



Karen DeMeola is the 94th president of the CBA. She is the assistant dean of student life at UConn School of Law, where she plans, manages, and oversees programs and services for the student body, including career planning, disability services, and student services. She advises students confronted with a variety of issues, including academic advising, personal matters, and wellness challenges such as addiction and mental health concerns. In addition, Dean DeMeola is charged with implementing and managing diversity programming as well as professional and community development activities.

Halfway Mark

By Karen DeMeola

Every past president of the CBA has told me some version of the following: “Your presidential year will fly by,” “Be sure to start early, as you will blink and the year will be over.”

Well, I blinked.

I find it hard to believe that more than six months have passed since Monte Frank passed me the gavel at the 2017 Connecticut Legal Conference. With the start of 2018, I lamented over the things I didn’t get to in the past year: the e-mails left unanswered, the projects I wanted to tackle. Then I took a deep breath and reflected on the relationships, collaborations, opportunities, and initiatives that we started or continued.

We continue to build our leadership in the diversity and inclusion space. In May, we kicked off our Pathways to Legal Careers Pipeline Program, which brought middle school and high school students together to talk about careers in the law. Through this program, we developed mentor relationships with individuals and helped kick off new mock trial programs. We continue to talk with leaders throughout the profession in expanding on our current program and

giving students additional opportunities.

Our second annual Diversity & Inclusion Summit was another successful event. This year, the focus was training. Presenters highlighted the importance of looking beyond the assumptions we place on people based on their physical characteristics and to give further insight into effective diversity training. Effective diversity training tailors itself to the heart and soul of each organization; it means a deeper and more critical look at the structures and systems that are in place.

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee created, and continue to develop, diversity and inclusion targeted education and training programs. In addition, our legal education programming was very successful in 2017. Sections and committees offered CLE as part of their meetings and also delivered broader events. Full- and half-day sessions on taxation, professionalism, technology, law practice management, and probate have complimented the depth and breadth of the CLE we offer.

Though we will still feel the impact of decline in new law school graduates, 2017’s graduating class brought more to the pro-

fession than originally thought. I was honored that Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers allowed me to present to two groups of new attorneys at the swearing-in ceremony on November 3, 2017. I was able to share thoughts about mentorship, authenticity, professionalism, and civility, and to proudly welcome the new attorneys to the bar.

CBA members continue to volunteer as judges for Civics First, build for Habitat for Humanity, mentor high school students—not to mention the hours spent on pro bono opportunities—and volunteer hours with nonprofits. Members continue to be recognized locally and nationally for contributions to the practice of law.

As we move toward a new legislative session, our sections and committees are busy preparing draft language and setting in motion their objections and support of legislative actions. It will, I am sure, be a busy session. Our task forces will continue to find effective and sustainable ways to impact the lives of those who are survivors of sex-trafficking and those individuals and families affected by the opioid crisis. Our efforts to protect the rule of law and to impact access to justice will continue to be at the forefront of what we do.

CBA membership continues to grow; I look forward to welcoming new members at our New Member Reception on March 8, and to celebrating the lives and careers of award recipients at our annual Celebrate with the Stars awards celebration on April 12.

With every look backward there is often a look forward to see what, if anything, we can change, perfect, or add to our lives. There is great capability in speaking truth to power. Storytelling is part of all cultures; the stories our elders pass on connect us to our past and shape the way we see the world. Sharing our personal narratives has a profound impact on relationships. Sharing the narrative of the CBA is equally as important to our profession. I am proud to be part of the narrative and proud to tell the stories of our association, sections, committees, and task forces. Thank you for taking this journey with me. I look forward to what's to come. **CL**


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