

**Warner Norcross & Judd**



**DIVERSITY NOISNTONI**

2014 Annual Report

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*“Women and minorities now play a larger role than ever before when it comes to firm and practice management.”*

– Douglas E. Wagner

## To our **COLLEAGUES, CLIENTS** and **COMMUNITY FRIENDS:**

I am pleased to report that in 2014 Warner Norcross & Judd made progress in its effort to become a more diverse and inclusive organization. Women accounted for half of the attorneys elected to the partnership in 2014, and the firm’s nine-member Management Committee reflected the firm’s demographics with the inclusion of a minority attorney and two women. Hodayune Ghaussi, a litigator and partner in our Southfield office, and a native of Afghanistan, was elected by the partners to the Management Committee in 2014.

Increasing our diversity has been part of the firm’s business plan for 15 years and we have made significant progress in some areas. For example, women and minorities now play a larger role than ever before when it comes to firm and practice management, with women holding an unprecedented number of leadership positions:

- **Management Committee:** In addition to Hodayune, partners Andrea Bernard and Susie Meyers served on this committee in 2014.
- **Practice Groups:** Women chair six practice groups. In 2014, Heidi Lyon was named chair of the Employee Benefits/Executive Compensation Practice Group (she also chairs our Professional Staff Committee, which handles all human resources issues for the firm’s associates and paralegals), and Dawn Garcia Ward was named co-chair of our new Data Solutions Practice Group. They joined four other women who chair practice groups – Melissa Collar, Real Estate; Linda Paullin-Hebden, Business and Corporate Services; Janet Knaus, E-commerce and Internet; and Nazli Sater, Family Law/Divorce.
- **Executive Partner:** In 2013, Jennifer Remondino became our first female executive partner. She manages our Holland office.

- **Client Service Manager:** Janet Ramsey was named Client Service Manager in 2014 for one of our largest clients - Whirlpool Corporation.

Five of the 11 lawyers named partners in 2014 are women: Elisabeth Von Eitzen, Amanda Fielder, Laura Morris, Jeena Patel and Pamela Enslin. At year's end, women accounted for 29 percent of all attorneys and 18 percent of our partners.

Unfortunately, our efforts to hire and retain minority associates have not been as successful.

Two of our minority associates left in 2014 for jobs in bigger cities. As a result, the percentage of minority attorneys at the firm slipped to 5.4 percent, down from 7.7 percent in 2013. We have taken steps to improve in that area:

- We established an Inclusion Committee to review and bolster minority hiring and retention efforts, and that group began meeting in 2014.
- The Inclusion Committee is reviewing our mentoring

program for associates to ensure that it is meeting the needs of our female and minority associates.

- We have revamped our associate evaluation process to minimize confirmation bias – the tendency to prefer information that confirms one's preconceptions. Our performance reviews are now more thorough and require greater analysis by the partners when evaluating our associates.

In addition to these initiatives, Warner Norcross continued to support a number of diversity programs. In 2014 the firm:

- Hired eight summer associates, five of whom were women or minorities – groups that are under-represented in the legal profession.
- Awarded six LSAT Prep scholarships to minorities. On page 14 of this report is the compelling story of Sungjin Yoo, who received one of our LSAT Prep scholarships and used it as a stepping stone to law school.



- Conducted the Ninth Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest for sixth grade students attending Grand Rapids Public Schools: 289 students from nine schools submitted entries.

- Read *Branch Rickey* for our One Book, One Firm series. The biography explored how Rickey, a Brooklyn Dodgers executive, changed the face of professional baseball by bringing African-American slugger Jackie Robinson into the major leagues.

Warner Norcross is far more diverse than it was when I started here in 1976. Back then we had just one female attorney; we employed 54 at the end of 2014. Our progress in the area of gender diversity is noteworthy, but much work remains for us to achieve similar gains when it comes to ethnic diversity. We remain committed to doing that work because diversity and inclusion expands our talent pool and helps people to tap into their full potential, which benefits both our clients and the firm.

– Douglas E. Wagner, Managing Partner



Holland Office Director

# BUILDS ON THE SUCCESS

of Trailblazers

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*“In order to adequately cover the market and serve our clients in their totality, we need to have a diverse set of perspectives.”*

– Jennifer Remondino



Jennifer Remondino doesn't consider herself a trailblazer in workplace diversity, despite the fact that in 2014 she became the first female appointed Executive Partner at a Warner Norcross office.

