Diversity & Inclusion

Irell & Manella has always been committed to building a diverse and inclusive law firm and creating an environment where attorneys of all races, ethnicities, gender identities and sexual orientations can thrive. This focus permeates our culture and has resulted in a population of attorneys from a variety of backgrounds and one of the highest percentages of minority partners for law firms in the United States. All partners are equity partners, and many women and minority partners have served on the firm’s Executive Committee and in other firm leadership positions, including as managing partner. Irell’s commitment to diversity has a long history—the firm had one of the first African American equity partners of any major law firm in Los Angeles and one of the nation’s first Asian American managing partners.

Irell is regularly recognized for its achievements in diversity and inclusion. For instance, The American Lawyer consistently ranks Irell as among the most diverse law firms in the nation, most recently ranking us #14 out of 220 on the 2020 Diversity Scorecard. Irell also had the highest percentage of minority partners of any of the firms surveyed, according to the data published by The American Lawyer.

“Irell & Manella is focused on delivering the highest quality legal services and achieving excellence through diligence and creativity. Our attorneys are hired and evaluated based on the quality of their work. This focus has penetrated our culture and resulted in a population of attorneys from a variety of backgrounds.”

– Kyle Kawakami, Irell & Manella Diversity Chair

Consisting of partners and associates from both offices, Irell & Manella’s Diversity Committee is dedicated to promoting an institutional culture that fosters the recruitment, advancement and development of a diverse population that reflects our larger community. The committee is responsible for recommending and implementing strategies to further diversity and inclusion, and its goals align closely with those of the Women’s Network, Associates Committee and Executive Committee. The Diversity Committee also sponsors a number of events and trainings targeted at inclusion, including sessions on unconscious bias and featuring key figures and diverse attorneys who are making a difference. Additionally, the firm offers Diversity Scholarship Awards of $15,000 to a select number of second year law students who, in addition to meeting certain criteria, receive and accept an offer to participate in the firm’s summer program.

2021 Diversity Scholarship Award

In keeping with the firm’s commitment to attracting and promoting the highest quality attorneys and creating an environment where attorneys of all races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations can thrive, Irell & Manella intends to offer Diversity Scholarship Awards of $15,000 to a select number of second year law students who, in addition to meeting certain criteria, receive and accept an offer to participate in the 2021 Summer Program.

Download Application
Eligibility

We will consider all candidates from under-represented groups in the legal profession, including, but not limited to, racial or ethnic minorities; women; gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender individuals; persons with disabilities; and/or applicants from a disadvantaged socioeconomic background. Additionally, applicants must at least meet the following criteria:

- Must be enrolled at an ABA-accredited law school and have completed their first year in a full-time J.D. program by the application deadline
- Must be authorized to work in the United States
- Recipients must spend a minimum of ten weeks at Irell during the 2021 Summer Program

Application Process

Irell will begin accepting applications for the Diversity Scholarship on November 1, 2020. Applications will be considered on a rolling basis.

Completed applications must include:

- Application form
- Resume
- Official law school transcript
- Personal statement (no more than 500 words) describing the applicant’s demonstrated academic and leadership achievements and commitment to diversity and inclusion. (The topic for the personal statement is meant to be broad. But applicants should discuss, at a minimum, the factors that inspired them to pursue a legal education and why they want a career as a lawyer. They may also discuss significant obstacles or challenges that they have overcome.)
- Contact information for two references

Selection Criteria

The following criteria will be used to select the Diversity Scholarship Award recipients:

- Academic achievement
- Excellent writing and interpersonal skills
- Demonstrated leadership ability
- Commitment to diversity
- Commitment to contributing to the legal profession
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Selection Process

An internal selection panel consisting of the Firm’s Hiring Partners (for each office), the Chairs of the Diversity Committee, and members of the Diversity and Hiring Committees will evaluate and select all Diversity Scholarship Award recipients.

Scholarship Award

The Diversity Scholarship Award of $15,000 will be paid in two equal installments on:

- January 15, 2021; and
- The start of recipient’s third year of law school.

Youth Programs

Irell & Manella is committed to promoting diversity in the legal profession and to providing equal opportunity to people of all ages interested in pursuing a career in law. Irell attorneys support and participate in a number of youth programs that share in that mission, including:

- **ProjectSELF**: Each summer, Irell’s Newport Beach office hosts interns in connection with ProjectSELF (Summer Employment in Law Firm), a hands-on internship for low-income, minority high school juniors that provides access to professional and career environments and positive mentors to help them with goal setting and college preparation. The program is run by the Orange County Bar Foundation in partnership with the Orange County Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators.

- **UCLA Law Fellows Outreach Program**: Irell regularly sponsors the UCLA Law Fellows Outreach Program, designed to encourage and prepare high-potential undergraduate and graduate students for a career in law, increase the diversity of the law school pool, and demystify the law school experience.

Community Involvement

Irell & Manella is committed to supporting various community and legal diversity organizations throughout Southern California and nationwide, including:

- Leadership Council on Legal Diversity
- California Minority Counsel Program
- Orange County Women Lawyers Association
- Asian Pacific American Dispute Resolution Center
- National Bar Association
- Langston Bar Association
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- Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Los Angeles County
- Equality California
- Lambda Legal
- National Association of Women Lawyers
- Women's Lawyers Association of Los Angeles

For more on our community involvement, please click here.

Women at Irell

Irell's women attorneys play an integral role in the firm's leadership. They are represented on all firm committees including the Executive Committee. For more on Irell's women attorneys, please click here.