

**NOMINATION FORM
2012 ANNUAL NCWBA PUBLIC SERVICE AND
OUTSTANDING MEMBER PROGRAM AWARDS**

Name of your organization's project:

**Please indicate whether your submission is for the Public Service Award or
Outstanding Member Program Award:**

Name of sponsoring women's bar association:

Name of Sponsoring Organization's contact person:

E-mail address:

Telephone No:

Number of members:

Name of contact person for purposes of award notification:

E-mail address:

Telephone No.

**PLEASE MAKE SURE TO NOTIFY THE NCWBA OF ANY CHANGE IN YOUR CONTACT
INFORMATION AFTER SUBMISSION OF YOUR AWARD APPLICATION TO ENSURE
YOU RECEIVE TIMELY NOTIFICATION REGARDING WHETHER YOU HAVE BEEN
SELECTED TO RECEIVE AN AWARD.**

**The nomination materials may be e-mailed to be received no later than Friday,
January 27, 2012: Awards Chair Nicolette Zachary, E-mail: awards@ncwba.org**



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January 27, 2012

Nomination of Oregon Women Lawyers
“First Generation Professionals Discussion Group”
for the NCWBA 2012 Outstanding Member Program Award

Oregon Women Lawyers

Founded in 1989, Oregon Women Lawyers (OWLS) origins can be traced back to the Multnomah Bar Association’s *Committee on the Status of Women* in 1987-88. At the 1988 state bar convention, the Multnomah Bar Committee co-hosted a breakfast with three existing groups of women attorneys: Queen’s Bench (in Portland), Lane County Women Lawyers, and The Mary Leonard Law Society in Salem. That breakfast led directly to the foundation of OWLS in 1989.

Since that time, OWLS has grown to over 1,400 members, making it the third largest bar association in Oregon, behind only the Oregon State Bar and the Multnomah County Bar Association (representing the greater Portland metropolitan area).

OWLS’ mission is to “transform the practice of law and ensure justice and equality by advancing women and minorities in the legal profession.” The principal purposes of OWLS are:

- To promote equal rights and opportunities for women and minorities within the legal profession and the justice system.
- To promote full participation of women and minorities in the organized bar and in the legislative and judicial branches of government.

- To provide opportunities for women and minorities in the legal profession to support and educate one another.
- To improve the quality and image of the legal profession in Oregon.
- To actively promote equality and fair treatment of all people within the legal profession and in society.

Some of OWLS' efforts at advancing its mission and purposes are major events in the Portland legal community, for instance, 2012 marks the 20th year OWLS has held a dinner to honor recipients of our Justice Betty Roberts and Judge Mercedes Deiz Awards (given to a member of our legal community who has made an outstanding contribution to promoting women (Roberts) and minorities (Deiz) in the legal profession and community). This 500-person dinner is a perennial sell-out. We also host a Fall CLE annually, bringing in the likes of Anita Hill, Patricia Ireland and Sarah Weddington to speak to our membership. We also publish a quarterly newsletter, and maintain a listserv, which over 1,000 of our members utilize.

Other OWLS' efforts are much more personal and are designed to benefit a particular contingency of our membership. These include monthly networking events, leadership seminars, mentoring programs and specialized groups. Our "OWLS First Generation Professionals Discussion Group" is one such group. We appreciate NCWBA's consideration of this program for its 2012 Outstanding Member Program Award.

First Generation Professionals Discussion Group

It is with no small amount of pride that we attorneys think of ourselves as members of the "legal profession." Unlike many jobs, a "profession" requires "special, usually advanced, education, knowledge, and skill." *Blacks Law Dict.*, 6th Ed. Becoming a professional is a significant accomplishment. Historically, even the opportunity to obtain the appropriate training was (largely) limited to wealthy, white men. Women and minorities have made tremendous strides over the past century in their ability to gain entry into the profession. Indeed, women and men graduate at a fairly equal rate from law school. Once members of this profession, however, women and minorities often discover that there are other, often significant, barriers to success. OWLS strives to develop ways to help our members not just overcome, but knock-down, those barriers.

The First Generation Professionals Discussion Group arose out of the recognition that a lawyer who is the first in her family (or the first woman in her family) to enter the profession (or, perhaps, even graduate from college) often faces unique barriers to success.

They often enter the profession with little prior exposure to its culture, traditions and jargon, and, consequently, they are often more uncomfortable in their job, networking or otherwise taking the steps that lead to success in the profession. Adding to the professional stress, their families often cannot fully appreciate the demands the practice places on them. Even the most intelligent and competent among them may have doubts about their ability—and, sometimes, their desire—to stay in the profession. Just being able to talk to other first generation professionals about the unique stressors they face can go a long way towards alleviating those stressors and breaking down those barriers to success.

Such was the thinking of Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Katherine Tennyson last summer. After a young lawyer finished her appearance, Judge Tennyson called her into chambers to offer her some pointers. During the conversation, she learned that the lawyer was the first person in her family to go to college and, in fact, was unaccustomed to getting assistance from anyone. Also the first in her family to attend college, Judge Tennyson identified with the young lawyer. She also knew that they were not alone.

First-generation lawyers come from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds but, for women and minority lawyers, overcoming the hurdles presented by this status can be even more daunting. Having just ended a long tenure on the OWLS Board of Directors, Judge Tennyson recognized this as an issue OWLS should attempt to address. She contacted OWLS, along with fellow “first-generation” judges: Hon. Youlee You (also an OWLS Board Member) and Hon. Angel Lopez. In fairly short order, OWLS members received this email:

To: OWLS Listserve
From: OWLS
Subject: First Generation Professionals Group - Portland

Dear OWLS members,

Are you the first in your family to go to college?
Get a professional degree?
Be a lawyer?
Feel like it would be helpful to talk with others who have the same life experience?

Please join Judges You, Lopez, and Tennyson on _____
at noon for just that conversation. Bring your lunch to Judge Tennyson’s courtroom—308—for a very informal get together in the

Multnomah County Courthouse. This lunch occurs about every other month and we let the conversation take it where it will, but also take suggestions for topics.

If you are going to join us, please let Judge Tennyson | [email address] know by emailing her by Thursday _____ to get an accurate count for a sweet treat).

Oregon Women Lawyers

And so began the OWLS First Generation Professionals Discussion Group.



January 27, 2012 Discussion Group

The group has met four times since August 2011 (approximately every other month). Generally, after introductions, one of the judges will share a few thoughts intended to get the conversation flowing; from there, the interests of the group guide the conversation. Inevitably, conversations and connections continue well after the official meeting has ended. With about 18 members joining the judges each session (and at least a few new members at each one), it shows every sign of becoming a long-standing OWLS program.

There is, essentially, no cost to implement this program and a tremendous up-side to doing so. We appreciate the NCWBA consideration of the OWLS First Generation Professionals Discussion Group for its 2012 Outstanding Member Program Award.