
Samara Gomez, a member of the 2011-12 PBA Bar Leadership Institute class, touted the BLI experience as a panelist on "Diversity in Leadership: Rise to the Challenge" during the Sixth Annual Diversity Summit held recently in Harrisburg.

"The PBA Bar Leadership Institute offers participants exposure to the Board of Governors and the House of Delegates," said Gomez. "In order to be an effective member of a section or committee, one should fully understand the authority of the board and House as it relates to the various sections and committees. I sincerely hope the PBA will continue to invest in the BLI program because it provides future leaders with the opportunity to understand and observe the inner workings of the PBA, which will in turn produce stronger leadership."

Gomez was joined on the panel by Lisa M. Watson, a 2010-11 BLI class member; Paul Troy, co-chair of the BLI program; and Julie Colton; a graduate of the Allegheny County Bar Association’s leadership program.

On the panel, Troy shared some of the early indicators of success of the BLI program, noting that the program was revived last year by then-PBA President Gretchen Mundorff after a program hiatus from 2003 to 2010. "We have already seen several BLI members from 2010-11 appointed to seats on the House of Delegates and a few are serving as committee chairs and in other leadership positions as a direct result of the relationships they have formed through their participation in the BLI," said Troy. "I think this is fantastic, and I am very proud of the work these young lawyers are doing. It has been very rewarding to observe the interaction and mentoring that is happening between many of our seasoned PBA leaders and the young lawyers just getting started in our profession."

Panelist Watson, recalling her experience as a member of the 2010-11 class of the BLI, said it offers “a great opportunity to gain access to key decision makers within the PBA. Participating in BLI allowed me to learn more about the governing process within the PBA, the types of issues that are discussed by the Board of Governors and House of Delegates, and how the decision making process ultimately occurs. The networking opportunity is
unparalleled to any other activities within the PBA. BLI opens doors to leadership like no other program; you just have to take the first step and apply."

The BLI was originally introduced by past PBA President Art Piccone in 1997-98, during the term then-PBA President Vincent Grogan. A number of BLI graduates from these early years continue to be active in the PBA, and some have stepped into leadership positions.

Royce Morris, a member of the 1999-2000 BLI class and a current PBA Zone 3 delegate to the PBA House of Delegates, attended the summit. A frequent presenter in CLE courses who serves on numerous PBA committees, he is also “paying it forward” by having encouraged Roy Galloway, a young solo practitioner in Harrisburg, to apply for the 2011-12 BLI class, providing one of the required recommendation letters for Galloway.

According to Morris, "Personal connections are very important to any professional, but particularly to lawyers. The PBA Bar Leadership Institute helps new, young lawyers learn about the PBA and encourages active participation. Service is important to me. The BLI introduced me to a variety of service and leadership opportunities."

Eleven lawyers were selected for each class from about 40 applications in 2010 and 2011. The diversity within the application pool and the selected classes has been encouraging. In 2011, nine of the 12 PBA zones were represented by at least one applicant. One-third of applicants were non-white and two-thirds were female. Those selected for the 2011-12 class include a solo practitioner, law school professor, district attorney, assistant general counsel, and lawyers practicing in the areas of family law, labor law, zoning and land use, intellectual property, workers’ compensation, Social Security disability and civil litigation. “The more inclusive we can be, the better and stronger our profession will be,” said Troy.

During November 2011, the current BLI class will participate in the Board of Governor’s meeting, PBA Committee/Section Day, the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation Night Out and the House of Delegates meeting. They will also attend the Conference of County Bar Leaders in February 2012.

Applications for the 2012-13 BLI class are anticipated to be posted in April 2012 to the PBA website at [www.pabar.org/bli.asp](http://www.pabar.org/bli.asp). If you have questions about the program, please visit that Web page or contact PBA Special Projects Coordinator Susan Etter at 1-800-932-0311, Ext. 2256, or susan.etter@pabar.org.

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