Enhancing the Pipeline of Diverse K-12 and College Students to Law School: The HNBA Multi-Tier Mentoring Program

Charles R. Calleros

Introduction: Awakening to a Need

For many years the legal profession has been painfully aware of disparities between the ethnic composition of the legal profession and that of our general population. In response, state and local bar associations and private organizations affiliated with the law have become increasingly interested in educational “pipeline” programs. These programs are designed to provide student populations with the information, guidance, and inspiration needed to keep them engaged in school, and to encourage them to aspire to higher education.

For example, the State Bar of California created a Diversity Pipeline Task Force in September 2005, with the goal of raising student aspirations and providing them with necessary support. Two months later, the American Bar Association (ABA) and the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) collaborated to host and fund a national pipeline diversity conference at Rice University in Houston, Texas, entitled “Embracing the Opportunities

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1. In 2004, for example, American Lawyer reported that “[m]inority attorneys make up 14.2 percent of U.S. lawyers,” and “only 4.4 percent of U.S. partners,” even though members of minority groups made up 37.3 percent of the U.S. general population in the 2000 census). “Slow rise to the top: despite formal efforts to recruit and retain minority lawyers, large firms continue to be overwhelmingly white, a new study finds.” Am. Law., June 2004, at 103. Table of percentages of lawyers and the general populations by ethnicity, from the 2000 census can be found online at ABA Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession, “Statistics about Minorities in the Profession from the Census,” available at <http://www.abanet.org/minorities/links/2000census.html> (last visited Dec. 8, 2008).

A recurring theme of this conference was the need for collaboration among members of the bar, private foundations, members of the community, supportive governmental entities, and educators throughout the pipeline, from elementary school to graduate school.4

At a more local level, law schools and local bar associations across the country are engaged in programs that reach out to youth. My school, the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law, for example, regularly hosts visiting high school classes for interactive legal method exercises and other programming designed to give the students the confidence and motivation to seek higher education.5 The Bronx Bar Association has implemented the national Thurgood Marshall Junior Mock Trial program, in which junior high school students play the roles of attorneys, witnesses, and jurors in simulated trials.6

These pipeline programs typically target communities whose members are underrepresented in the legal profession and are most in need of assistance: low-income communities, largely composed of ethnic minorities, with few role models from the professions and higher education. Unfortunately, these communities often are short-changed by the public school system. In March 2006, for example, a joint report issued by two organizations affiliated with the University of California commented on the manner in which low-income minority communities have disproportionately borne the impact of inadequate resources devoted to K-12 education in California:

The roadblocks to college loom larger for students living in low-income communities of color. Every California community feels the effect of the state’s educational crisis, but all communities don’t suffer equally. Schools with high concentrations of students of color, many of whom are poor or learning the English language, report the highest rates of unqualified

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3. Links to information about and reports from this conference and follow-up conferences can be found at the home page for the ABA Presidential Advisory Council on Diversity in the Profession, available at <http://www.abanet.org/op/councilondiversity/home.html> (last visited Dec. 8, 2008).

4. This theme is underscored in the Post-Conference Report, Embracing the Opportunities for Increasing Diversity into the Legal Profession: Collaborating to Expand the Pipeline (Let’s Get Real) at 12 (Executive Summary), 24-26 (2006), available at <http://www.abanet.org/op/pipelineconf/PipelinePostReport.pdf> (last visited Dec. 8, 2008).

5. The legal method exercises are set in familiar, non-legal settings that are accessible to the students and that engage them in legal reasoning by analogy. For a full description, see Charles Calleros, Law School Exams: Preparing and Writing to Win 37-41, 49-52, 121-22 (New York, 2007).

teachers and shortages of college preparatory courses in the state. These students are not given a fair and equal opportunity to learn.7

Mentoring programs or other pipeline programs cannot fully compensate for serious systemic problems in public education. But they can make a difference with students who have talent and ambition but might lose hope or focus without the encouragement and guidance of a role model. Lawyers who promote or work in these programs obviously hope that some of the assisted youth will one day enroll in law school and become leaders and role models in the legal profession. They recognize, though, that every such student who enrolls in college and pursues a college or graduate degree in any discipline represents success for these and other pipeline programs.

