

Inclusive Excellence in Lawyering Process  
by Nantiya Ruan  
Professor of the Practice  
University of Denver Sturm College of Law

### How LRW Faculty Can Lead in Law School Inclusive Education

We are entering a new and exciting era in our profession as two women of color become President of our two major professional associations: Professor Kim Chanbonpin for the Legal Writing Institute (LWI) and Professor Teri McMurry-Chubb for the Association of Legal Writing Directors (ALWD). The question I posed during the panel on diversity at the ALWD Conference last June was: “**how will we know we moved beyond the symbolic and made true progress in diversifying our profession**”? I posited that it won’t be when we no longer need a panel devoted solely to diversity, but when all our panels, all our committees, and all our leadership positions reflect a range of diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

The sad truth is that LRW faculty are among the least diverse in the legal academy.<sup>1</sup> Yet we know that who stands up in front of the classroom to teach our law students, especially in the first-year, is critically important. Diversity matters particularly in the first year, when students are introduced to the practice of law, and begin working with clients and confronting difficult legal issues. Having faculty able to share diverse viewpoints enriches our students, while also encourages non-traditional students to succeed in law.

As a profession, we have not done enough to initiate change in inclusive education. Towards that goal, I proposed four goals at the ALWD Conference for LRW faculties and law schools to adopt.

**#1: Formalize an Inclusive Hiring Plan.** Make the hiring of new LRW teachers a priority at national markets with competitive processes that prioritizes hiring those with diverse viewpoints. If schools continue hiring practices that look only local or known audiences, our faculties will continue to be a reflection of the majority.

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<sup>1</sup> See LWI/ALWD Survey (from 2010-2014, reporting between 87-89% of Legal Writing Faculty as White, available at: <http://lwionline.org/uploads/FileUpload/2014SurveyReportFinal.pdf>).

**#2: Provide Shared Leadership Opportunities.** The dominant model of programs with Directors gives priority to a handful of privileged faculty, while most of the newer and lesser-known faculty receive less pay and benefits, in conference budgets and scholarship opportunities. Pushing for shared leadership models, that shares resources along with opportunities for leadership on national and law school-level committees, will give others more opportunity for career growth.

**#3: Mentor Scholarship.** One part of being a leader in the LRW community is being a scholar of engaging scholarship, whether it is in rhetoric and communication, pedagogy, or particular fields of legal doctrine. The most well-known and influential LRW professors author books and articles that we routinely refer to and teach from. LRW professors just entering the field should be encouraged and promoted to take on these types of scholarly endeavors. Mentors are needed to do so successfully. Schools should consider starting scholarship groups, such as we have in the Rocky Mountain Legal Writing Scholarship Group (RMLWSG of CU, DU, and Wyoming).

**#4: Voice Your Views in Leadership Roles.** Being a leader at our individual schools is important. But we also need to take leadership roles outside our schools, at regional and national conferences, committees and organizations, to spread the word about how to make our profession more inclusive. Providing a truly inclusive education takes consistent and persistent work. Making sure that conversation happens all around the LRW community is all our responsibility.

Here at Denver Law, we have taken concrete steps towards the goal of inclusive education. First, we became Director-less, and began sharing the resources that allow our LRW faculty to get more recognition for their leadership roles, engage in scholarship, and attend more conferences. We took the initiative to change the conversation around hiring and resources to include those outside the majority.

Most recently, and most importantly, we began the **Lawyering Process Fellowship of Inclusive Education**. To begin, we sought to hire a candidate who would bring a rich experience and inclusive perspective to our writing classroom. We were extraordinarily lucky to find our inaugural hire with Professor Komal Vaidya, who joins us as an Assistant Professor of the Practice of Law for 2015-16. Professor Vaidya came to us with a wonderful background in public interest law and a wealth of teaching experience, and she plans to incorporate inclusive

education teaching pedagogies in her classroom.

Our hope at Denver Law is to continue and grow this Fellowship to a full-time, multiple-year position in the future. We also hope to spur a national movement and conversation about the need for inclusive education in law school generally, and legal writing particularly.