

Page: Achievement Award
Category Best Diversity Initiative
Chapter ACC Louisiana
Chapter Size Small (fewer than 300 members)
Entry Title ACC Louisiana DiversiTea Legal Tea Talk
Entry Description The ACC Louisiana DiversiTea Legal Tea Talk was designed to introduce young, diverse women interested in law school to practicing lawyers to discuss the rewards and difficulties of being a woman in this field. Studies continue to show that women leave the profession at a high rate, and that diverse women leave at an even more alarming rate. The goal of this program was to help open the pipeline of diverse talent in the legal field and to keep that talent in the profession.
When was the program initiated? 4/7/2021
What was the project objective? This program centered around a formal tea to address some of the reasons that diverse women enter the practice of law and also what causes them to leave. The objective was for the group to meet and discuss strategies for succeeding in the practice of law; the hurdles associated with the practice; the types of work opportunities in the field; the reasons why women leave; and how we can build a network to support each other personally and professionally throughout our careers.
How was the objective achieved? ACC Louisiana in partnership with DiversiTea Divas hosted a Legal Tea Talk on November 6, 2021, at the A/C Hotel in New Orleans, Louisiana. In attendance were 32 mentees including a diverse group of female undergraduate and law students from Dillard University, Tulane School of Professional Advancement, and Loyola University New Orleans College of Law. Eighteen (18) female mentors attended including practicing attorneys, local judges, and a Louisiana Supreme Court justice. We awarded four (4) \$1,000 scholarships via a random drawing of mentees in attendance at the end. Mentors and mentees were interspersed together at round tables throughout the room to facilitate conversation. All members introduced themselves to the group and then an open discussion was held about the practice of law in general and the role of women. The program was highly interactive with mentors and mentees having honest discussions about the challenges diverse women face in the legal profession. Attendees enjoyed a catered lunch of chicken Caesar salad, traditional teatime offerings, and a selection of teas. Each mentee received a swag bag which included donated items from ACC Louisiana sponsors, DiversiTea Divas, and the ACC Foundation. Each mentor received an ACC Foundation teacup with a gift card to an area coffee shop and handmade cookies with the ACC and DiversiTea logos.
What was the project budget? The initial budget was \$10,000. We were awarded a \$10,000 grant from the ACC Foundation PBJ Fund for this program. Final project costs were \$11,094.48 and donations from generous donors covered the shortfall.
What obstacles were faced while doing this project/program? In light of the Covid-19 pandemic our application for the ACC Foundation PBJ Fund Grant envisioned two events including a virtual tea with delivery of tea and related items to mentors' and mentees' homes or offices, and then an in-person event later in the year. When we began the event planning the Covid-19 numbers in the area were relatively low, so we proceeded with scheduling an August 2021 in-person event. However, the Delta variant of Covid-19 struck Louisiana with a vengeance in the summer, so we postponed the program until it was safer. By October the rates of Covid-19 were decreasing in the New Orleans area so we proceeded with an in-person event in early November. Further obstacles included communicating the date changes to our mentors and mentees, personally reaching out to encourage attendance, and last minute cancelations due to Covid-19 infections.

In 300 words or less, please state how this project was innovative.

The ACC Louisiana DiversiTea Legal Tea Talk was innovative in providing mentees with an opportunity to engage in candid conversation with real lawyers and judges about the challenges involved in legal practice for diverse women. This event built upon the purpose and mission of the DiversiTea Divas organization to create a pipeline of mentorship for young, diverse female talent in the various professions and was specifically geared toward the legal industry. Through an annual Tea and quarterly events DiversiTea Divas provides an intimate forum for professional women to network with and mentor college-aged students. For mentees, DiversiTea Divas provides a dynamic group of mentors ready and willing to pass on their wealth of experience. In addition to choosing their "Personal Board of Directors" from the mentors they meet, mentees also have an opportunity to talk to other women who are doing what they strive to do in life, ask them questions, and learn about the trials and tribulations along the way to their goals. For mentors, being a member of DiversiTea Divas provides an opportunity to "give back" and "pass knowledge" to the generation that will come after them. It also provides an opportunity for mentors to meet and add other positive professionals to their network.

Instead of having a guest speaker at the ACC Louisiana DiversiTea Legal Tea Talk in November 2021 all attendees contributed to the conversation. Attendees developed personal mentorship connections and left knowing they had sources of information available. The program also increased awareness of ACC and opportunities for in-house practice. The four \$1,000 scholarships were awarded at random to assist each in continuing toward their goal of becoming an attorney.

