

BLOG POST

Creating Tomorrow's Lawyers Today: The Houston Bar Association Minority Opportunities Boot Camp

April 18, 2019



On April 6, **Bracewell LLP** played host to the Houston Bar Association's [**Minority Opportunities in the Legal Profession Committee**](#) (MOILP) Boot Camp. The program offers law students advice and best practices from a diverse group of lawyers from across the area. For **Bracewell**, hosting the Boot Camp allows the firm to create a welcoming environment for participating students, as well as to support HBA's ongoing mission to build a diverse and inclusive local bar.

The 2019 Boot Camp opened with a legal writing presentation by Hao Le, general counsel of Texas Southern University. This was followed by a transactional presentation by Rafael Boza, regional lead counsel for the Americas at Sarens USA. These presentations set the stage for a panel discussion on interrelated issues of best practices, etiquette, networking, diversity and the minority experience. The panel was moderated by **Staci Wilson**, partner at **Bracewell** and co-chair of the MOILP Committee. Staci was joined by a group of panelists that included **Jeffery B. Vaden**, partner at **Bracewell**, and Brittney Mandarin, a second-year student at South Texas College of Law and a 2018 MOILP Law Clerk.

The MOILP Committee organizes and implements a summer clerkship program for first-year law students from the three prominent Houston law schools. To assist participating students in preparing for their clerkships, the Committee puts on its annual MOILP Boot Camp. The program is specifically designed to encourage equal opportunities for minority lawyers in the legal profession.

Most law firms and companies hire only second-year law students for summer clerkships. MOILP works to extend employment and mentoring opportunities to include minority first-year law students. The positions provide mentoring and real work experiences for students who might not otherwise have the opportunity to compete for those positions.

A number of MOILP clerks have gone on to accept permanent positions with employers they first met through the program. Some have even gone on to become partners in those firms.

The Boot Camp is one of a number of programs that participating students have the opportunity to attend. These initiatives all foster the development of minority law students by providing practical experience and advice before they commence their on-campus interviews during their second year of law school, and before they embark on their legal careers.

For Staci, programs like the Boot Camp are an important part of HBA's mission to serve the needs of the legal community by creating a vibrant and inclusive local bar.

"This year, the MOILP program helped nearly 50 students obtain summer clerkship positions with a variety of employers, including law firms, corporations, state and federal judges, and nonprofit and government organizations," said Staci. "This has been one of HBA's most successful programs to date. We wanted to make sure that the students placed in these positions have all of the tools necessary to continue that success and, more importantly, excel in their summer clerkships."

