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LAW FIRM PARTNERS, TALENT EXPERTS, AND STANFORD LAW STUDENTS JOIN FORCES TO TACKLE GENDER PARITY THROUGH INAUGURAL WOMEN IN LAW HACKATHON

Diversity Lab, in partnership with Stanford Law School and Bloomberg Law, launch the Women in Law Hackathon aimed at advancing women in the legal profession

DENVER, March 9, 2016 – Fifty-four top law firms have signed up to participate in the Women in Law Hackathon, a new Shark Tank-style pitch competition aimed at generating innovative ideas to close the gender gap in law firms. Nearly two-thirds of the participants in the Hackathon are managing partners, practice group chairs, or other high-level leaders in their respective firms. They are working together virtually in teams from January to June 2016 to devise initiatives that will help retain and advance experienced women in law firms. Each team is comprised of six partners from across the country, two talent/diversity thought leaders, and a Stanford law student.

“The Hackathon could help participating firms, and our industry as a whole, make significant strides toward breaking barriers to equal opportunity and inclusion,” said Anna White Erickson, Managing Partner at Morrison & Foerster. “This is the first time we have ever come together in a structured way as a community of law firms and leaders to devise a plan for closing the gender gap in law firms. I’m honored to be representing my firm in this endeavor.”

On June 24, 2016, the teams will pitch their ideas to a group of high-profile judges at Stanford Law School. The top three teams selected by the judges will grant their prize money, donated by Bloomberg Law, to nonprofit organizations that are helping to advance women in the legal profession and beyond. The first-place award is \$10,000, second place is \$7,500, and third place is \$5,000. Diversity Lab is contributing an additional \$5,000 for a Crowd Favorite award voted on by the audience, which also will be donated to a non-profit.

The Women in Law Hackathon is the brainchild of [Caren Ulrich Stacy](#), Chief Executive Officer of [Diversity Lab](#), whose pioneering work has included creating the [OnRamp Fellowship](#), the first re-entry program launched in the legal field for women returning to the workforce after an extended hiatus.

“Law firm leaders have been working internally for decades to solve the gender parity challenge, but very little progress has been made; currently women represent only [18 percent](#) of the partnership in large law firms,” remarked Ulrich Stacy. “Now, these law firms are trying something different.”

In conjunction with the Hackathon, Stanford Law School (SLS) developed a policy course to research why the gender gap persists in the legal profession and propose possible solutions. Students enrolled in the course, supported by three faculty advisers, will author a white paper on the issue, which will be available to Hackathon participants prior to the June event. “SLS faculty and students are committed to making headway on this issue and closing the gender gap,” said Susan Robinson, Associate Dean for Career Services at Stanford Law School. “The Hackathon is an innovative approach to a persistent problem. We welcome this important dialogue and hope this will serve as a turning point for women in the legal profession.”

“There has never been such a large collaborative effort where rival law firms join together to solve the gender parity issue,” said Ulrich Stacy. “Nor has a major law school previously created a class to examine and help solve the problem. There is an unprecedented concentration of brain power being applied to this issue through the Hackathon. And, thanks to Bloomberg Law, we have the necessary funds to support and implement the Hackathon ideas going forward.”

“We couldn’t be more excited to act as the lead sponsor for the inaugural Women in Law Hackathon,” said Melanie Heller, Vice President and General Manager of Bloomberg Law. “It’s no secret that more needs to be done to drive the advancement of women in the legal profession, and we’re proud to partner with top-tier law firms around the country to tackle this issue.”

Due to the overwhelming interest from legal organizations and other companies inquiring about the endeavor, Diversity Lab is launching a second Hackathon in late 2016 that will include cross-industry teams working together to close the gender gap. “The legal, energy, financial services, and consulting industries have the same challenge – too few women at the top,” Ulrich Stacy said. “The next Hackathon will bring together high-level executives from various companies and firms to work together – using all of our collective knowledge and wisdom across industry lines – to create gender parity in leadership within the world’s most elite organizations.”

“We are honored and delighted to partner with Diversity Lab and the other participants on this important initiative and to work together as a team for six months on ideas to catalyze the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women lawyers,” said David Gerson, partner and former management committee member at Morgan Lewis. “The exciting ideas that we all generate together will help us to achieve our own goals as a firm, and bring about meaningful and lasting change.”

