

**STATE BAR NEW MEXICO
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND THE
LEGAL PROFESSION
RETREAT NOVEMBER 2022:
Prioritizing Initiatives**

Session facilitation and report provided by



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State Bar NM CWLP Retreat November 2022

On November 5, 2022, the State Bar of New Mexico Committee on Women in the Legal Profession (CWLP) convened for a retreat with the main goal of determining initiatives for the next year. Katie Christianson of Unwhelm Coaching was present to assist (attendance noted on the last page of this report).

Mission

The mission of the Committee on Women and the Legal Profession has been to secure the full and equal participation of women in the New Mexico State Bar, the legal profession, and the justice system. The Committee's mission of making strides towards gender equality is in line with the newly established New Mexico Supreme Court's Committee on Equity and Inclusion, which is working on equality and fairness in court operations and diversity in the judicial workforce.

Objectives

This session's objectives were to clarify committee membership; inform and educate participants about the past and current work of the committee; gather input from the participants; prioritize the initiatives and work of the committee in the next year.

Review

Past initiatives of CWLP:

- The Minzner Award and Recognition
- #LawMoms: chats, podcast, community
- Family-friendly law firm policy bank
- Gender Equality Handbook
- Professional Clothing Closet
- Golf Clinic
- Annual CLE: Women in the Law Symposium

Process

The session included a historical review of CWLP and the specific past work of the committee; a discussion about the requirements for membership and the time commitment expectation of committee members; and a robust discussion of initiatives and proposed work for the committee.

The group established working norms for our time together:

- Leave space for new voices
- Honor past work and institutional knowledge
- Take care of your biological and emotional needs
- Limit sidebar conversations
- Demonstrate respect and hold a safe space for the exchange of ideas
- Celebrate new ideas, embrace a philosophy of "no bad ideas"

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- Network and meet new people
- Be present and authentic
- Embrace trust
- Respect confidentiality, acknowledging that the outcomes from the session will become public but that any sensitive conversations will be kept here
- Collaboration
- Put ideas in The Garden if they seem like something we should come back to
- Have fun!

The group agreed that in this short time, they would only be able to assemble a list of initiatives and that the committee would be responsible for further defining the specific work within those broader initiatives and creating measurable goals. The group will have further work to do in agreeing on measurements and then communicating the goals and metrics to stakeholders.

The next step in the session was gathering ideas. The process allowed for conversation in small groups, reporting out to the group at large, clarification, and documentation. The group agreed that they were not looking for a robust discussion of each idea or any specific planning but instead would focus on broader categories with the understanding that the first and most important work of the committee would be to prioritize the ideas within each category.

The ideas follow in the order they were reported. An "x" following the suggestion indicates that additional individuals or groups had the same or similar suggestion.

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SUGGESTED INITIATIVES FOR WCLP NM 2023:

- Re-establish the clothing closet on the UNM campus
- Recurring women-only golf event
- Internship bank
- Disability liaison xx
- Mentorship program by and for women xxx
- Guest speakers at committee meetings to educate and inform committee members
- Regular social events, like happy hours
- Child care cooperative
- An event centered on the clothing closet: fashion show, fundraiser, etc.
- Develop a toolkit for women starting their own law firms or other businesses
- Speaker's bureau to go to high schools and other youth community groups
- Boundary-setting support for women in the legal profession, to include education and support for negotiating salaries and raises, establishing personal/professional boundaries, and other sticky issues
- Leadership series (trainings and support)
- Public service project with family involvement
- "Accountabilibuddies": mentorship plus; women to share ideas with, discuss professional and personal issues, a safe space for support
- Self-advocacy training: how to use our collective advocacy skills for ourselves
- Trauma response guidelines and suggestions: a "how to" for women who face sexual assault, harrasment, discrimination, etc.
- Committee speaker bureau: members of the committee available to speak to other groups or in public events
- Membership sub-committee to increase membership and also tasked with ensuring increased diversity, to include women who are not parents, LGBTQIA+ attorneys, and women of color, among others
- Self-defense classes
- Oral history and intergenerational projects
- Merch: t-shirts and other goodies acknowledging and advertising WCLP
- Committee mentorship: sustainable leadership and membership

The group determined five themes that emerged from the suggestions. One broad category has been split into two discrete categories due to the overwhelming majority of suggestions placed there.

- 1. Professional Development and Education**
- 2. Personal Support**
- 3. Law Student and New Lawyer Support**
- 4. Public Service**
- 5. Membership**

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The participants then took each of the ideas that were important to them individually and placed them in each category. They are noted below in the same format, where an "x" indicates more than one "vote".

