2017-2018 MID-YEAR REPORT OF THE NATIONAL BLACK LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION
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The mission of the National Black Law Students Association is to increase the number of culturally responsible Black and minority attorneys who excel academically, succeed professionally, and positively impact the community.

"NBLSA continues to exist because the need for NBLSA in championing a more diverse legal community continues to exist."

NBLSA Founder Algernon J. Cooper, Esq.
Message from the National Chair

This year, we are celebrating half a century of programming, education, advocacy, and pushing for a more diverse and inclusive legal profession.

Since 1968, NBLSA has produced some of the finest attorneys in all industries and career paths. Our members are law students from Washington State to Washington, D.C. and our alumni are prosecutors, public defenders, general counsel, lawmakers, judges, attorneys general, as well as a former president and first lady of the United States.

Yet, our work remains unfinished.

Despite fifty years of work by distinguished men and women in BLSA chapters across the nation, there are many victories ahead for the organization and its members. Even so, we take this moment to celebrate the progress of this year, and we recognize the many people who have helped pave our way.

From our Founder, Algernon J. Cooper, who continues to be a supportive presence and influence to the organization, to our past National Chairs and Alumni Advisory Board members, to law school professors who mentor NBLSA's student members, our success would not be possible without the contributions and counsel of these dedicated individuals.

Since the beginning of the 2017-2018 NBLSA Year on April 1, the 50th National Executive Board, as well as the various Regional Boards, have been hard at work in developing programming, establishing sound governance policies, and continuing to developing the NBLSA community.

Let me take this moment to thank each and every one of you for your support of NBLSA's mission. Your efforts cultivate the next generation of brilliant Black and minority attorneys who will take this profession into the future.

We look forward to our 50th National Convention, March 13-18, 2018 in Brooklyn, NY, where we will celebrate our legacy and rededicate ourselves to continuing to advance our mission into the next 50 years.

Mark A. Dunham, Jr.
48th NBLSA National Chair
NBLSA THANKS

OUR 2016-2017 PARTNERS

NBLSA's work would not be possible without the generous support of law firms, corporations, government agencies, and other partnering non-profits that invest in our mission. From meetings to job fairs to interactive programming and competitions, our partners support the work of the organization in preparing the next generation of legal leaders.
OUR PAST PARTNERS

Our 50th year gives us the opportunity to thank so many institutions that have invested in NBLSA's mission over the many years. Whether in 1968 or just last year, we express our continued appreciation for your partnership and support.

Special thanks to the Ford Foundation, who provided the first sponsorship to NBLSA in 1968 in advance of the first National Convention.
The National Black Law Students Association was founded as the Black American Law Students Association on the campus of New York University Law School in 1968, by six law students led by Algernon J. Cooper. Established as a not-for-profit corporation on December 19, 1969, the organization was formed out of a need to promote the interests of Black and minority law students as they entered the legal profession.
“The purpose for which this corporation is formed is to articulate and promote the professional needs and goals of [Black and minority] law students; to foster and encourage professional competence...to instill in the Black Attorney and Law Student a greater awareness of and commitment to the needs of the Black Community...” - NBLSA Articles of Incorporation

**NBLSA PRINCIPLES**

Taken from the articulation of its mission, NBLSA programming, events, and initiatives center around four principles that we believe are critical to the development of Black and minority attorneys.

NBLSA Members work to exemplify, defend, and promote these goals and ensure through oversight that our work is aligned with our mission.

**NBLSA STRUCTURE**

Our organization has national, regional, and local chapter structures. NBLSA members join at the local chapter level and have access to Regional and National events, programs, and leadership opportunities as a result of their NBLSA membership.

**LOCAL**

The chapter at the law school level is the heart of NBLSA and where its work is most tangibly realized. Led by a president, an executive board, and overseen by the local membership, it works on behalf of students locally.

**REGIONAL**

Led by a Regional Chair, the Regional Board, and overseen by a Regional Assembly, the six NBLSA Regions focus their efforts on providing critical networking opportunities and programming to certain geographical areas.

**NATIONAL**

Led by the National Chair, the National Executive Board, and overseen by the National General Assembly, the National level of NBLSA provides the overarching policy and programmatic direction to the entire organization and provides resources to chapters for program development.

**CULTURAL RESPONSIBILITY**

NBLSA works with an awareness and understanding of the history, the struggle, and the determination of our people. We also know that “Black law student” is reflective of the full range of the diaspora.