She runs the firm's Holland office and is responsible for managing all aspects of it, from business plans and staffing to client receptions and lease agreements. She also serves as the face of the firm, so to speak, in the Holland area.

Although she is the first woman to run one of the firm's eight offices, Remondino said female attorneys who joined Warner Norcross in the 1980s and 1990s – before diversity was a priority at the firm – blazed a path for other women to follow.

“I think I'm a generation behind the trailblazers at Warner Norcross,” she said. “Women like Sue Conway and Janet Knaus came into the firm when there weren't many female attorneys and they had to deal with the challenges of working in a male-dominated profession.”

Knaus and Conway, who have held various leadership positions at the firm, joined Warner Norcross in 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Remondino believes diversity is important and that it helps the firm better serve its clients.

“In order to adequately cover the market and serve our clients in their totality, we need to have a diverse set of perspectives,” she said. “We’re not viewing the entire spectrum of issues if we don’t have people like Homayune (Ghaussi) at the table. Although we are both partners at the firm, he was born in Afghanistan and has a completely different background than I do.”

Remondino said practicing law can be especially challenging for a woman trying to raise a family.

“The long hours and demanding schedule that go with being an attorney make it very hard to practice law and run a household,” she said. “Our firm makes it easier by

offering flexible schedules, generous maternity leaves and standing by its commitment to support a healthy work-life balance.”

Remondino added that the culture of cooperation at Warner Norcross is enormously helpful. “All of our attorneys understand that our clients’ needs, deadlines and priorities come first, but having a team of colleagues willing to help each other and work cooperatively allows me to attend events for my son’s school and generally spend more time with my family.”

### **Jennifer Remondino** ▶





International Experiences Lead to

# GLOBAL INSIGHT

on Diversity Issues

Homayune Ghaussi brings a global perspective to the issue of diversity, one forged by growing up in Afghanistan and Sudan before becoming a first generation immigrant to the United States.

In 2014 Homayune, who is a partner at Warner Norcross, assumed a more prominent role in the firm's overall management and efforts to make it more diverse and inclusive: he was elected by the partners to serve on the Management Committee and was also named co-chair of the Inclusion Committee.

He brings a wealth of experience to the issue of diversity. Homayune was born in Afghanistan, relocated to Sudan when his father landed a job there, and eventually settled in suburban Detroit at age nine. Having lived in diverse societies, he understands the value of diversity.

“I see diversity as being important to us internally because we are, at heart, problem solvers. Having diverse experiences and mindsets to tackle our clients' problems gives us better opportunities to find better outcomes,”

◀ **Homayune Ghaussi**

Homayune said. “Externally, we are increasingly operating in a global business environment. The more we understand the diversity of that global environment, the better situated we will be to take advantage of opportunities for clients and the firm.”

Homayune earned his bachelor and law degrees from Wayne State University in Detroit, and joined Warner Norcross in 2003. He works out of the firm’s Southfield office, where he maintains a litigation practice specializing in issues facing automotive suppliers and financial institutions.

He is also active in the affairs of his homeland, which has been gripped by war since the late 1970s. In 2014, Homayune was elected as a board member of The Friends of the Public Private Partnership for Justice Reform in Afghanistan, a nonprofit organization that was established in 2007 as a joint initiative of the U.S. State Department and leading national law firms. It administers a program of scholarships for Afghan legal scholars to attend a one-year program at U.S. law schools. The goal is to



empower Afghan lawyers to help establish the rule of law in Afghanistan.

Andrea Bernard, a partner at Warner Norcross who serves with Homayune on the firm’s Management Committee, said his background provides a unique viewpoint on issues related to diversity and inclusion.

“As a person of color, Homayune’s perspective is incredibly valuable to the committee,” said Bernard, who is also the firm’s General Counsel. “As co-chair of the Inclusion Committee, he has a very good sense of how our decisions on the Management Committee affect efforts to improve diversity in our ranks. We really value his views on that.”

Homayune co-chairs the Inclusion Committee with Rodney Martin, the firm’s Diversity Partner. The committee was formed in 2013 and began meeting regularly in 2014. In late 2014, the committee began reviewing the firm’s mentoring program for associates to ensure that it meets the needs of female and minority associates.

