Family Law Practice Group chair of Warner Norcross. The consummate salesman, Ric began to talk with Nazli about opportunities to grow

her practice by joining one of the largest law firms in the state. Nazli was initially intrigued – and then convinced.

She made the move to Warner Norcross in early 2011 – a self-described “big year,” in which she also turned 50 and married again. Nazli enjoys the “great energy” of the Firm and the initiatives such as “One Book, One Firm” that bring her partners together. In fact, she was so taken by one of the books on the Firm’s reading list this year that she bought multiple copies of “Choosing Civility” to share with clients and friends – and an extra one to leave in her family room, hoping her two daughters might pick it up and browse.

“I love the idea of the ‘One Book’ club,” she said. “It’s very cool when you have partners who like one another and want to do things together, above and beyond work. These kinds of ‘extra’ programs that the Firm does underscore what is so wonderful about Warner.”

Nazli has already found a book she’d like to see on the 2012 reading list: “The Power of We: Succeeding through Partnerships.”

Enhancing the Seating Chart

Ric Roane used to worry that he would wreck the seating chart at law firm functions.

As Warner's first openly gay partner, he broke a significant barrier when he joined the Firm in 2008. After all, as a single, middle-aged white man, Ric looks like a member of the majority – even though he perceives himself as a member of an “invisible minority.”

He admits being hesitant to join at first, wondering how he would be treated as an out gay man at one of West Michigan's “silk-stocking” law firms. After all, he had spent more than 20 years building a successful family law practice in the community. One of the first topics he broached with the Management Committee was how well he would be accepted.

“We don't tolerate discrimination,” Ric recalled Managing Partner Doug Wagner telling him during an interview. “He was very adamant that Warner Norcross had an environment of acceptance and was a place where hostility or ill treatment toward someone who was gay would not be tolerated. I had to take a leap of faith that what he was telling me truly was an ingrained part of the Firm's culture.

“I have not had one day when I felt discriminated against or slighted. Instead, I gained 220 new friends. Joining the Firm has enhanced my professional and personal life. I am proud to be a leader here.”

Today, Ric leads the Firm's growing Family Law Practice Group, which has three partners and six associates in two offices. He also serves as president elect of the Michigan Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and as a delegate to the organization's national board of governors.

He serves on the board of the Legal Assistance Center and recently shepherded the publication of *Michigan Family Law, 7th Edition*, as an author and co-editor. His life partner, an attorney and a professor in the area, actively supports Ric's numerous roles in the Firm and the community.

“My role really exemplifies Warner's commitment to diversity,” Ric explained. “I am a senior partner and a practice group chair, which really speaks to the fact that what we say on paper is what we do. I feel safe here. As a gay man, you don't always feel safe everywhere. I am proud to be part of this organization and how we relate to people.”



Leading through Volunteering

Marcus Jones simply didn't know any other way.

After moving from Ann Arbor to East Lansing and then to join the Grand Rapids office of Warner Norcross in 2007, he began seeking out ways to connect through community organizations. Early volunteering led to leadership opportunities, and Marcus now serves on the board of the Boys and Girls Club of Grand Rapids and as general counsel of Business Leaders Linked to Encourage New Directions, or BL²END.

"Community involvement is incredibly important. I wouldn't know any other way to do it – and my grandfather would kill me otherwise," Marcus joked. "If it has to do with helping underprivileged children or professional development, I'm there."

His involvement began in the relatively early days of BL²END, a networking organization that helps young professionals of color connect with each other, develop professionally and contribute to the local community. After attending a few mixers, Marcus found himself helping the organization with its general organizational legal needs and assisting through the process of attaining its 501(c)(7) as a non-profit corporation.

He was surprised when more than 700 professionals packed the ballroom at DeVos Place to celebrate BL²END's 5th anniversary in 2011. From a small start-up, BL²END had blossomed into an organization committed to engaging and retaining young professionals of color in the greater Grand Rapids area, which promotes the sustainability and diversity of leadership.

"BL²END serves a tremendous role in our business community," said Marcus, who practices corporate and international law. "It's a great way to get to know people from different industries, backgrounds and organizations whom I might otherwise not have the opportunity to meet. It's also a great way to develop leadership skills."



