

# LAW WEEK

## COLORADO

## GCs Impart Client Service Insights in Advisor Program

*General counsel group connects diverse private practice attorneys with in-house leaders*

BY DOUG CHARTIER  
LAW WEEK COLORADO

General counsel don't always get to work directly with a law firm's high-performing diverse and women attorneys. But instead of waiting for the law firms to make those connections, a group of GCs is doing it in a mentorship program.

Now in its fourth year, the Colorado General Counsel Group's Advisor Program brings women attorneys and lawyers of diverse backgrounds together with Denver-area in-house lawyers, most of whom are their companies' chief legal officers. The GCs mentor the outside counsel participants, giving them the insider's perspective on what corporate clients want and need from outside firm attorneys.

The CGCG Advisor Program's goal is that high-performing diverse attorneys, who might be less likely than white male attorneys to get face time with GCs, come away with knowledge on how to better serve clients and grow a book of business. The 30 outside counsel participants are associate- and partner-level attorneys with experience ranging from seven to 17 years in legal practice. More than 80 percent of the participants are women. They will be connecting with a pool of 45 in-house lawyers this year.

At its 2018 kickoff session held March 2 at Holland & Hart's Denver office, Liberty Media Corporation CLO Rich Baer said he co-founded CGCG because he was dissatisfied with the lack of meaningful diversity promotion among law firms in Colorado.

"I would sit down with senior management at the firms and they would want to talk about [their] diversity [efforts] ... and they were all just like me — white guys in their fifties," Baer told the audience of attorneys. "I came from those meetings convinced that none of these lawyers really cared about advancing diversity within their organizations. I said, 'Screw that, we're going to create a network for diverse lawyers that they would die to have access to.'"

Appliance Factory Outlet General



**TOP:** Stephanie Hoos of Massive Interactive (left) and Patricia Elias of ServiceSource participated in a panel of Colorado general counsel. **RIGHT:** Women and diverse attorney participants in the CGCG Advisor Program attended the program's 2018 kickoff meeting at Holland & Hart in Denver. / DOUG CHARTIER, LAW WEEK

Counsel and CGCG cofounder Dennis Kaw told the participants that the Advisor Program is an opportunity to gain inside knowledge from GCs and "take your career to the next level." He urged participants to "pay it forward," however, by sharing what they learn in the program with junior attorneys at their firm and giving them access to the same network.

At the kickoff meeting, GCs gave their two cents on a variety of attorney-client business concerns from litigation to billing. The participants then broke out into small groups to workshop their elevator pitches.

The discussion hit on several points related to communication between outside counsel and client. Patrick O'Rourke, general counsel for the University of Colorado, said an organization's legal or business goals aren't

always what its outside counsel think they are, so lawyers would benefit from double-checking the stance the organization wants to take on a matter it's litigating.

"There are a lot of times where we could go to the mat on something, but we're going to have an ongoing relationship with the party on the other side, or that there's some reason the goal is other than to grind the other side into dust," O'Rourke said. "Unless you're actually trying to clarify the outcome that we're seeking early, we're going to be frustrated."

Wendy Cassidy, general counsel for Zayo Group, touched on the subject of client meetings. She said she doesn't mind seeing junior attorneys coming along to meetings as long as they're meaningfully engaged in the business or the matter. "Don't bring an associate,

no matter how young or old, for [only] the token reason," Cassidy told participants. "Encourage them to learn about the company, just like you all want to."

Most of the Advisor Program's participants are litigators, and as such it can be harder for them to have face time with GCs. The panel discussed how litigators can build relationships with in-house counsel even when they're brought in for "one-off" litigation matters.

Shawn Cheadle, general counsel for Lockheed Martin's Military Space division, acknowledged that it can be hard for litigators to "stay relevant" and connected to the company after the matter closes. But the "heart of the matter," he said, "is you've got to do really well in the matter."

"If you're one-off litigation counsel for us, you've got to knock it out of the

## DIVERSITY



park, every time,” Cheadle said. “You do really good, that’s repeat business.”

Trust between the outside firm and the client was a common theme throughout the GC panel’s advice. It extended into a well-worn subject — billing.