“Right now the main thing is assessing where the firm is at on diversity and inclusion, setting goals and figuring out how we can attain those goals,” Homayune said. “There are more minorities in the marketplace than are represented in the firm and we are working to address that.”

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*“Having diverse experiences and mindsets to tackle our clients’ problems gives us better opportunities to find better outcomes.”*

*– Homayune Ghaussi*

# DIVERSE SKILLS

the Foundation of Firm's  
Newest Practice Group

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*“Our approach works well because the diversity within this practice group reflects the diversity of the clients we serve.”*

– Dawn Garcia Ward



Diversity and inclusion in the workplace encompass more than race and gender, according to Dawn Garcia Ward, who has witnessed how embracing people with different technical skills and backgrounds can strengthen the services we provide to our clients.

Ward, who is Hispanic and works out of the firm's Holland office, co-chairs the new Data Solutions Practice Group that Warner Norcross established in 2014. That practice quickly evolved to include more than 30 lawyers who specialize in records and information management, eDiscovery and data privacy. The group also added paralegals, consultants and IT professionals to provide a greater breadth and depth of knowledge.

“We are diverse in our approach to the issues our clients face – we have lawyers with different areas of expertise,” said Ward, who co-chairs the Data Solutions Practice Group with B. Jay Yelton III. “Clients recognize that having a team of people with diverse skills and opinions can improve a project and lead to a better outcome.”



Ward is a New Mexico native who moved to the Midwest to attend the University of Notre Dame for her undergraduate and law degrees. She chaired the firm's Document Management Practice Group, which was part of the larger Business and Corporate Services Practice Group, before the Data Solutions Practice Group was formed. Data Solutions became a standalone practice group when Yelton, an eDiscovery specialist, joined the firm in 2014.

Ward said hiring Yelton and inviting other lawyers and information technology professionals into the Data Solutions practice enabled Warner Norcross to become the first law firm in Michigan to provide an integrated team approach to full life-cycle support for business data. She said having a team of people with varied backgrounds gives the firm the ability to assess issues from all angles and come up with more creative solutions.

“When Jay came on board there was an opportunity to combine his expertise with mine and bring in additional

folks who understood the life cycle of data,” Ward said. “Clients come to us from a broad spectrum of industries because we understand data life cycle management — an area that affects every type of organization. Our approach works well because the diversity within this practice group reflects the diversity of the clients we serve.”

**Dawn Garcia Ward** ▶





New Leader Offers a

# FRESH PERSPECTIVE

on Client Service

◀ **Janet Ramsey**

Janet Ramsey has risen quickly up the ranks of litigators since joining Warner Norcross in 2001. In 2014, she became one of the first female attorneys to be named Client Services Manager for one of the firm's largest clients: Whirlpool Corporation.

In that role she is a legal concierge, of sorts. Ramsey will track all of Whirlpool's legal issues and decide which Warner Norcross attorneys are best suited to handle specific topics for the world's largest appliance manufacturer. "Client service managers have a lot of influence over who gets the work," she said.

Being named Client Service Manager for the Whirlpool account is significant for two reasons, Ramsey said: It elevates a female attorney to another leadership position at Warner Norcross, and it addresses Whirlpool's desire to increase diversity internally and among its service providers.

"Clients care about diversity," she said. "They know that getting more women and minorities doing their legal work

is more likely if the person assigning the work is a woman or a minority.”

Ramsey, who is also Client Service Manager for the firm’s Gordon Food Service account, is no stranger to leadership. She serves on the firm’s Professional Staff Committee, which manages and evaluates most of the support staff, serves on the board of the Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, and is currently enrolled in Leadership Grand Rapids – a nine-month program that cultivates business and community leaders.

One of Ramsey’s first initiatives as Client Service Manager for Whirlpool was implementing more of a team-based approach to handling the company’s legal issues. She said that approach gives individual attorneys greater freedom and greater responsibility for delivering positive results for the client; it also mirrors Whirlpool’s shift to a more collaborative work environment.

Ramsey doesn’t shy away from the question of whether women manage differently than men. She said women

tend to be more inclusive than male managers, adding: “There is significant research that shows women bring different qualities to leadership than men.”