The Hispanic National Bar Association National Mentoring Program

Upon assuming the presidency of the Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA) in October 2005, attorney Nelson Castillo appointed HNBA officers Jose Perez and Norma Garcia to co-chair a committee on pipeline programs, including a national mentoring program. Over the next year, this committee conceived of city-wide programs that would organize mentoring teams, each team consisting of at least one attorney, one law student, one pre-law college student, and one high school student. On September 1, 2006, the Hispanic National Bar Association launched its National Mentoring Program at the HNBA’s National Meeting in San Francisco, California.8

Over the following year, HNBA members organized mentoring programs in several cities, including Miami, Phoenix, New York, and Tampa, joining the program that was launched in San Francisco at the September meeting. Most of these programs, however, went no further than pairing attorneys with law students, affecting the pipeline only at the point where it flowed directly into the profession. In Phoenix and New York, though, the HNBA mentoring programs encompassed at least four levels in the pipeline.


8. I joined the committee just prior to the program’s launch and have knowledge of many of these events. The history in the accompanying text, however, is set forth in the HNBA’s application for the American Bar Association’s 2007 Partnership Award, available at <http://www.abanet.org/barserv/partnernominees2007/national/hnba.pdf> (last visited Dec. 8, 2008).
The Pilot Mentoring Program in Phoenix, Spring 2007

Administrative Resources for Organization

One advantage of the HNBA mentoring program is the relatively low cost of implementation, as described later in this section. Organizing a program, in contrast, can be a complex, time-consuming process.\(^9\) Without administrative assistance at the program’s inception, the burdens of organization fell on volunteers in each of the cities promoting mentoring programs.

In the Phoenix area, the organizational efforts have been contributed by the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law at Arizona State University in Tempe. My light teaching load in the 2006-07 academic year fortuitously corresponded with the launching of the HNBA mentoring program, allowing me to devote substantial time to the project.

Recruiting Participants

High school participants were drawn primarily from the Law Magnet Program at South Mountain High School and from a community organization for college-bound Latino students, called Aguila. In both cases, the directors of those high school programs recruited and selected the high school participants. Similarly, pre-law and student group advisors at Arizona State University spread the word among pre-law students, resulting in adequate numbers of college applicants.

Two affiliate organizations of the HNBA provided natural pools of potential participants at the attorney and law school levels: Los Abogados, an organization of Hispanic attorneys in Phoenix, and the Chicano/Latino Law Students Association at the College of Law, for which I am a faculty supervisor. Although largely Hispanic in membership, both organizations are open to any attorney or student interested in their activities and goals. Perhaps unsurprisingly, neither group’s members responded in significant numbers to general e-mail solicitations. Instead, I recruited attorneys through individual solicitations, and recruited students largely through passing around a sign-up sheet at a student organization meeting. After a viable program was assured through adequate participation of HNBA affiliated organizations, I recruited additional participants from other bar and student organizations.

Forming the Mentoring Teams

Ultimately, seventy-five participants were recruited and were organized into fifteen mentoring teams, sometimes called mentoring rings, or “mento-rings”

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\(^9\) In 2008, the foundation of the HNBA, the Hispanic National Bar Foundation (“HNBF”), received a substantial grant from the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) to help organize new mentoring programs in Los Angeles and Chicago from its offices in Washington, D.C. The program is now commonly called the HNBA/HNBF National Mentoring Program. For simplicity, however, this article refers more generally to HNBA as the founder and sponsor for the program implemented in Phoenix.
for short. Each team included one or more participants from each of the four tiers of the HNBA program.

Because of the demographics of the community served by South Mountain High School, most of the high school students were Hispanic; however, one was Anglo-American, two were African-American, and one was Native-American. Among the college, law school, and attorney participants all ethnicities were represented, including several Asian and Asian-American students. Thus, the program was multi-ethnic at all levels, although it was of particular interest to Hispanic students and attorneys because of its HNBA affiliation.

