The legal profession is in the midst of profound change. Beginning roughly in 2008 with the economic downturn, a number of alarming trends have been documented: Law school enrollment is declining and thousands of law graduates have had to face the stark reality of job scarcity in the marketplace; firms are under increasing pressure from individual and corporate clients demanding alternative billing arrangements; companies are outsourcing legal work to less expensive providers such as overseas lawyers, contract attorneys, and e-discovery providers; and consumers are turning to more affordable online legal services or going without legal advice because it is simply beyond their reach.

With this background, in 2014 the D.C. Bar leadership engaged in a comprehensive planning effort to revisit all of the assumptions of its existing strategic plan to pivot to a future in service of its more than 100,000 members. The effort was directed by a Strategic Planning Committee appointed by then D.C. Bar President Brigida Benitez and comprised of respected leaders representative of the Bar’s diverse membership.

To fully understand the context in which its deliberations would occur, the committee undertook an environmental scan of the legal marketplace, conducted a survey of the membership, hosted 21 focus groups, and commissioned a series of polls. Thousands of D.C. Bar members responded, providing critical feedback that informed the priorities and objectives that serve as the foundation for the Bar’s New Strategic Plan, DC Bar 2020: A New Five-Year Horizon.

The D.C. Bar is at a crucial time in its history. Now, more than ever, the Bar needs to step up and provide strong leadership to respond to the changing nature of the legal profession and to meet the varying needs of its members to remain relevant, as well as to position itself to succeed in the future.

**STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Kim M. Keenan, Chair

Members:
The Hon. Corrine Beckwith
Brigida Benitez
Amy L. Bess
Moses Cook
Sabine Curto
The Hon. Herbert B. Dixon Jr.
Andrea Ferster
Suzanne Rich Folsom
Ronald C. Machen Jr.
Jonathan Mastrangelo
Marlon Paz
Ilene G. Reid
Robert Spagnoletti
William Michael Treanor
Timothy K. Webster
Claudia Withers

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

“The only thing that is constant is change.”
---Heraclitus

KATHERINE A. MAZZAFERRI
D.C. Bar CEO
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

ONLINE SURVEY
More than 2,500 current D.C. Bar members participated in the Bar’s quantitative research conducted via an online survey.

FOCUS GROUPS
346 members participated in qualitative research conducted via 21 two-hour focus groups representing diverse segments of the membership.

21 demographically unique audiences:
- Age-based
- Practice-based
- Bar leaders
- Judiciary

YEARS PRACTICING LAW
- 63% 20+ years
- 9% 15–20 years
- 9% 11–15 years
- 11% 6–10 years
- 8% 5 years or less

YEARS AS MEMBERS OF THE D.C. BAR
- 61% 15+ years
- 28% 4–15 years
- 11% 3 years or less

Although D.C. Bar 2020 is a member-centric effort, key staff drove the strategic planning process.

VICTOR L. VELAZQUEZ
Chief Operating Officer, CAE

CYNTHIA G. KUHN
Director of Content Initiatives; Former Director of Communications

MICHELA M. PERRONE
Facilitator, MMP Associates

LINDSEY BLEDSOE
Planning/Logistics Coordinator
D.C. BAR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

1. Strategic Priorities
   The key, overarching imperatives on which the Bar must focus its attention

2. Strategic Objectives
   Descriptions of each stated priority

3. Organizational Implications
   What the Strategic Priorities & Objectives actually mean for the D.C. Bar

4. Strategic Goals & Initiatives
   The efforts that will allow the D.C. Bar to achieve its stated Strategic Priorities & Objectives
“We have formed a plan that reflects the needs, interests, and input of our members.”

Brigida Benitez, D.C. Bar President, 2014-15

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE D.C. BAR

1. Improve its value to the membership
2. Be nimble to better serve member needs in a changing environment
3. Better utilize alternative program delivery methods in serving a geographically diverse membership
“We need to put the members’ needs at the center of decisions.”

Timothy K. Webster, D.C. Bar President, 2015-16
“The D.C. Bar has to be nimble enough to respond quickly to changes in the field.”

Kim M. Keenan
Chair, D.C. Bar Strategic Planning Committee
D.C. Bar President, 2009-10

CHANGES IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

- Shrinking law school pipeline
- Globalization of the practice
- Difficult market for newly minted lawyers
- Increased pressure on traditional billing models
- Proliferation of alternative legal service providers
D.C. Bar 2020 consists of five strategic priorities that summarize the Bar’s values and provide a foundation on which the organization will deploy its resources.
LEADING WITHIN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

“What is the vision for being a lawyer? The D.C. Bar has a role to play in the debate about what it means to be a lawyer in the next five years.”