A New Generation of Leaders

Charles Ash did it because of his interest in the business side of the practice of law. Nazli Sater did it as a way to connect with her community. Heidi Lyon did it based on the recommendation of others.

All three Warner Norcross partners were accepted to programs during the past year that were designed to enhance their leadership skills. They are three of the more than 45 attorneys and staff at the Firm who will have graduated from leadership development programs held from Muskegon to Macomb County.

Charles, who was also profiled in our 2009 DIAR, said that Leadership West Michigan broadened his perspective by introducing him to a great mix of people from government, non-profit organizations and for-profit businesses. Sessions on education, healthcare, local government and economic development were “eye-opening” and helped Charles to better understand the interconnectedness among Warner Norcross, the myriad of other organizations in West Michigan and the community.

“We have inherited a vibrant community for business, and now it’s our turn,” said Charles, a native of Grand Rapids who returned to practice business litigation after law school. “For the challenges ahead of us, we absolutely need to cultivate leaders who inspire others to action. Leadership West Michigan does just that.”

Nazli (profiled on page 8) characterized Leadership Oakland as a “great experience”

that allowed her to gain a keener understanding of issues from education to healthcare to the justice system and the impact they have on the community.

“It was a tremendous opportunity to network with other business and community leaders,” said Nazli, who concentrates her practice in family law. “Although I have lived in Southeast Michigan for many years, I was able to see my community through different eyes – and see its various pieces in a larger context.”

Heidi said that the Inforum West Michigan Executive Leadership Program allowed her to explore various styles of leadership in a business context and understand when one style might be more advantageous to use. Inforum is a professional women’s alliance that works to empower women to lead and succeed. Heidi now views leadership not necessarily as inherent, but as a skill that can be acquired and honed.

“Technical skill and excellence are the foundation for success, but how you relate to others is a differentiating factor that makes you a great leader,” explained Heidi, who focuses her practice on employee benefits. “Empathy is a critical skill. I don’t know how you can lead an individual unless you have an understanding of what might motivate that individual, which is often quite different from what motivates you as a leader.”



Care to Dance?

When Rodney Martin was in high school, it wasn't called diversity – it was called human relations.

Rodney attended Flint Northwestern High School during a time of much racial tension. In practical terms, none of the elementary schools in Flint was racially integrated, leaving students unprepared for the transition into junior high school. The school board allocated about \$35,000 – a large sum in those days – to provide human relations training to student leaders such as Rodney, who went into the elementary schools to lead exercises with the students to help them better understand what the move to a diverse school would be like.

“My experiences in high school were very important to me,” says Rodney. “I learned back then that little things can pile up over time until they reach the point of great tension. Today we would call them ‘microinequities.’ Back in high school it was things such as a poorly drafted newspaper headline or the way classmates could show disrespect that would simmer until they boiled over.”

Rodney saw that again when he became one of the first Warner attorneys to attend the Institute for Healing Racism. He explained an exercise called “unpacking the knapsack of white privilege,” where participants listened to simple statements

(such as “I can choose bandages in ‘flesh’ color and have them more or less match my skin color”) and took a step forward when one applied to them.

“At the end of the exercise, I found that I had a partner and a good client and friend, both of whom were African American, standing on the opposite side of the room from me,” Rodney said. “This divide had developed. It was a profound experience, and I wasn't prepared for it.”

He was also not prepared for the transition to Grand Rapids after law school. Growing up in a racially mixed community and then coming to a city that was predominantly white proved to be disconcerting. Rodney didn't hesitate when Managing Partner Doug Wagner asked him to become the Firm's Diversity Partner in 2006 – even though he was neither of color nor a woman. He started by creating a communications plan that has served as his road map.

“It was important in the Firm to hear diversity communicated – why are we doing this, what's the business case,” Rodney said. “The moral aspect of diversity has not always been a driving force in getting businesses to change. If people understand the