In organizing students into teams, I took several factors into consideration. Two teams, for example, were organized around subject matter preferences stated by some of the college and law students: intellectual property (IP) law for one, and business law for the other; indeed, I recruited the IP attorney especially to provide guidance in that legal field.

The emphasis on the early end of the pipeline, however, led me to organize most of the thirteen teams around the needs of the high school participants. The director of the high school law magnet program identified a few of the female high school participants as ones who would respond best to a female mentor, leading to their placement on a team that had at least one female mentor at the college or law school level. The ethnicity of attorney mentors was a consideration in three other teams that included students at various levels who might respond particularly well to role models from their own ethnicity, culture, or community. These teams were led by African-American, Asian-American, or Native-American attorneys, to help create critical masses and provide role models for the relatively small numbers of student participants from those communities.

For the most part, though, the teams were organized randomly. Some of the most successful mentoring partnerships in the program crossed gender and ethnic lines as well as subject matter interests.

Special Requirements for Working with High School Students

In telephone and e-mail correspondence with the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources for the Phoenix Union High School District, we soon learned that the school district would not permit our mentoring program to work with their high school students unless all mentors were fingerprinted at the district office so that they could be cleared by law enforcement agencies. This requirement represented either an implementation of state legislative requirements designed to protect students from harm, or a more demanding school district policy authorized by state law, though not required by it.¹⁰ Such

¹⁰. An Arizona statute provides in part that:

> Noncertificated personnel and personnel who are not paid employees of the school district and who are not either the parent or the guardian of a pupil who attends school in the school district but who are required or allowed to provide services directly to pupils without the supervision of a certificated employee and who are initially hired by a school district after January 1, 1990 shall be fingerprinted as a condition of
clearance is not required when students, supervised by a certified teacher, welcome a one-time guest speaker to the classroom or take a field trip to visit the speaker at another setting. The possibility of off-campus mentoring team meetings involving a high school student not accompanied by a teacher, however, raised the necessity of clearance for all the college students, law students, and attorneys participating in the program.

The fingerprinting process required substantial processing of forms, facilitated by the staff at the College of Law. Then the fun began. In the two weeks prior to the scheduled kick-off dinner on February 3, 2007, fifty-seven student and attorney mentors visited the district office to fill out more forms and to get fingerprinted. Aside from these formal requirements for working with K-12 students, we recognized that high school students would thrive academically only with parental support. Accordingly, we took care to invite their parents to most mentoring events.

employment….

Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 15-512(A) (2002). This section appears to apply only to those seeking “employment,” but that term likely applies broadly to anyone who provides services, volunteer or otherwise, because the first line of the statute distinguishes those who are “paid employees of the school district” and because another subsection refers to paying the cost of fingerprinting for “personnel of the school district who are not paid employees.” Moreover, the primary purpose of the statute is to screen out those who would represent a criminal or moral threat to children. See Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 15-512(D) (2002) (requiring disclosure of conviction or open-court admission of various kinds of crimes, most of them relating to sexual abuse of minors or other risks to minors). Those risks, of course, apply to volunteers who work with children through a school program such as the Law Magnet Program at South Mountain High School. See also Ariz. Rev. Stat. §§ 36-425.03(A & (K)(2)), 36-883.02(A & H), 36-897.03(A) (fingerprinting requirements for child care personnel and child behavioral health care personnel apply to “volunteers”).

In one way, the school district’s policy may have exceeded the state law requirements. The school district required fingerprinting even though the mentoring would occur off-campus pursuant to a program for which parents of high school students had given written consent through forms I drafted and that were administered by the director of the high school law magnet program. The statute appears to provide an exception to the fingerprinting requirement in such circumstances:

Subsection A of this section does not apply to a person who provides instruction or other education services to a pupil, with the written consent of the parent or guardian of the pupil, under a work release program, advance placement course or other education program that occurs off school property.

Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 15-512(I) (2008). The statute contemplates, however, that school districts may impose fingerprinting requirements that go beyond the minimum required by the statute: “A school district may fingerprint any other employee of the district, whether paid or not,” so long as the district does not charge the cost of the fingerprinting to the “nonpaid employee.” Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 15-512(G) (2002). As illustrated by an even more demanding district policy implemented in the 2007-08 school year—requiring a certified teacher to be present at all mentoring team meetings—the school district erred on the side of providing maximum protection to its students.