That said, Ramsey believes strongly that promoting diversity at the firm is about embracing new perspectives and different approaches to issues – not creating an “us vs. them” mentality that pits colleagues against each other based on gender or race. That would run counter to the culture of collaboration at Warner Norcross.

“Gender isn’t the most important part of this discussion,” she said. “The important piece is recognizing that there are different work and leadership styles – between men and women, old and young and across races – and valuing those different work and leadership styles. That’s why it is important to have diversity among our client service managers.”

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*“The important piece is recognizing that there are different work and leadership styles – between men and women, old and young and across races – and valuing those different work and leadership styles. That’s why it is important to have diversity among our client service managers.”*

– Janet Ramsey



# Scholarship PAVED THE WAY for Law School, Changed Student's Life

Sungjin Yoo was just 17 years old, a junior in high school, when he vowed to become an attorney. His decision was forged by personal tragedy: an immigration attorney's error on his father's visa forced his entire family – Sungjin, his three siblings and their parents – to grudgingly return to their homeland, South Korea, or face deportation from the United States.

It was a devastating turn of events for a family that emigrated to America so that Sungjin's father could attend seminary and become an ordained Christian minister.

After one year of home-schooling in Korea, Sungjin returned to the U.S. in 2009 and graduated in 2013 from Calvin College with a degree in International Relations, Classics and German. He was still determined to become a lawyer but he lacked the financial resources to attend law school.

Strapped for cash, he applied for and received a \$1,500 scholarship from Warner Norcross that covered the cost of a LSAT (Law School Admission

Test) preparation course. He was one of five students who received the scholarship in 2012.

Sungjin said the scholarship changed his life—it helped pave the way for other scholarships that ultimately allowed him to enroll at Washington University Law School in St. Louis, Missouri.

“Without your firm's funding of my LSAT preparation course, I would not have been able to do well on the LSAT and would not have been granted admission to, as well as receive a generous scholarship from, Washington University,” Sungjin wrote in a recent, unsolicited email to Rodney D. Martin, the Diversity Partner at Warner Norcross. “The LSAT Prep Scholarship was crucial in leading me to an opportunity to study at Washington University.”

Sungjin is now on track to earn his Juris Doctorate in 2017; he plans to focus his practice on international business or international humanitarian law. “I really want to be a voice for the weak and the overlooked,” he said.



“Taking an LSAT preparation course can make a big difference in whether and where one gets into law school,” said Rodney Martin. “For many disadvantaged students of color, however, the cost of such a course is prohibitive. We offer the LSAT Prep scholarship to help deserving students overcome that obstacle.”

Since it began awarding scholarships in 2000, Warner Norcross has awarded more than \$155,000 to support programs that encourage minority students to pursue a career in the law. The firm has awarded scholarships to more than 70 students.

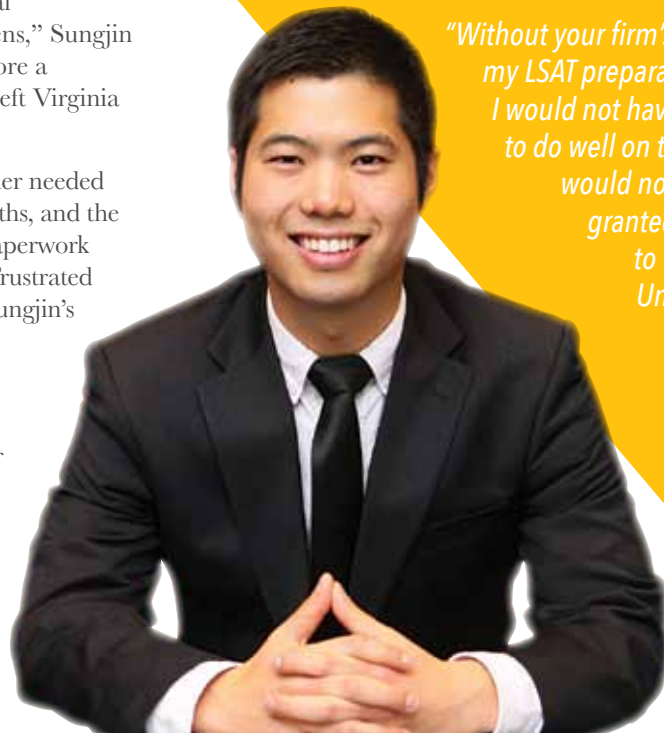
Sungjin said his desire to advocate for people of modest means stems from his Christian faith and his family’s needless exodus from the U.S. His family was forced to return to Korea after their lawyer applied for the wrong immigration status for Sungjin’s father, who had graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in West Michigan and was hired to pastor a church in Virginia.