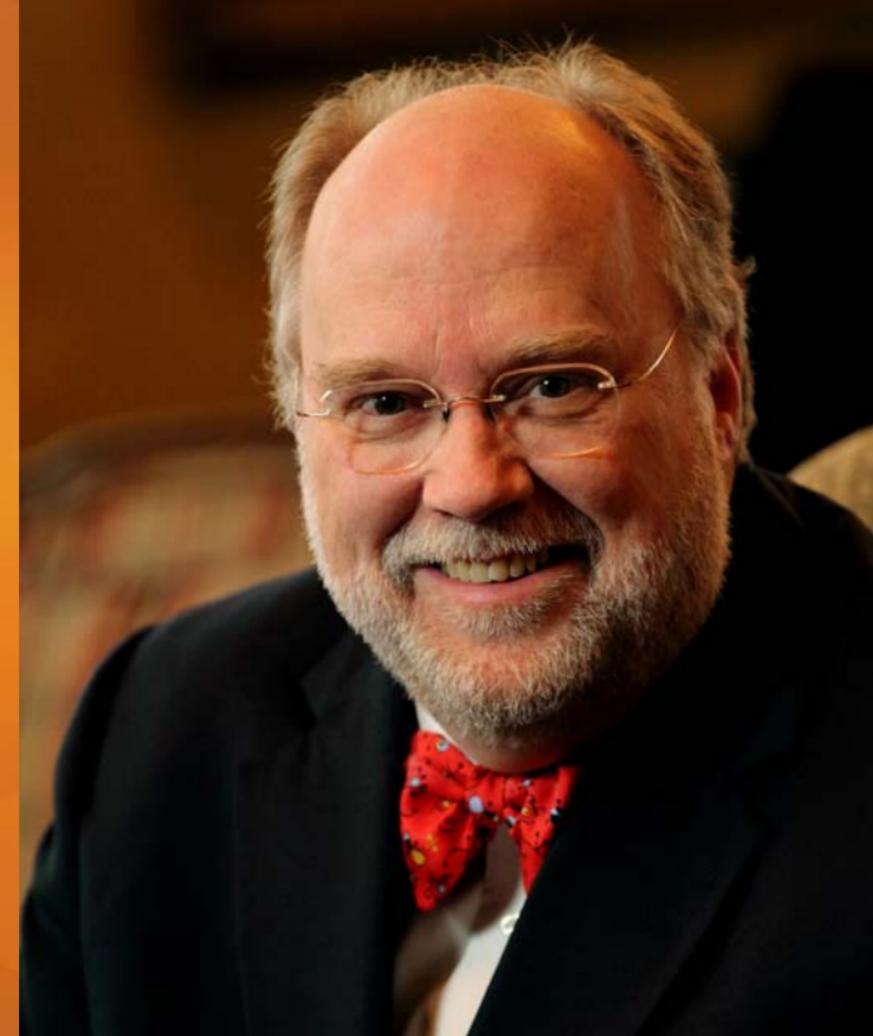
need for us to be a healthy organization, to be a diverse and inclusive organization, we don't have to talk politics or ethics – it all comes back to the good of the organization and the good of the people in the organization.”

In looking back over his tenure, Rodney has been pleased with many of the initiatives the Firm has started, especially the Managing Partner Diversity Collaborative with the Grand Rapids Bar Association and the LSAT Scholarship Program. In the past six years, the number of women partners at Warner Norcross has doubled. One partner of color retired, but the Firm now has four minority partners.

The conversation has shifted from diversity to diversity *and* inclusion. To Rodney, the distinction is critical.

“I think a lot of diversity programs get stuck in the kumbaya mode, doing lunch and learns and eating ethnic food,” he said. “While that’s important, there’s a big difference between talking about diversity and doing inclusion. As one of my favorite consultants, Vernā Myers explains: Diversity is being asked to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.

“If an organization doesn’t look at its internal structures, both formal and informal, and see what stops people from having fair opportunities, that organization will never get past counting the number of women and minorities it brings through the door. The kumbaya approach leads to a revolving door – you may be able to get people in, but you won’t be able to keep them if they don’t find any real opportunity or feel included in the organization.”