The Launching of the Phoenix Program

It was important for all members of the mentoring program to attend the first group meeting, so that everyone could absorb and reflect the group energy, and so that the members of each mentoring team could develop a working relationship. Accordingly, we spent some time with e-mail messages confirming a date that ended up working for nearly everyone.

During the morning and afternoon of Saturday, February 3, staff from Arizona State University joined with two visiting attorneys to hold a workshop on higher education for a few dozen students from the South Mountain High School Law Magnet Program and from the community group Aguila. Like other programs of its kind, the cost of busing and lunch for this outreach program was sponsored by the Law School Admissions Council and by the ASU Undergraduate Admissions Office.

That evening, eighteen of those high school students, some of them with their parents, joined the other participants of the mentoring program at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law to launch the Phoenix version of the HNBA mentoring program. Two law firms provided funds for a light dinner for the more than eighty guests, to allow general mingling for the first hour.

In the meeting’s second stage, the participants moved to a large classroom to receive instructions on the program and on suggested team mentoring activities. The new HNBA President, Jimmie Reyna, had altered his flight schedule to provide his encouragement to the program, and the room was alive with excitement. The ethnically diverse high school students, already immersed in pre-law studies, looked around the room and saw dozens of college students, law students, and attorneys who looked like them, some of whom came from their communities. The high school students and their parents were invited to recognize that this path was open to all who displayed the requisite determination and devotion to their studies.

In this group meeting, law student Alba Jaramillo and her attorney mentor Alexander Navidad spoke about their early mentoring activities. They had met as mentoring partners at a Los Abogados luncheon meeting earlier in the semester, and Mr. Navidad had invited Ms. Jaramillo to shadow him for a few weeks over the semester break. Ms. Jaramillo told the group how much she had learned from accompanying Mr. Navidad to office strategy sessions, meetings with other attorneys, and court hearings. Although we all agreed that this fulltime shadowing went well beyond the activities that were feasible for team mentoring during the spring semester, the testimony of these two participants helped to set an inspiring tone for the evening.

In the meeting’s third stage, each mentoring team gathered as a small group at some suitable meeting place at the law school, to exchange contact information, develop a rapport, and begin planning mentoring activities. At the end of the evening, one Asian-American law student, Estelle Pae, told me of her “bonding” with the Latina high school student in her group, whom I will call...
Sara. Ms. Pae told of Sara’s pride in recently being accepted to ASU and then her tearful confession that her parents did not want her to attend college—any college. Sara’s parents, relatively recent immigrants from Mexico, had traditional views about the proper place for their daughter after graduation from high school, and higher education was not on their agenda. Sara’s parents, however, had cared enough to attend this meeting, and they had seen their daughter sitting with dozens of Latina college students, law students, and attorneys. We may never know whether this role modeling helped to increase the level of support that Sara’s parents provided to Sara in her quest for higher education, but Ms. Pae reported later that Sara did enroll at ASU.

Mentoring Activities, Spring 2007

During the plenary session, I requested that each mentoring team engage in at least one educational meeting during the semester, and that pairs or trios within the team stay in touch more regularly. Following are examples of the kinds of mentoring activities that took place:

- Attorney mentors arranged for their team members to attend oral arguments in court in interesting cases and then either (1) have lunch with the attorney member to discuss what they saw, or (2) meet with the judge and/or the advocates to discuss advocacy.
- Team members met for brunch or dinner (usually paid for by the attorney mentor) to exchange information and ideas about lawyering, law school, and getting into college.
- An attorney mentor on a team that had an interest in IP law took the team on a trip to a high-tech firm to speak with the firm’s attorneys about their work.
- An attorney mentor took her team to the “closing” of a major transaction providing financing for construction at ASU, so that the team could get a view of transactional work, and could discuss it later over lunch.
- A college team member took her high school counterpart on a tour of ASU and then out for coffee to talk about college life and academics.
- Law school team members invited their college counterparts to events at the law school, such as guest speakers or moot court arguments.
- An attorney mentor, a criminal defense attorney, took the two college student members of his team to the state trial courthouse and arranged for short conversations with a number of attorneys, staff members, and judges.
- An attorney mentor invited all high school participants and their parents to an evening reception at his firm, including a Mexican buffet, brief welcomes to the group, and then small-group tours and discussions with an attorney from the firm. A university admissions representative was also on hand with information about college admissions and financial aid.
Closing Dinner