**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

NBLSA works to create resources, hold programs, and build confidence in every Black and minority law student to excel and overcome the academic rigor of law school to become attorneys of the highest caliber.

**PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS**

NBLSA works to help our members and our students build connections, develop skills, and take opportunities to pursue the career of their dreams and provide access to others who may follow.

**COMMUNITY IMPACT**

NBLSA works to instill community commitment through facing the issues of our time and investing our time and talent into the community regularly.
WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT

NBLSA?

NBLSA has a reach of over 16,000 law student members and alumni.

Our members are activists, thought leaders, and strategic thinkers. Our alumni are general counsel, judges, non-profit executives, and business operatives. We connect our members and alumni with unparalleled opportunities to network, seek new professional avenues, and develop life-long friendships.

Through our work, our members have greater access to the next step in their legal careers.

NBLSA PROGRAMS

EQUIP LEADERS

Our programming works to provide opportunities to NBLSA members to develop skills, make contacts, and build a network that will yield benefits for years to come. Through NBLSA, our members truly gain an edge to become excellent lawyers.

Resource Development

To be an added value to members, we work to develop resources such as webinars, outlines, "how-to" guides and other implements to further develop academic excellence and promote Bar passage.

Career Fair Program

NBLSA hosted six regional job fairs during the summer prior to the academic year to provide our members with opportunities to interview with top firms and to provide firms with a unique opportunity to speak to and recruit diverse talent from law schools across the nation.

Academic Retreats

Each of the six regions hosts an annual academic retreat. Students receive crucial academic support from professors, lawyers, and fellow students to help maximize opportunities during their law school experience.

Legislative and Judicial Advocacy

Since its inception, NBLSA members and officers have taken part in the country’s legal and legislative discourse, which helps to shape and sharpen advocacy skills. NBLSA participated in the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference, and, on the Regional level, we have discussed pertinent issues in statehouses across the nation.

National Competition Series

Our organization annually hosts four long-standing student competitions on the Regional and National levels:

- Thurgood Marshall Mock Trial Competition
- Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition
- Nelson Mandela International Negotiations Competition
- Pre-Law Oral Advocacy Competition
NBLSA takes its stewardship of student membership and corporate partnership funds seriously, with rigorous governance policies and use of accountants for auditing purposes on a yearly basis. Also, NBLSA operates entirely on a volunteer basis. Its entire National Executive Board and all regional teams are law students who dedicate their time, talents, and energy to the betterment of the legal profession.

This also eliminates overhead, as there are no paid staff nor are Board members - on any level - compensated for their time.

**100% of NBLSA funds are dedicated to supporting our programming efforts.**

*Starting Organizational Balance (April 1) | $136,288.90  
Balances As of October 25, 2017*

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**Programming supported by NBLSA funding includes:**

- BLSA Chapter Grants
- Academic and Professional Development Retreats
- NBLSA's Job Fair Program
- Alumni and Legal Community Networking Events
- Direct Student Scholarship Programs
- Community Service Projects
- NBLSA Amicus Brief Project
- National and Regional Conferences
ADVANCING OUR MISSION

NBLSA MID-YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Created during the civil rights movement, advocacy has been part of the core of NBLSA programming since our inception. Our National Advocacy Team, led by Attorney General Jeremy McLymont and Director of Social Action Meagan Sunn, has continued in that tradition.

NBLSA's ongoing advocacy efforts and focuses are directed by the National General Assembly and focused by the National Board and officers.

NBLSA Participates in Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Legislative Conference

From September 21-24, 2017, NBLSA engaged in programming aimed at addressing issues that affect the African-American community. NBLSA was present at three different law schools while also maintaining a presence at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. The National Attorney General was asked to speak on multiple panel discussions alongside individuals such as Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee Esq., David Banner, Barbara Arnwine Esq., Rep. Jewell Jones (D-MI) and more. The National Director of Social Action also represented NBLSA at an intimate roundtable discussion with the Congressional Caucus for Black Women and Girls and activists from around the country including the co-founders of Black Lives Matter and the Women's March on Washington.

