

Proskauer's Mentoring Circle Program Cultivates Leaders

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One of Proskauer's flagship talent development programs, the Mentoring Circle Program is an innovative approach to expanding opportunities for diverse lawyers and cultivating emerging leaders.

The Mentoring Circle Program aims to enhance the integration and development of junior-level diverse associates with one-on-one support from designated partner mentors. It amplifies the core benefits of individual mentoring — coaching, counseling and networking — by creating circles (i.e., teams) of mentor-mentee pairs, with each circle encompassing multiple pairs of mentees and their mentors. Mentees forge close bonds with their mentors, gain exposure to different insights, working styles and networks of their circle's partners, and learn from their fellow mentees.

Associate Sean Pence and former associate Krista Whitaker provide insight to their participation in the program.

Transcript

Krista Whitaker: The Mentoring Circle Program and the other diversity initiatives that Proskauer has are truly committed to making strides for diverse attorneys. I wanted to make sure I was at a place where diverse associates were included, they were integrated into the firm and had a positive experience and were also able to develop their careers professionally. As soon as you start at the firm, you have a set mentor, somebody that you can go to, confide in.

Sean Spence: The relationship is actually governed by a contract, the terms of which I had to negotiate with my mentor, such as how often do we meet and where. Having that in writing with our signatures on file with our diversity and inclusion team, made the relationship seem very real and consequential. Proskauer has continuously made efforts, be it through the Mentoring Circle Program, be it through our Affinity groups to ensure that I always feel at home.

Krista Whitaker: One of the highlights for the Mentoring Circle Program for me has been the diversity retreat that Proskauer hosts. And one of the most insightful and, I think, beneficial panels that we had was a panel on authenticity. How do you celebrate the differences that you bring to the table in the workplace, how do you turn those differences into your strengths, and how do you really bring your whole self to work.

Sean Spence: What has been the most meaningful part of the program has been our executive Coaching Initiative. So, on a monthly basis I have a call with a professional coach, in whom I can confide and be vulnerable about my career. Be it how I ask for work, how I interpret and internalize feedback, how I build my brand both internally and with clients.

Joe Leccese: Our job is no barriers. No barriers to hiring, no barriers to staying, no barriers to training and no barriers to opportunity. We need to fight for the opportunities to make sure those opportunities are equal, so that every individual who comes here, comes here not thinking I have to battle today, but rather I'm going to be my best self today — myself, not yourself, not some other institutions' self, so that I can serve Proskauer's clients best. So if the institution fights then the individual doesn't have to.

Krista Whitaker: Proskauer doesn't just have diverse programs because everybody else has them. They have diverse programs because they are committed to investing in associates and making sure that that positive experience and career development is there for them.

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