Public Service

- Speakers Bureau (external-facing, emphasis on HS level) xx
- Public Service projects involving family x
- Professional clothing closet event x
- Policy committee/law changes x
- Handbook
- Minzner Award
- Toolkit for new law firms
- Oral History Project

Law Student/New Lawyer Support

- Professional clothing closet xxxx
- Mentorship program by and for women xx
- Internship bank

Professional Development/Education

- Leadership series (educational for women in law) xxxx
- #LawMoms continued support, including podcast xxx
- Mentorship/"Accountabilibuddies" training, bank, support xxx
- Disability Liaison xxx
- CLE xx
- Speakers Bureau (internal-facing, invited in) xx
- Small business/entrepreneurs toolkit x

Personal Support

- Self-defense training xxxxx
- Boundary-setting support/training/workshop xxx
- Self-advocacy training xx
- Child care co-op x
- Trauma response training and resources

Membership

- Happy hour/social events xxxxx
- Recurring women-only golf series xxxxx
- Golf clinic xx
- Diversity Liaison and/or training xxx
- Marketing/Outreach xx
- Membership diversity (non-mons, LGBTQIA+, all life stages) xx

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The Garden

- Support Dean Carey at UNM Law School
- Formal Liaison w/complementary Bar Committee (disability, LGBTQIA+, etc.)

Observations

The desires and priorities of the committee members (and perhaps the larger group of women in the legal profession) are clear above. A quick glance shows the importance of supporting women entering or new to the legal profession, a strong need for professional development, a clear desire for personal support, and an overwhelming sense of looking for community.

In such a limited time, the committee wasn't able to address the question of whose voices were not in the room, though diversity is clearly important to the group. The geographic location, time and date, and venue of the retreat necessarily excluded a large number of women and non-binary individuals. The committee represents the entire state, but a brief round of introductions did not reveal robust representation from outside of the greater Albuquerque area.

There is clearly a strong need to provide community and support among women in the legal profession, and though community, emotional support, and engaging the membership in non-work related activities is not explicit in the mission of the committee, it could certainly be argued that this additional support does indeed work to further the committee's mission.

The committee has historically carried out some ongoing initiatives, such as providing CLE, drafting and updating the Gender Equality Handbook, and honoring women who have been making a positive impact in the legal profession. Some of this continuing work isn't reflected in the list above. It will be important to articulate what work the committee has undertaken in the past or is still in progress and determine whether it should continue.

Recommendations

The suggestions listed above represent an enormous amount of work, and to carry out all of them would require a massive membership effort, solid infrastructure work, and a dedicated sustainability effort.

1. It is my recommendation that the committee review this report and then assess each of these initiatives and suggestions with a rubric that includes fit with mission, capacity of the committee, and ownership of ideas. In other words, which of these suggestions furthers the work tasked by the New Mexico Supreme Court, has excitement and ownership around it, and has sufficient resources (human power,

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money, time) to carry out? Mission should be the most important consideration in this conversation.

2. A full strategic planning session conducted by a steering committee and considering input from the larger community would be enormously helpful in drafting priorities, setting goals, and providing reports to stakeholders.
3. I further recommend that the committee seek input on all these issues from a broader array of voices, making efforts to solicit input from marginalized groups, starting with the question, "Whose voice is missing from this conversation?" Diversity is not only a good idea; it is essential.
4. The last recommendation I have for this committee is that they make a strong effort toward sustainability: create and document processes; clearly define standing subcommittees and ad-hoc committees; draft measurable, time-bound goals for each subcommittee and the committee as a whole; create and document a strategic plan; emphasize shared ownership and mentorship, passing on institutional knowledge while allowing for new leadership

Report written and submitted by Katie Christianson, owner of Unwhelm Coaching, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 8 November 2022

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In attendance at November 2022 retreat:

Facilitator Katie Christianson, Unwhelm Coaching

Co-chair Erin Marshall

Co-chair Jensen Wallace

Alesia Cappon

Allison Block-Chavez

Ann Washburn

Anna Baecker

Becky O'Gawa

Charlotte Craig

Chelsey Pelzman

Dana Cox

DeAnza Valencia

Hannah Stephens

Holly Gallegos

Krista Russell

Laura Johnson

Miriam Sutherland

Patricia Galindo

Sheryl L. Saavedra

Stella Edens Pederson