NBLSA Works to Create Senate Diversity Pipeline

NBLSA's National Advocacy Team is currently developing a policy career path pipeline, in support of the Senate Diversity Initiative, to help place NBLSA members in internship and clerkship positions on Capitol Hill. In support of this effort, NBLSA will co-host a series of webinars with the Black Talent Initiative at Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies to educate members on careers in policy and law making.
INCREASING THE NUMBER

NBLSA officers once again partnered with Evangeline Mitchell and Pre-Law Diversity Initiatives, Inc., in their annual pre-law conferences and law expositions in Miami, FL and Greensboro, NC. Phanuelle Duchatelier, director of the NBLSA Pre-Law Division, has been a frequent speaker, joined by NBLSA Attorney General Jeremy McLymont, NBLSA National Chair Mark Dunham, and several BLSA chapter presidents and officers in the Southern Region.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

In finding ways to reach our national membership, NBLSA has sought to develop innovative ways to provide valuable content to chapters and other interested parties. NBLSA has held two webinars on professional development and law school admissions with more upcoming on academic and professional topics.

COALITION BUILDING

NBLSA has continued its endeavors to build partnerships that add value to our members and amplify the organization's voice and reach as we carry out our mission.

This year, our Board and officers have had the opportunity to interact with leaders from the National Bar Association, the nation's oldest and largest organization focused on the representation and uplift of Black and minority attorneys, the National Latino/a Law Students Association, and the New York City Bar Association.
REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

Our Regions are Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southern, Mid-West, Western, and Southwest. Led by the six Regional Chairs, each Regional Executive Team completes programs, initiatives, and creates resources for use by members and chapters. Some selected highlights are below.


This year kicked off with the Northeast Regional Job Fair, which took place at New York Law School on August 4, 2017. We had approximately 220 students bid on over 60 employers, including law firms, government agencies, and public interest organizations. Students the northeast, mid-west, and mid-Atlantic regions participated in our Job Fair this year. Over half of our participants received a second interview as a result of the Job Fair and approximately 40% of participants received an offer. The Region was also able to offer three Academic Retreats this year occurring at Boston University School of Law, Fordham University School of Law, and Syracuse University College of Law.

During these events, NEBLSA was able to provide over 70 students, most of them first-year law students, with the tools and skills needed to navigate law school and beyond. Programming included workshops on outlining and preparing for final exams, journals and Bluebooking, resumes and interview tips, and building one’s brand. Lexis provided legal research trainings, and Barbri conducted an information session on the bar exam and MPRE. The Region also invited guests from the National Lawyer’s Guild and ACLU to conduct Know Your Rights and Legal Observer trainings. Alumni also participated in our Black and Minority Experience in the Law panel and members could network with those individuals. Members from NY Metro Sub-Region had a chance to network over happy hour during the Welcome Back Mixer in NYC and members had an opportunity to network with alumni in the Boston during the Fall Alumni & Law School Mixer.

During our Leadership Retreat, chapter presidents had an opportunity to network with one another and learn about the various regional initiatives the Region has promoted this year, including the 50th NEBLSA Regional Convention in Albany, New York, the moot court and mock trial competitions, academic retreats, social events, pre-law scholarships, and community service initiatives. One of the Region’s community service initiatives, this year, is a hurricane fund to assist fellow students at the University of the Virgin Islands. Many of the students lost most of their possessions from both Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Donations will be directly sent to the University of the Virgin Islands and will be used to purchase supplies and other necessities for students on the St. Croix and Saint Thomas campuses. The Regional goal is to raise $7,000.
Mid-Atlantic Region (MABLSA) | Virginia, Washington D.C., Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Southern New Jersey

MABLSA kicked off the school year with their annual Job Fair in Washington, DC, which attracted over 30 firms and organizations and was attended by over 100 students from around the Mid-Atlantic region. Each MABLSA Sub-Region hosted a Back-to-School kickoff event and the Region convened a Chapter Leadership Retreat, where ideas were exchanged and best practices were reinforced on all levels of governance. MABLSA alumni have had the chance to reconnect at MABLSA’s alumni brunch in Washington, DC and Alumni Trivia Mixer in Philadelphia, PA. The University of Baltimore hosted MABLSA’s annual Academic Retreat, where students gained valuable information and advice from peers and alumni, as well as took advantage of a free MPRE review session from Themis Bar Review. MABLSA will be celebrating its 50th Convention in Portsmouth, Virginia in February, where the Honorable U.S. District Judge James R. Spencer, of the Eastern District of Virginia, will deliver the keynote.

Western Region (WRBLSA) | New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, California, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and Hawaii

WRBLSA, as the sitting NBLSA Region of the Year, has been continuing its brand of “West Excellence” in delivering valuable content and programming to NBLSA members. From the multiple job offers obtained through the Region’s Southern California Job Fair to chapter development efforts to enhancing local programming, WRBLSA has continued to expand into every facet of the law student experience. The Region has also focused on connectivity, both in connecting our members to the legal community by pairing students with mentors through local bar associations, as well as connecting NBLSA to its larger civic community. Regional leadership chose to focus on community impact by increasing involvement with youth and conducting community service programs to educate the youth in located within the Regional jurisdiction on engaging positively with the legal system.

