Proskauer

Celebrating Diversity and Inclusion with Adopt-A-School Students

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Last month, we concluded the sixth year of our Adopt-a-School program, Proskauer's signature education initiative that provides career and college readiness to high-achieving, low-income high school students across the country, with a panel discussion focusing on diversity and inclusion in college and the workplace. We planned carefully to facilitate a remote session with the same level of educational, interactive conversation that drives our in-person monthly workshops. We gathered around our computers at home for our first-ever virtual meeting with the students who were finishing up their junior year at our five partner high schools. Even with the challenge of connecting remotely, our final session brought us together beyond what we could imagine.

Our discussion featured panelists with various job roles across the Firm, all from diverse backgrounds: manager of client operations Gil Desroches, associate Winnie Ma, manager of diversity and inclusion Courtney Paul, associate Hena Vora and associate Bryant Wright, moderated by associate director of CSR Wendy Dessy. The panel discussion centered on the topic of diversity and inclusion at college and in the workplace, providing the students with a thought-provoking conversation at what seemed to be exactly the right time.

Our final session of this school year came at a pivotal moment when the need for racial justice dominated the news and captivated public attention. Match Charter School, our Boston school partner, shared with us that the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and too many others have weighed heavily on their students.

Our five panelists shared their personal and professional stories, highlighting their own experiences and struggles with issues of race, diversity and inclusion at school, the workplace and in life. Not only did the panelists provide the students with meaningful advice as they prepare for the next stages in their academic and professional careers, but they sparked a meaningful discussion.

The panelists encouraged students to appreciate and celebrate diversity, to be proud of their backgrounds, to use college as an opportunity to learn from and listen to classmates from different backgrounds, and, more generally, the importance of public service and speaking out for what is right.

This experience reaffirmed for us the educational value of frank conversations about race as well as the great benefits of a diverse and inclusive workplace.

We wish the students well as they prepare for their summer jobs, internships and senior year, and we look forward to hearing about their college selections and meeting our new class of juniors in the fall.

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