“Due to the attorney’s mistake, we lost our legal immigration status and thus became illegal aliens,” Sungjin said. “In order to comply with the law and before a deportation took place, our family voluntarily left Virginia for Korea – with plans to return.”

The application process for the new visa his father needed to work in the U.S. turned from weeks into months, and the attorney who botched the initial immigration paperwork showed no interest in remedying the situation. Frustrated by bureaucratic red tape and repeated delays, Sungjin’s parents opted to settle in Seoul.

“I included this story in my application for law school,” Sungjin said. “I hoped to convey to the admissions officers how the visa problem further confirmed my desire to change things and be a voice for the voiceless.”

**Sungjin Yoo** ▶



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*“Without your firm’s funding of my LSAT preparation course, I would not have been able to do well on the LSAT and would not have been granted admission to Washington University Law School.”*

– Sungjin Yoo

## New Attorney Evaluation System Confronts Implicit Bias



Preconceived ideas that lurk deep in the subconscious mind can hijack the human brain and cause even the most thoughtful managers to reach flawed, potentially harmful conclusions about their employees.

Case in point: A recent study found that law firm partners who were told a memorandum was written by an African American associate were more critical of the memo than partners who believed the same memo was written by a Caucasian associate.

That study, coupled with several Warner Norcross partners attending a workshop on inclusive leadership and the dangers of implicit bias, prompted an overhaul of the firm's associate evaluation system. The goal: Ensure a level playing field for associates, regardless of race or gender.

In the past, partners at Warner Norcross evaluated associates using a check-the-box scoring system. Studies suggest that such a system could be subject to implicit bias, since it takes little time to complete. Starting in 2014, partners were required to write essays about each associate before using the check-the-box scoring system.

“The idea is to interrupt any potential opportunity for implicit biases, such as confirmation bias, by requiring the attorney to take additional time to think about his or her response and to provide examples that support the attorney's evaluation,” said Rodney D. Martin, the Diversity Partner at Warner Norcross.

Implicit bias is an attitude a person holds, subconsciously, about other people, groups or things. Confirmation bias is the brain's way of selectively interpreting information that agrees with a person's preconceptions.

Martin said it's too soon to tell if the new evaluation system is making a difference.

“We did find that, in the first two rounds of evaluations using the new system, we obtained an increased amount of narrative feedback that provided specific examples from the associate's performance, which is what we were hoping for,” he said.

Also in 2014, several of the firm's largest practice groups implemented a list of competencies that associates are

expected to demonstrate at the end of their second, fifth, and seventh years with the firm. Those competencies provide associates with a roadmap for success, while ensuring a level playing field between associates of different genders, ethnicities or other backgrounds.

Managing Partner Doug Wagner said the new evaluation system provides a more complete, definitive assessment of associates' strengths and weaknesses.

“We’re holding the evaluators more accountable; they have to provide a narrative that supports their ranking of an associate – good or bad,” Wagner said. “We get better information and it enables us to better judge individual results and initiate a response that helps the associate improve and progress through the organization.”

— Rodney D. Martin, Diversity Partner

## Demographic Profile as of December 31, 2014

### Associates

**Percent Female = 53.8%**    **Percent Minority = 10.3%**

Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
African American	1	1	2
Arab American	1	0	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0	0
Hispanic	0	1	1
White	19	16	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>39</b>

### Partners

**Percent Female = 18.0%**    **Percent Minority = 2.5%**

Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
African American	0	1	1
Arab American	1	1	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1	2
Hispanic	0	0	0
White	20	97	117
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>122</b>

### Counsel & Senior Counsel

**Percent Female = 43.5%**    **Percent Minority = 13.0%**

Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
African American	0	1	1
Arab American	1	0	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0	0
Hispanic	1	0	1
White	8	12	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>

### All Active Attorneys

**Percent Female = 28.8%**    **Percent Minority = 5.4%**

Race/Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
African American	1	3	4
Arab American	3	1	4
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1	2
Hispanic	1	1	2
White	47	125	172
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>184</b>



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