

PUBLICATION

A Conversation with GM's Craig Glidden

Third Quarter 2021

GM has long been known as an industry leader in diversity and inclusion, earning numerous accolades including a #5 ranking in "Top Employers" by readers of *Minority Engineer* magazine (2020); a #11 ranking in the "Top 50 Employers" by readers of *Careers & the disABLED* magazine (2020) and recognition in Bloomberg's 2020 Gender-Equality Index for its commitment to supporting gender equality through policy development, representation, and transparency.

Baker Donelson recently contacted Craig Glidden, Executive Vice President, Global Public Policy, and General Counsel at General Motors, to gain insight into the company's DE&I initiatives, new programs which have been launched during the pandemic, and specifically, how DE&I criteria factor into the legal department's approach to serving its internal clients and outside counsel hiring decisions.

1. How would you describe your goals for advancing diversity and inclusion?

CG: GM Legal Staff's goals for diversity, equity and inclusion take a three-prong approach. First, we are looking inward to determine how to continually make our own staff more diverse and create a more inclusive environment. Second, we are working with our Strategic Legal Partnering (SLP) firms (such as Baker Donelson) to ensure not only that the work done on our matters includes diverse lawyers, but also that the diverse lawyers are taking on lead roles and are being given opportunities to grow. Third, we are working with our communities, affinity bar associations, and other non-profit organizations to develop, promote and recognize pathways to advancements in diversity, equity and inclusion.

2. We know GM has a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion; can you describe the GM legal department's D&I program?

CG: What is most significant is that GM introduced a new employee behavior, "Be Inclusive," which is now a criterion upon which all employees will be evaluated. The thought behind this additional behavior is for each of us to create moments every day that value backgrounds, opinions and ideas that may be different than our own. The Legal Staff sees this as the beacon in all of our initiatives. We are also working with the SLP firms to create diverse and inclusive teams representing GM. Through these partnerships, our firms have reached historically high numbers of women and racially diverse attorneys working on GM matters. Based in part on the direction of where our company is going, we enhanced our existing Diversity & Inclusion Task Force, we worked with our SLP law firms to expand our impact, and we launched the Legal Staff Diversity & Inclusion Pillars, which consist of five focus areas: Awareness and Training, Environmental Justice, Education and Economic Opportunity, Public Health, and Finance Initiatives. In each of these pillars, we partner with community-based organizations to help address social inequities and injustices. The pillars are supported by legal resources to bolster awareness and training, advocate for policy reform, education and economic opportunities, financial support, and public health initiatives to benefit disadvantaged communities.

3. Have you made progress in the legal staff framework on the five D&I pillars?

CG: We have made great progress. Already this year we were lucky enough to have Kevin Clark, Partner at Lightfoot, Franklin & White LLC, speak to our staff about diversity in the legal profession. He shared his

personal journey to champion diversity and inclusion at his own firm and the ways he inspires others to do the same. We also were able to hear from GM internal experts and Michigan's Lt. Governor, Garlin Gilchrist II, on the topic and importance of environmental justice. Additionally, in early March, the Legal Staff, working with some of our SLP firms, sponsored a virtual Street Law program for students at local Detroit-area high schools. This gave us an opportunity to encourage diverse individuals to learn about and consider the area of law as a career.

4. How much of a factor is diversity as GM makes outside counsel hiring decisions?

CG: When we started our SLP program with our outside firms, we made it very clear that we expected to have diverse lawyers working on our matters. We set up an SLP Diversity & Inclusion Task Force within the Legal Staff to engage with the firms and make sure that this was happening. Relying on the expertise within our Legal Operations group, we also created a diversity dashboard that allows the D&I Task Force and Legal Leadership Team to have real time insight into the diversity metrics of each firm. We take this very seriously and have quarterly SLP Diversity Meetings with our firms to address any issues and discuss what more we can do in partnership with each other.

5. Do you think an inclusive work environment helps your team provide better solutions for internal clients? If so, how?

CG: GM views diversity and inclusion as a strength, based on our ability as an organization to recognize, value and draw upon unique perspectives to help drive innovation. By establishing an inclusive work environment, members of the team feel that they are being respected, heard and understood; we believe this, in turn, helps us accomplish the goal of meeting the needs and expectations of an increasingly diverse and global customer base.

6. How will GM keep diversity and inclusion and its D&I program fresh and revitalized each year to ensure it remains a priority?

CG: Keeping diversity and inclusion top of mind is always a priority at GM, and this year is no exception. At the beginning of each year, we set our goals for the GM Legal Staff, which includes DE&I objectives. Starting this year, we decided to open all of our team meetings with not just a safety moment, but a diversity moment, as well. We highlighted our commitment to DE&I during the keynote at the ABA's ESG conference for in-house counsel in February. I also recently collaborated with the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity on its "Leaders at the Front" program, in which I personally pledged my commitment to diversity leadership within GM, the community, and with our outside firms. We will continue to have Legal Staff representation on GM's Inclusion Advisory Board, which consists of both internal and external leaders to help us toward the ultimate goal of becoming the most inclusive company in the world. We will, of course, continue to meet with our SLP firms on a quarterly basis to focus exclusively on this topic, and many of our attorneys are members of diversity organizations and other organizations that are championing diversity, including national groups such as MCCA, NLADA, NAPABA, CCWC, HNBF and LCLD, in addition to local organizations such as the Detroit Bar Association Foundation and Women Lawyers Association of Michigan. Our collective body of work will ensure that DE&I continues to remain a priority year after year.

7. What challenges has the COVID-19 pandemic created for your efforts at improving diversity in the profession?

CG: We noticed that the global pandemic resulted in various austerity measures within some law firms and organizations, which then adversely impacted not only diversity efforts at those entities, but also the funds going to affinity bar organizations and other groups promoting diversity in the legal profession. It was important

to GM to ensure that those organizations continued to receive their necessary funding, so despite austerity measures being implemented within the company, GM announced a \$10 million donation to support organizations that promote inclusion and racial justice; so far, we have allocated \$4 million toward supporting organizations like the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the MLK Memorial Foundation's Inaugural Social Justice Fellows Program, and the Asian Pacific American Institute Congressional Studies Fellowship Program. Another key thing to note is that GM Legal did not reduce any of the financial commitments we made to affinity bar organizations despite these austerity measures.

GM and the Street Law Program

GM also fosters diversity, equity and inclusion by collaborating with other organizations in pipeline initiatives that are designed to help educate individuals about various and unique careers and pathways to success. Baker Donelson attorneys Stefanie Doyle and Victoria Young responded to GM's call for collaboration in Street Law, Inc., a non-profit that works in communities and schools across the country and the globe to develop programs and teaching materials that educate people about law and government. Victoria, who worked with Benjamin Kwakye (GM), shared, "As a former high school teacher, the program fueled my passion for public service and the law. Street Law promotes the notion that the law is all around us and, if we look for opportunities to teach those outside of our field, we will ultimately broaden our reach to encourage diversity and inclusion in our profession." Stefanie said, "I genuinely enjoyed it! The kids were smart and made interesting observations and asked intelligent questions. Our group, including Erica Grant (GM), took the lead on organizing the logistics and we worked well as a team."