Women in Law Hackathon participating law firms include:

Akerman; Akin Gump; Alston & Bird; Andrews Kurth; Arnold & Porter; Baker Botts; Bass, Berry & Sims; Blank Rome; Cooley; Covington; Dentons; DLA Piper; Farella Braun; Faegre Baker Daniels; Fasken Martineau; Fenwick & West; Fish & Richardson; Fried Frank; Gibson Dunn; Goodwin Procter; Haynes & Boone; Hogan Lovells; Holland & Hart; Holland & Knight; Husch Blackwell; Jenner & Block; Kilpatrick Townsend; Kirkland & Ellis; Kramer Levin; Littler Mendelson; Miller Canfield; Morrison & Foerster; Morgan Lewis; Munger, Tolles & Olson; Neal Gerber; O’Melveny & Myers; Orrick; Paul Hastings; Perkins Coie; Pillsbury; Reed Smith; Seyfarth Shaw; Sidley Austin; Simpson Thacher; Skadden; Sullivan & Cromwell LLP; Sutherland; Troutman Sanders; Vinson & Elkins; Weil Gotshal; White & Case; WilmerHale; Wilson Sonsini; and Winston & Strawn.

The judges and thought leaders serving as team advisors include:

Pitch Event Judges:

- Lucy Endel Bassil, Assistant General Counsel, Microsoft

- Alan Bryan, Senior Associate General Counsel, Legal Operations – Outside Counsel Management, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.
- Alexis Diaz, Managing Director, G100 and General Counsel, G100 Companies
- Deborah Gillis, President and CEO, Catalyst
- Honorable Faith Hochberg, United States District Judge (Retired)
- David Perla, President, Bloomberg Law
- Deborah Rhode, Stanford Law School, Center on the Legal Profession
- Miriam Rivera, Venture Capitalist and Former VP/Deputy GC, Google
- Jim Sandman, President, Legal Services Corporation
- Tony West, General Counsel, PepsiCo

Team Advisors:

- [Ida Abbott](#), Consultant and Co-Founder, Hastings Women’s Leadership Academy
- [Mark Beese](#), Founder, Leadership for Lawyers
- [Avery Blank](#), Women’s Advocate and Business Strategist
- [Rosalie Chamberlain](#), Leadership Coach and Diversity Expert
- [Linda Chanow](#), Executive Director, Center for Women in Law at the University of Texas
- [Carol Frohlinger](#), President, Negotiating Women, Inc.
- [Pat Gillette](#), Founder, Opt-In and Senior Counsel, Orrick
- [Debbie Epstein Henry](#), Co-Founder, Bliss Lawyers and President, Flex-Time Lawyers
- [Karen Hester](#), Executive Director, Center for Legal Inclusiveness
- [Lisa Horowitz](#), Principal, Talent Strategy Group
- [Katie Larkin-Wong](#), Immediate Past President, Ms. JD and Associate, Latham & Watkins
- [Sang Lee](#), CEO, SJL Shannon and CEO, Lawyer Learning On Demand
- [Manar Morales](#), CEO, Diversity & Flexibility Alliance
- [Ellen Ostrow](#), Executive Coach and Consultant, Lawyers Life Coach LLC
- [Amanda Packel](#), Deputy Director, Rock Center for Corporate Governance at Stanford University and Co-Director, Stanford Directors’ College
- [Jennifer Queen](#), Consultant and Former Director of Talent at McKenna Long and Baker Botts
- [Jennifer Waters](#), Executive Director, National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL)
- [Sandra Yamate](#), Executive Director, Institute for Inclusion in the Legal Profession
- [Jennifer Zimmerman](#), Executive Director, Morgan Stanley

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About Diversity Lab

[Diversity Lab](#) creates and tests new ways to close the gender gap and boost diversity in organizations at the leadership level. Data, behavioral science, and design-thinking are at the core of everything that the Lab does. The Lab’s inaugural initiative, the [OnRamp Fellowship](#), is the largest re-entry platform matching experienced women returning to the workforce after a hiatus with organizations for six- and twelve-month Fellowships. The Fellowship started as a pilot with four law firms and has now grown to include more than 30 of the world’s top law firms, legal departments, and banks. The Lab also celebrates and highlights what other individuals and organizations are doing to advance women through the [TakeALittleAction.com](#) website and shares knowledge – in collaboration with 25 other talent and diversity experts – through its blog [TalentThinkTank.com](#).

About Stanford Law School

[Stanford Law School](http://www.law.stanford.edu) (www.law.stanford.edu) is one of the nation's leading institutions for legal scholarship and education. Its alumni are among the most influential decision makers in law, politics, business, and high technology. Faculty members argue before the Supreme Court, testify before Congress, produce outstanding legal scholarship and empirical analysis, and contribute regularly to the nation's press as legal and policy experts. Stanford Law School has established a new model for legal education that provides rigorous interdisciplinary training, hands-on experience, global perspective, and focus on public service, spearheading a movement for change

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