On Sunday, June 3, many of the mentoring participants met as a group again, this time to assess the program. Although the program was generally a great success, we focused our attention during this meeting on the problems encountered by some mentoring teams and on brainstorming ways to overcome those problems and improve future programs. Following are some of the issues that arose:

- Communication Among Team Members—Some teams experienced difficulty in getting four to six team members to respond quickly to e-mails or phone messages so that they could schedule team activities. We concluded that, at the first group meeting each year, we should underscore the importance of each team developing a strategy for communication.

- Large-Group Meetings—Many participants enjoyed the plenary group sessions, as supplements to team meetings, and they requested that we add one or two group meetings in addition to the kick-off and closing dinners each year. Under our new approach, moreover, the group meetings will be opportunities to meet with classes of high school students.

- Sub-meetings within a Mentoring Team—At the other end of the spectrum, some team mentors confessed that they relied too heavily on efforts to organize team meetings that fit every team members’ schedule. More mentoring could have taken place had pairs or trios within a team made efforts to meet at an attorney’s office or on campus for some enlightening event.

- Starting Date—Team members found that the months passed quickly and that team meetings were difficult to fit within busy schedules when the program was compressed between the months of February and June. They hoped that the 2007-08 program could begin sooner in the academic year. Because of some restructuring of our program, we did not meet this goal in the 2007-08 program but held our kick-off dinner on January 26, 2008, in conjunction with a mock-trial and outreach program for high school students. In Fall 2008, we achieved continuity by continuing the teams and activities of the Spring 2008 program, filling gaps created by departures from teams.

Changes in the Phoenix Mentoring Program—Spring 2008

New School District Restrictions on Working with High School Students

By Fall 2007, the Director of Admissions, Zarina Nadir, and the Director of Pro Bono Programs, K Royal, at the College of Law expressed interest in helping to administer the program, thus relieving me of organizational responsibilities while I handled a heavy teaching load during the fall semester. Nadir, Royal, and our law library staff organized a very successful law library
tour and exercise for thirty students from the South Mountain High School Law Magnet Program, which took place in October. They encountered a substantial roadblock, though, in creating the fourth tier of the HNBA mentoring program.

In the 2007-08 academic year, the Phoenix High School District implemented a requirement that undermined our ability to place high school students on mentoring teams. A district official determined that HNBA mentors could not meet with South Mountain High School students unless a certified teacher was present even if the mentors were fingerprinted and cleared by state officials for work with K-12 students. This issue had arisen in the school district’s Office of Business and Operations, which is responsible for risk management, when the mentoring program came to their attention near the beginning of the fall 2007 semester. It was the topic of numerous discussions during that semester.

The policy posed no obstacle to a major field trip, such as a high school class visit to the College of Law or a law firm, which would be routinely supervised by at least one teacher. But it was not realistic to expect certified teachers to attend every meeting of an individual mentoring team in which a high school student was present.

As the fall semester drew to a close, we realized that further correspondence and negotiations would not change the district’s new policy pronouncement, and it was clear that the Law Magnet Program at South Mountain High School was free to work with our program only within the parameters defined by the district. True, we could bypass some district policies by working with high school students through private community organizations; the Law Magnet Program, however, was an invaluable partner in the mentoring program. Accordingly, in early December our organizing team set a January date for launching a new model for the program: The new mentoring teams would include ninety attorneys, law students, and college students, while the program would provide K-12 students with programming and mentoring in group settings in which at least one certified teacher was present.

