

# BRILLIANCE EXISTS EVERYWHERE, AND WE INTEND TO FIND IT

The law firm now known as Greensfelder, Hemker & Gale first embraced diversity in 1927, when Forrest Hemker, a Christian attorney, joined Jewish lawyer Bernard Greensfelder's firm established three decades earlier. Nearly 100 years later, our city, our nation and the legal community at large have changed dramatically. Greensfelder has vastly expanded our framework of diversity to include people of color, women, people who identify as LGBTQIA, people who live with disabilities, etc. and is focusing on the necessary work of making our firm one in which all of our employees thrive. As the Chief Diversity Officer at Greensfelder, I readily embrace this task. Our firm strongly believes that our employees, who come from varied backgrounds and experiences, are our greatest assets. Those differences in lived experience directly contribute to our competitiveness and success.

## What We Do

Over ten years ago, Greensfelder established our Diversity and Inclusion Committee, a dedicated body of attorneys and professional staff tasked with realizing the Firm's diversity and inclusion commitment. Currently, some of our efforts to promote a diverse and inclusive workplace include:

- \_ Funding for diverse employees to attend leadership development programs and conferences
- \_ Sponsorship of local events and programs promoting diversity and inclusion within the legal community
- \_ Officer mentor program that provides each attorney with one-on-one career guidance
- \_ Gender neutral parental leave and mentor programs for new parents

In 2016, our board asked me to work as the firm's Chief Diversity Officer and approved the hiring of a Diversity and Inclusion Manager. Together, we are more prepared than ever to take our Firm's efforts to the next level by providing ongoing learning opportunities for all employees about unconscious bias and removing barriers that prevent talented people from being included in our candidate pools. In addition, we intend to provide opportunities, through professional facilitators, to engage in meaningful conversations that will help all employees remain inclusive and respectful of each other.

## Why is Diversity and Inclusion Important to Greensfelder?

In recent years, the legal community recognized the industry was simply not embracing the tenets

of diversity and inclusion. As that recognition became more pronounced, the industry, and Greensfelder, began to understand that diversity was not only the "right thing", but also necessary for all law firms that want to compete in a very competitive marketplace. Consequently, many larger law firms began making concerted efforts to hire diverse attorneys and employees.

Though the industry is attempting to diversify its attorneys, those efforts often fail on the inclusion side of the equation. It is uncomfortable work to identify and eliminate unconscious bias within any organization. Similarly, it is difficult to review and revise policies and aspects of firm culture that may not be fully inclusive. Lastly, it is hard to have honest discussions about how those biases, policies, and culture can create an inhospitable or uninviting workplace to people of color, women, people who identify as LGBTQIA, people with disabilities, and people with nontraditional backgrounds.

Greensfelder's talented diverse employees have contributed strategies and perspectives and grown our business in ways that are invaluable and incalculable to our firm. We would be unwise not to invest heavily in not only their recruitment, but also their continued growth and success. Additionally, it is becoming clear that clients understand and believe that diversity is critically important and they expect to see that reflected in the law firms who handle their legal matters. We believe that expanding the representation of diverse employees in our firm is not only the smart thing to do from a business sense; it is also the right thing to do from a moral sense.

## What do we Hope to Accomplish?

Ultimately, we want Greensfelder, Hemker & Gale to be an employer of choice known for identifying, attracting, grooming, and promoting diverse talent. We believe that brilliant, capable lawyers and professionals can be found everywhere and from every background, and we intend to ensure that we not only attract them to our firm, but create an environment where they will stay, thrive, and ultimately become leaders. We hope our colleagues in the St. Louis legal community will join us in our efforts to dismantle old biases and transform our perception of what brilliance looks like.

*Christopher Pickett is a B.A.M.S.L. member, as well as an Officer and the Chief Diversity Officer at Greensfelder, Hemker & Gale, P.C.*



**Christopher Pickett**  
Greensfelder, Hemker & Gale, P.C.

“ Though the industry is attempting to diversify its attorneys, those efforts often fail on the inclusion side of the equation. It is uncomfortable work to identify and eliminate unconscious bias within any organization.