



**ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT**  
**Commission on Professionalism**



**THE CHICAGO COMMITTEE**  
Advancing Minority Attorneys | Transforming the Legal Profession

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 1, 2013

**THE SUPREME COURT COMMISSION ON PROFESSIONALISM AND  
THE CHICAGO COMMITTEE ANNOUNCE COLLABORATION TO PROMOTE INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY IN  
ILLINOIS LAW FIRMS**

**Talent Development Best Practices are Essential**

With the goal of establishing the Illinois legal community as a diversity leader, Illinois law firms with ten or more attorneys will, in the next month, receive a letter from the Commission on Professionalism encouraging them to actively and intentionally promote institutional diversity in their firms. In collaboration with the Chicago Committee, a legal diversity organization formerly known as the Chicago Committee on Minorities in Large Law Firms, the Commission encourages law firms to take advantage of a set of tools developed by the Committee that are instrumental to retaining their minority attorneys.

The initiative follows recent legal industry reports that in 2012, despite the efforts of many law firms, progress nationwide retaining minorities in large law firms remains stalled. The initiative is founded in empirical research showing that implementing sound talent development practices in law firms is essential to improving minority attorney retention. The tools, collectively called the Talent Development Initiative, include a base line assessment, best practices models and index criteria by which law firms can determine whether firm policies, practices and culture are as favorable as possible for retaining minority attorneys.

As a result of the collaboration between the Commission and Chicago Committee, the first between the two organizations, the Committee has agreed to make certain of these tools available to non-member firms in Illinois. The Committee is also working with the Commission to supplement the diversity section of the Commission's statewide Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program.

*"One of the Commission's mandates is to promote diversity and inclusiveness in our profession," said Judge Debra Walker, Chair of the Commission on Professionalism. "We are delighted to collaborate with the Chicago Committee and other organizations across the state on this important initiative."*

A number of Chicago Committee's member law firms have implemented all or some components of TDI with favorable results, including Hinshaw & Culbertson, McDermott Will & Emery, Reed Smith and

Seyfarth Shaw. *“Law firms can have the best intentions pertaining to diversity and inclusion but might not be aware of best practices across the industry to sustain institutional diversity and advance minority attorneys.”* said Leslie Richards-Yellen, Chair of the Chicago Committee. *“The tools that we are making available to all Illinois law firms allow them to assess how they are doing against this set of standards”.*

Law firms will receive the Commission’s letter during the month of August.

The Commission on Professionalism was established by the Illinois Supreme Court in September 2005 to help foster increased civility, professionalism and inclusiveness among the lawyers and judges in the state. Its duties are defined under Supreme Court Rule 799(c). The Commission consists of a Chair, law school faculty, judges, lawyers, and non-lawyers appointed by the Court. Commissioners serve terms of three years.

The Chicago Committee is a not for profit membership organization established in 1987 to advance racial and ethnic diversity in law firms, thus increasing diversity in the broader legal profession. It does so by working collaboratively with its member law firms and other partners to drive sustainable institutional change. Forty-five of Chicago’s largest law firms are Chicago Committee members and the Committee’s governing Board is comprised of seventeen member firm partners.

**(FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Jayne Reardon, Executive Director, Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism, 312.363.6208, or [jayne.reardon@ilsccp.org](mailto:jayne.reardon@ilsccp.org) or Peggy Davis, Executive Director, Chicago Committee, 312.899-8466 or [pdavis@chicagocommittee.org](mailto:pdavis@chicagocommittee.org) .)**