

PRESS RELEASE

Baker Donelson Beefs Up Diversity Initiatives

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The Memphis office of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz PC recently began beefing up its diversity initiatives by adding a pipeline program to encourage minority undergraduate students to consider law school, offering help with law school admissions and other related issues along the way.

The firm has a Diversity Committee headed by shareholder Mark Baugh at the Nashville office, and Ben Adams, the firm's chairman and CEO who works at the Memphis branch, sits on the Diversity and Women's Initiative committees. Several other attorneys from the Memphis office are members of the firmwide Diversity Committee.

The pipeline program, called Bringing Back Diversity Boldly from our Colleges to our Businesses (BBDBCBB), is in its pilot phase. The pipeline program will be launched at two schools this fall.

Adams said the pipeline program is particularly geared toward minorities.

"Minority enrollment in law school has dipped," Adams said. "It makes it hard for us to improve the minority statistics and participation for our lawyers if there are fewer minorities going to law school in the first place.

"It wasn't a big pool to begin with, and the pool's been dropping, so the whole idea behind this initiative is to make people more comfortable and more knowledgeable about going to law school, and encouraging them to do that."

Adams said the plan is to "see what works and what doesn't work," and then the firm will expand the pipeline to include more universities and colleges.

The firm's diversity efforts are being recognized. Baker Donelson was named in "Multicultural Lawyer's" Top 100 Firms for Diversity and the Top 100 Firms for Women in 2008, and the firm recently learned it's on both lists again this year.

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