“I always really like the firms that we work with when we’re surprised by how low the bill is,” said Stephanie Hoos, general counsel for Massive Interactive. She added that it’s happened when the firm was cutting her organization a discount or billing lean while getting the firm’s associates up to speed, as a show of fair dealing. “That’s critical. When I know I don’t have to deal with law firms on that, that I know that I can trust them ... it really makes me want to give more work to that firm.”

One of the participants asked the GC group what billing pet peeves they have. Several of the GCs piped up in unison, to laughter, that “that would be a whole other panel.” •

—Doug Chartier, [DChartier@circuitmedia.com](mailto:DChartier@circuitmedia.com)

## // WHO’S IN THE ADVISOR PROGRAM?

This year, 30 diverse and female attorneys from a variety of law firms will participate in the CGCG Advisor Program. Meet three of the attorneys who will be connecting with Denver-area CLOs in the program.



### KAT HACKER

**PRACTICE:** TRIAL  
**FIRM:** BARTLIT  
BECK HERMAN  
PALENCHAR &  
SCOTT

Kat Hacker’s past experience as a pop singer has translated somewhat to her work in

trial. In each venue, the focus is on storytelling. “I see the courtroom as a stage,” Hacker said. “We’re just telling a story using different instruments.”

Hacker, a partner at litigation boutique Bartlit Beck Herman Palenchar & Scott, has tried cases ranging from employment discrimination disputes to patent infringement suits. Though her practice has no single focus in terms of legal area, the same principles tend to apply when making a strong case in the courtroom, she said.

“We start every case by thinking about what is our story at trial,” Hacker said. “You don’t need 10 years of employment law experience to know how to craft a story for the jury.”

Between high school and college, Hacker had a brief career as a pop singer and had recorded an album.

That was during the early 2000s when the music industry experienced an upheaval brought on by Napster and other file-sharing services. While that period “feels a world away,” Hacker said her exposure to entertainment legal issues during that time jumpstarted her interest in law.



### JOEL SAYRES

**PRACTICE:** INTELLECTUAL  
PROPERTY  
**FIRM:** FAEGRE  
BAKER DANIELS

Intellectual property litigator Joel Sayres’ account of how he first came

to America “is a bit of a long story.”

But the short version is this. He was born in Afghanistan and lived there until his family left for the U.S. before the Soviet Union invaded in 1979. He, his parents, three brothers and two sisters eventually settled in New Jersey. But the Sayres household would play host to visitors from around the world. Sayres’ mother is Mexican and lived in Tanzania before Afghanistan, and his father spent years in Peru and Chile. So they had grown a circle of friends from South America to Africa and housed numerous Afghan families escaping the war.

“It was a bit chaotic, but there was a big international flavor to our house, and we were exposed to a lot of different perspectives of life,” Sayres said.

Today Sayres is a partner at Faegre Baker Daniels’ IP litigation group where his focus is on patent litigation and proceedings before the Patent Trial and Appeal Board. He handles IP in an array of subject matter, from wireless technology to medical devices to data storage. He began his private practice at Irell & Manella in California. “I naturally wound up doing a lot of patent litigation and found out I liked it,” he said. Part of what he enjoys about IP practice, he added, is it allows him to be creative.



### KATIE YARGER

**PRACTICE:** APPELLATE  
**FIRM:** GIBSON  
DUNN &  
CRUTCHER

There’s no experience in law quite like working in the U.S. Supreme Court. Appeals-

focused lawyer Yarger clerked for Justice Clarence Thomas in what was a formative and intense segment of her career.

“The learning curve is amazingly steep [there], and you’re surrounded by so many brilliant lawyers,” she said. She fondly remembers the grind. “It was one of those jobs where you give it everything you have in the tank and then collapse at the end.”

Before that, Yarger clerked for then-Colorado Supreme Court Justice Allison Eid, as well as for the judge whose spot Eid would later assume on the Tenth Circuit — now-Justice Neil Gorsuch. Today Yarger is an associate with Gibson Dunn & Crutcher in Denver, where she handles litigation in both the appellate and trial levels. Her practice has her doing strategic brief writing for all types of subject matter. But the keys to writing an effective brief, she said, are similar whether it’s in a products liability case or an intellectual property dispute. A good brief has to nail the core legal argument have a strong overarching structure, she said.

Yarger joins the CGCG Advisor Program at an exciting and busy time. She and her husband of nearly 10 years, Colorado Solicitor General Fred Yarger, welcomed their third child, a boy, in January.