

Rochelle Gumapac Named Firm's First Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer

Gumapac will expand and formalize strategic diversity initiatives
1.28.21

KEY ATTORNEYS

Rochelle Gumapac

White and Williams is proud to announce the appointment of Partner Rochelle Gumapac as the firm's first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Officer. In creating this new role, Gumapac will spearhead and oversee the firm's diversity, equity and inclusion strategies. Gumapac has been with the firm for over 10 years and is a partner in the Wilmington, Delaware office.

"Improving diversity in the legal industry cannot be taken lightly and needs to be a stated priority for all law firms with emphasis from the top down" said Gumapac. "I'm excited to work closely with Andy Susko, the firm's Managing Partner, and firm management to further the firm's long-standing commitment to diversity and inclusion. Our established committees, including Diversity, Associate Development, and the Women's Initiative, will be expanded and will supplement our already progressive programs in place as we launch new innovative initiatives with the goal of making meaningful and systemic change."

"One of my primary goals as Managing Partner is to build upon the foundational diversity initiatives Patricia Santelle implemented during her tenure as the firm's first female Managing Partner," said Andrew Susko, Managing Partner of the firm and Chair of the Executive Committee. "Appointing Rochelle as the firm's leader on diversity, equity and inclusion is the next logical step, representing an extension of our firm's commitment to be a more inclusive organization and one which reflects today's diverse society."

The goals of the new position are to sustain the recruitment of diverse candidates and summer associates and continue to build upon and expand the mentorship and associate training programs. In addition, the firm will seek to foster and retain diverse legal talent, create a leadership pipeline and sponsorship program to invest in diverse future leaders, and provide opportunities to participate actively in firm management and firm management committees. In pursuing these goals Gumapac plans to partner with legal industry associations to support and shape DEI initiatives industry-wide, including launching a formal metrics evaluation to measure the success of the firm's short and long-term goals.

"The firm will continue its focus on diversity and inclusion, and under Rochelle's direction we will measure our DEI efforts and provide accountability. We welcome Rochelle's energy and passion and look forward to her leadership and meaningful progress with her in this new role," continued Susko.



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White and Williams' commitment to diversity was long established prior to the addition of this new position. The firm's Diversity Committee, chaired by Wesley Payne, the current Chancellor-Elect and 2022 Chancellor of the Philadelphia Bar Association, was formed in 2006 to ensure the firm is developing lawyers and staff of every race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender and sexual orientation. The firm has additional committees such as the Women's Initiative, which creates educational programs, networking opportunities and charitable activities to help cultivate a supportive and inclusive workplace for women. The firm also hires first-year law students as summer associates through the Philadelphia Diversity Law Group, a non-profit consortium of law firms and legal departments in the Philadelphia region committed to increasing the diversity of the legal community. White and Williams' sustained commitment to diversity has yielded the hire of eight full-time diverse attorneys and seven diverse summer associates over the last 12 months.

White and Williams recently endowed a scholarship in support of the Rutgers Law School Minority Student Program, a nationally-acclaimed and highly successful post-admissions program that serves students of any race or ethnicity that are underrepresented in the legal profession and who have faced discrimination or overcome social and economic hardships. The firm will also be sponsoring 10 Delaware Bar Applicants' participation in the Multicultural Judges and Lawyers Section of the Delaware State Bar Association's Supplemental Bar Course, which provides additional assistance and support to all Delaware Bar Applicants, specifically ethnically diverse applicants. Gumapac is an alumnae of the program.

In addition to her new role, Gumapac serves as the Delaware State Representative for Defense Research Institute, and is a board member of the state's local defense organization, Defense Counsel of Delaware, where she also champions diversity and inclusion initiatives. Gumapac is an advocate for increased diversity, equity and inclusion efforts within clients' organizations as well and has collaborated with some of the firm's long-standing clients to develop DEI programs. Gumapac is currently enrolled at Cornell University to obtain a certificate in Diversity and Inclusion.