In some ways, this new approach worked well for high school students, and on one occasion for younger students as well. By hosting group field trips, we would not change the district’s new policy pronouncement, and it was clear that the Law Magnet Program at South Mountain High School was free to work with our program only within the parameters defined by the district. True, we could bypass some district policies by working with high school students through private community organizations; the Law Magnet Program, however, was an invaluable partner in the mentoring program. Accordingly, in early December our organizing team set a January date for launching a new model for the program: The new mentoring teams would include ninety attorneys, law students, and college students, while the program would provide K-12 students with programming and mentoring in group settings in which at least one certified teacher was present.

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12. This policy does not appear to represent an implementation of state statutory requirements, because a state statute excludes from fingerprinting requirements “a person who provides instruction or other education services to a pupil, with the written consent of the parent or guardian of the pupil, under...[an] education program that occurs off school property.” Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 15-512(I) (2008); see supra note 10.

13. These requirements were discussed in several phone conversations and e-mails between Lorrie Drobny, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Operations at Phoenix Union High School District, and K Royal, who attempted to analogize the mentoring program to other community partnerships to which the district policy had not been applied. E-mail from K Royal, former Director of Pro Bono Programs, to Professor Charles Calleros, June 26, 2008. The Director of the Law Magnet Program at South Mountain High School also made numerous attempts to persuade the district office to modify its requirements. E-mail from K Royal to Charles Calleros, June 27, 2008.
could ensure participation of a critical mass of K-12 students in programming tailored to their needs. On January 26, 2008, for example, we combined three outreach and mentoring events, each of which targeted different segments or combinations of segments of the educational pipeline. During the afternoon, while a team of law students and faculty coached mock trial competition teams from several high schools, another law student and I provided introductory lessons in legal method and trial practice for students from several middle schools. The K-12 students, accompanied throughout the afternoon by several of their teachers, then met for an hour-long panel presentation on college admissions and academic life. Finally, these K-12 students briefly overlapped with the college students, law students, and attorneys on the mentoring teams while all mingled over pizza at the kick-off dinner for the mentoring program. As the K-12 students later boarded buses for their home schools, the mentoring teams received instructions in a group meeting before breaking into team meetings for their first mentoring sessions.

On other occasions, mentoring attorneys and their law firm associates hosted groups of high school students—accompanied by a few teachers and parents—for tours, dinner, and presentations at their law firms. Thus, we managed to continue the mentoring process for high school students in group settings, often featuring presentations by attorneys participating in the mentoring teams.

Nonetheless, the absence of high school students on individual mentoring teams represented a lost opportunity for more individualized mentoring. During the pilot program in 2007, a few of the high school students developed solid friendships and mentoring relationships with attorneys and with college or law students. In these more personal mentoring relationships, the high school students gained access to lawyers or University students to whom they felt comfortable directing questions and expressing concerns. Some of these mentoring relationships endured beyond the 2007 mentoring program season. Accordingly, in Fall 2008 we began to restore these opportunities for individualized mentoring by working with some high school students through community organizations and with parental consent. Thus, in the 2008-09 program, we are reaching K-12 students both in group field trips and by including high school students on several of our mentoring teams.

Other Lessons from the Second Year of the Program

Two law firms contributed several attorneys to the program in the spring 2008 program. This provided the firms with some advantages in mentoring. The Phoenix office of the law firm of Quarles and Brady, for example, scheduled monthly presentations at its firm, each on a different field of practice, and invited all of its teams to each presentation. Quarles and Brady even had enough attorney mentors to provide two attorney mentors for three out of four of their mentoring teams, pairing a senior attorney with a relatively junior one. Another law firm with multiple mentors in the program, Gust Rosenfeld,
noted that the mentors could cover for each other when a conflict prevented one of them from meeting a mentoring program responsibility.

Perhaps these advantages of coordination among mentoring teams could be extended to teams that are not affiliated with the same law firm. In addition to encouraging individual team activities, as well as scheduling occasional group meetings of all the teams, the program organizers could assign three or four teams to intermediate-sized mentoring groups, so that they can be encouraged to plan activities together and to cover for one another in mentoring responsibilities.