Southern Region (SRBLSA) | Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Puerto Rico

SRBLSA has worked under the theme "Get Back to the Basics, Reaching Beyond the Profession and Pouring into the Members of the Community." The Region has done so by putting on many amazing events. Thus far, SRBLSA has accomplished a panel and mixer during the South Eastern Minority Job Fair (SEMJF), a Chapter Leadership Retreat/Job Fair at North Carolina Central University, a Birmingham Alumni Mixer and the Region’s first Academic Retreat for the year. During the panel events at SEMJF, students and panelists were able to have a conversation about diversity in the workplace and what it means for corporations/firms to be diverse and inclusive. More than 40 students sat in on this discussion. At the Chapter Leadership Retreat, SRBLSA chapter leaders were granted the pleasure to have the first African-American female Chief of Staff to the Governor of North Carolina, Mrs. Kristi Jones, be the Keynote Speaker.
Mid-Western Region (MWBLSA) | Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Kentucky

MWBLSA has been on the move over the past 7 months! The Region started off its academic year with the MWBLSA Meet Up in Cleveland, Ohio in September. This weekend started with MWBLSA's Annual Career Fair and Meet & Greet, and this year the Region partnered as co-hosts with the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association.

The Region served a total of 43 students and hosted 21 firms, hospitals, and government organizations. Following the Career Fair and Meet & Greet, Reminger Co., LPA hosted NBLSA members at East End Restaurant and Bar for a less formal social outing in Downtown Cleveland, on the bank of Lake Erie. On Saturday, the Region held a Law School Summit hosted by the Norman S. Minor Bar Association, Cleveland’s minority bar association, which was open to pre-law, and law students and featured panels on various tips and tricks towards academic, professional, and personal success in law school.

In October, MWBLSA hosted its Annual Academic & Leadership Retreat at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW), hosted by UW's BLSA Chapter, led by Chapter President and NBLSA National Treasurer, Christian Conway.

Southwest Region (SWBLSA) | Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana

In September, SWBLSA was focused on blazing trails and building relationships. SWBLSA hosted its Annual Regional Academic & Leadership Retreat in Oklahoma City, OK, making it the first Regional event in the State of Oklahoma. Students came to Oklahoma City University Law School to network and engage in professional development with Oklahoma’s top Black attorneys. In addition to the networking and professional development, SWBLSA members were also able to give back to the people of Oklahoma City by donating over 30 meals to the local homeless shelter.

The Region extended its reach in building lasting partnerships by traveling to the Nation’s capital. SWBLSA officers and members participated in Congressional Black Caucus’ Annual Legislative Conference, taking part in panel discussions with the Honorable Maxine Waters and engaged with alumni. At end of September, SWBLSA hosted the Region’s first Alumni Mixer in Houston. Alumni practitioners, including recent graduates and candidates for judicial office, attended the event to socialize and fellowship with classmates and current students. Proceeds from the Alumni Mixer went to a Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund.
LEADERSHIP

Mark A. Dunham, Jr.  
NBLSA NATIONAL CHAIR

Jordan Green  
NATIONAL VICE CHAIR

Britney Retess  
NATIONAL SECRETARY

Christian Conway  
NATIONAL TREASURER

Jeremy McLymont  
NATIONAL ATTORNEY GENERAL

K. Gennelle Chatman  
NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

Alexis Agredo  
NATIONAL CO-DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING

Kayla Vinson  
NATIONAL CO-DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING

Ashley Rose  
NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF MOOT COURT

Brian Gordon  
NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF MOCK TRIAL

Viona Miller  
NORTHEAST REGIONAL CHAIR

Marwa Abdelaziz  
MID- ATLANTIC REGIONAL CHAIR

Jessica Etienne  
SOUTHERN REGIONAL CHAIR

Kelynn Carter  
MID-WESTERN REGIONAL CHAIR

Melani Jones  
WESTERN REGIONAL CHAIR

Khanay Turner  
SOUTHWEST REGIONAL CHAIR
“A lawyer’s either a social engineer or … a parasite on society … A social engineer [is] a highly skilled, perceptive, sensitive lawyer who [understands] the Constitution of the United States and [knows] how to explore its uses in the solving of problems of local communities and in bettering conditions of the underprivileged citizens.”