Demographic Profile as of December 31, 2011

Associates

Percent Female 45.1% Percent Minority 13.7%

Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
African American	0	2	2
Asian/Pac Islander	3	1	4
Hispanic	0	0	0
Middle Eastern/Arab American	1	0	1
White	19	25	44
Total	23	28	51

Partners

Percent Female 15.0% Percent Minority 3.5%

Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
African American	0	1	1
Asian/Pac Islander	0	1	1
Hispanic	0	0	0
Middle Eastern/Arab American	1	1	2
White	16	93	109
Total	17	96	113

Counsel & Senior Counsel

Percent Female 47.4% Percent Minority 15.8%

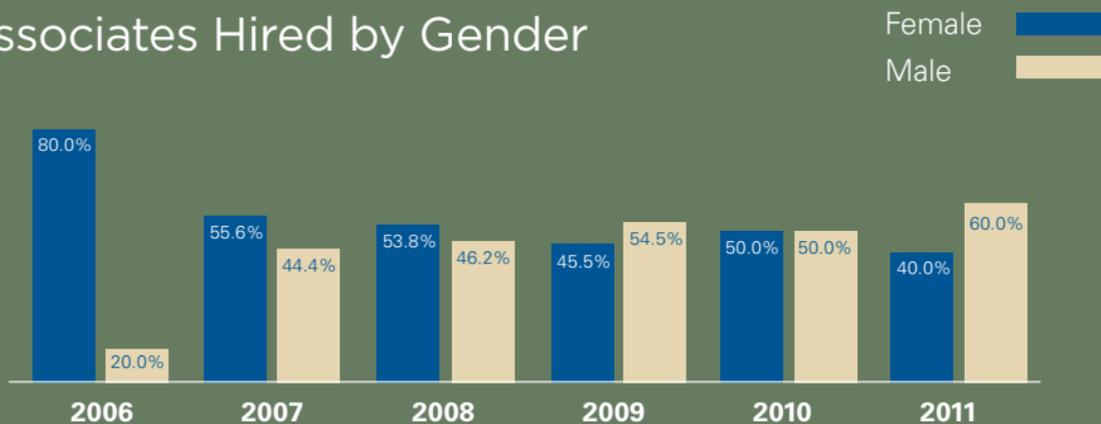
Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
African American	0	0	0
Asian/Pac Islander	0	0	0
Hispanic	1	0	1
Middle Eastern/Arab American	1	0	1
White	6	10	16
Total	9	10	19

All Active Attorneys

Percent Female 26.8% Percent Minority 7.7%

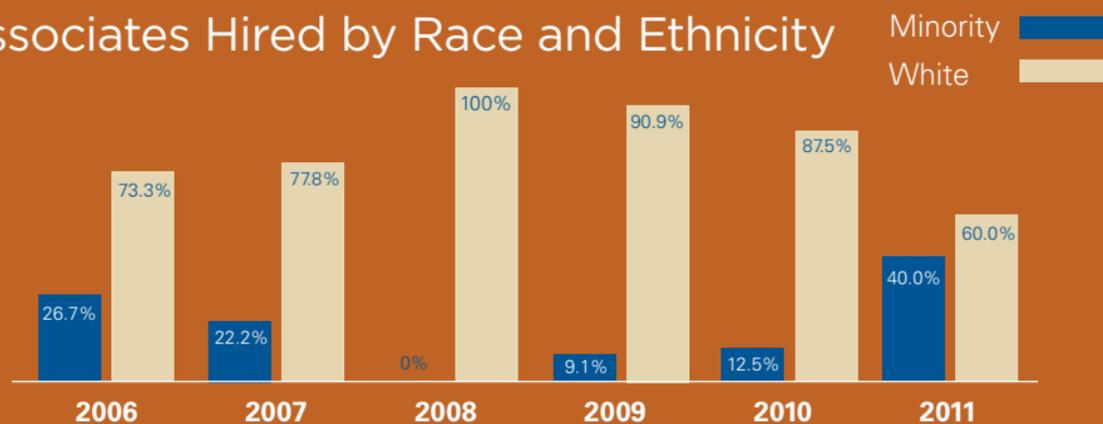
Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
African American	0	3	3
Asian/Pac Islander	3	2	5
Hispanic	2	0	2
Middle Eastern/Arab American	3	1	4
White	41	128	169
Total	49	134	183

Associates Hired by Gender



	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Female	12	10	7	5	4	2
Male	3	8	6	6	4	3
Total	15	18	13	11	8	5

Associates Hired by Race and Ethnicity



	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
African Am.	1	1	0	0	0	1
Asian/Pac Islander	1	2	0	1	1	0
Hispanic	1	1	0	0	0	0
Middle Eastern/Arab Am.	1	0	0	0	0	1
White	11	14	13	10	7	3
Total	15	18	13	11	8	5



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