Launching the Mentoring Program in Las Vegas

From February 2007 to September 2008, I served as HNBA Regional President for Arizona and Nevada and sought to generate interest in the HNBA mentoring program in the sister communities of Tucson, Arizona, and Las Vegas, Nevada. In Fall 2007, members of the student organization La Voz, in their second year of operation at the William S. Boyd School of Law at the University of Las Vegas, began to organize a four-tier HNBA mentoring program there. Under the leadership of their President, Leslie Niño Fidance, members of La Voz launched such a program with ten teams on March 1, 2008. Those teams engaged in activities similar to those in the Phoenix program: tours of the district court and county government offices, a mock courtroom exercise, a tour of a private law firm, a meeting with the managing partner and associate attorneys at a law firm, and team gatherings for lunch, dinner, bowling, and even a hike at Red Rock Canyon. The program celebrated the success of its pilot program in a closing dinner in May, with plans to repeat the program during the full 2008-09 academic year.14

Plans for the Future: Reaching Further Back in the Pipeline

By meeting with middle school students at the January 26 outreach program, the Phoenix program addressed a segment in the pipeline to higher education where many students may lose their academic focus unless inspired and guided by influential role models. We hope to include this segment more frequently in the mentoring or outreach events open to high school students.

Moreover, even students in earlier grades, such as third or fourth grade, can find inspiration in creative demonstrations of law and higher education. Accordingly, I hope to organize mentoring team trips to primary schools so that teams can present outreach programs to younger students. For example, available materials could help young students imagine Goldilocks’ trial for her trespass against the home of the Three Bears.15

15. Richard D. Torpy, Am. Bar Ass’n, Mock Trial, A Script and How-To Guide for the Case:
Expanding the HNBA Mentoring Program to other Communities (Including Yours)

The HNBA mentoring program is a grassroots program that runs largely on the volunteered time of committed persons and the collaboration among professional organizations and educational institutions at several levels. If this program can spread to most major cities in the country, students who most need a helping hand may be enabled to realize their dreams for higher education on a more nearly level playing field. Indeed, if reached early enough, some students may develop that dream when they otherwise might not envision a college or graduate education for themselves.

In some communities, a city-wide or regional mentoring program may draw from a number of universities. The HNBA encourages other communities to follow suit and bring cooperative pipeline programs to life throughout the nation. Although mentoring programs such as these cannot single-handedly solve the problems of underfunded schools and under-appreciated, overworked K-12 teachers, they can help. They can help students adopt academic goals that in turn lead the students to take their current studies more seriously. In the best of cases, they may even form lasting partnerships that can bring long-term benefits to all participants. Whether the mentored students ultimately turn to law school or some other productive pursuit matters little; the mentoring program will succeed if it helps guide and inspire youth who might otherwise fall through the cracks of our educational system.

Conclusion

The HNBA mentoring program is a successful pipeline program that can make a difference for students who lack professional and academic role models and can benefit from guidance, inspiration, and other mentoring from professionals and from older students. If readers of this article take the first step toward implementing this program in their communities, in collaboration with other individuals and institutions, we stand a chance of spreading this worthwhile program throughout the nation, taking advantage of the

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16. The HNBA mentoring program in New York has in the past formed up to thirty mentoring teams with students from a single high school but with college and law students from Barnard College, Cornell University, CUNY Honors College, Hunter College, John Jay College, Albany Law School, Brooklyn Law School, Cardozo Law School, Cornell Law School, Fordham Law School, New York University School of Law, St. John’s University School of Law, and Touro Law Center.

17. If you advise or teach a law-related program in high school, college, or law school and would like to start a four-tier mentoring program in your community, contact the HNBA for information about which law schools and lawyers might be available to help you organize a program. You can start by going to the HNBA website at hnba.com, roll your cursor to the right side of the block labeled “About HNBA” and then click on “Board of Governors.” Look for the Regional President in your region, or look for the National Mentoring Committee Co-Chairs, and ask for guidance in linking up with attorney or student organizations that can collaborate with you in starting a mentoring program.
good will, time, and valuable experience of thousands of professionals and students in higher education, collaborating with community leaders and with dedicated K-12 and college teachers and counselors, all to the benefit of our youth.