

PUBLICATION

Developing a Legal Career Pipeline for Birmingham High Schoolers

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Baker Donelson is thrilled to be an active sponsor and participant in the Birmingham Bar Association's (BBA) "Students Today | Lawyers Tomorrow" pipeline program for Birmingham City School students. This collaborative initiative is a partnership between law firms and judges that is intended to break down barriers for people of color to become lawyers. The initiative is led by Baker Donelson Shareholder and BBA President Marcus Maples.

A primary component of the pipeline initiative will include a city-wide mock trial competition. Local law firms will provide attorney coaches for participating high school students who may dream of becoming attorneys and want to experience a trial. The hope is that the students will gain awareness of the steps necessary to ensure that they achieve their goal of becoming an attorney. According to Marcus, "The Students Today | Lawyers Tomorrow initiative will provide concrete next steps to ensure that interested students stay on the right path. In addition, it will build their confidence and comfort level with achieving their goal. If they can be successful at mock trials, then they will believe that they can continue the path to becoming a lawyer." He noted that the initiative will also help students build a network of fellow students who dream of becoming lawyers. To date, seven law firms have committed to participate in the mock trial competition.

Another major component of the pipeline initiative will endow scholarships to the six Alabama colleges with established mock trial programs so that participants can continue their training and stay on the path to pursuing a legal education. The schools include University of Alabama at Birmingham, Samford University, University of Alabama, Auburn University at Montgomery, University of North Alabama, and University of Mobile. The goal is to endow one scholarship per year at each of these institutions over the next six years. Baker Donelson is the first law firm to commit to a \$10,000 contribution toward a scholarship at Marcus's alma mater, the University of North Alabama (UNA). Notably, the UNA Mock Trial Program is celebrating 25 years of existence and has propelled countless minority students into the practice of law.

The Students Today | Lawyers Tomorrow initiative is in the process of soliciting additional support from the law firms participating in the mock trial program and the BBA and plans to request support from corporate sponsors as well. Anyone interested in participating or getting more information can contact [Marcus Maples](#) or Executive Director of the Birmingham Bar Association, [Jennifer Bates](#).