The D.C. Bar is the second largest unified bar in the country with members in all 50 states and in 83 countries. Members from all areas have articulated a desire for the D.C. Bar to function as a leader in the profession, serving as an enabler of thoughtful discussion on the key issues affecting the profession.

The Bar will strive to convene the talented individuals and premier organizations within the profession to help define, evaluate, and identify opportunities in response to existing and emerging issues and challenges, consistent with the parameters of its role representing members across entire spectrums of perspectives on any given matter.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

ORGANIZATIONAL & OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The D.C. Bar will achieve positioning as an overall leader in the profession by acquiring, retaining, and showcasing the skills and expertise of talented staff; leveraging technologies; and conducting efficiency and effectiveness reviews of its programs and processes. The Bar will ensure that a five-year time horizon and beyond is considered in making all significant economic decisions, and will strive for long-term financial sustainability and resiliency.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

The D.C. Bar will use its stature in the community to provide thought leadership around domestic and global issues affecting the legal profession and the community, including the delivery of, and removal of barriers to, access to justice for underserved communities.

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

The D.C. Bar will put greater emphasis on partnerships and collaboration with other organizations to address immediate, near, and long-term areas of opportunity and challenge for the profession, its members, and the public interest.
A key theme expressed in the 21 focus groups hosted by the D.C. Bar, in which hundreds of members participated in person, and in the responses of thousands of members to online surveys and polling was the desire for choice and the ability to have professional mobility.

A high percentage of members indicated that a career change had been thrust upon them, while significant numbers indicated that movement within practice areas had been driven by their interest in career progression or in the subject matter. In general, feedback was focused on the ways in which the D.C. Bar could provide members with multi-dimensional resources that would empower them to have choices.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

**LIFELONG TRANSITIONS**

The D.C. Bar will focus on providing resources and experiences at every phase of a member’s professional journey, from when they first launch their careers to when they retire but may still wish to contribute, and the many in-between stages in one’s career span.

**CAREER EXPLORATION & DEVELOPMENT**

The D.C. Bar will provide its members with an opportunity, both in-person and virtually, to consider new career options and trajectories by identifying and addressing gaps in strengths, skills, and experience, and by developing both technical expertise and technological competence in the practice of law.

**FRAMING PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITY**

Drawing on the expertise of its members and the profession at large, the D.C. Bar will help to define frameworks and approaches for the opportunities and challenges associated with the choices a member may encounter in the course of his or her professional journey. It will seek to drive a holistic understanding of “what I need to know” in order to enhance members’ awareness and ability to identify appropriate professional choices.

“We need better practice support for lawyers at all stages of their careers so we can practice bigger, better, faster — all related to managing our practices effectively and keeping out of disciplinary consequences.”
ENHANCING MEMBER VALUE

“The D.C. Bar could help with career transitions: career counseling, mentoring, informational interviews, and even career coaching.”

An organization that serves more than 100,000 members in 83 countries with a high concentration of its membership in the D.C. metropolitan area must focus on what constitutes value for such a diverse and dispersed community.

By effectively growing and communicating its brand value, the D.C. Bar has an opportunity to yield both real and perceived added value to membership in one of the premier bars in the country.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

UNDERSTANDING INDIVIDUAL VALUE PROPOSITION

The D.C. Bar will work proactively to evaluate the needs and interests of its individual members, discreet member segments, and cross-segments of its membership to define a sophisticated value proposition model to encourage and support individual members’ engagement.

COMMUNICATING & DELIVERING VALUE

Leveraging the latest technologies whenever possible, the D.C. Bar will seek proactively to communicate the unique value available to its members. The Bar will ensure that value is delivered in a manner that aligns with the diverse and dispersed nature of its membership.

DELIVERING OUTSTANDING SERVICE EXPERIENCES

Members and other key stakeholders should expect a consistently superior service experience, in person or online, through leading-edge technologies, in keeping with the D.C. Bar’s superior member value offerings and its standing as one of the premier bars in the country.

“The D.C. Bar could help with career transitions: career counseling, mentoring, informational interviews, and even career coaching.”
The D.C. Bar has a public service mission that addresses the public’s need for exceptional legal representation. It achieves this by ensuring that the competence and ethical standards of its members are of the highest caliber.

PROVIDING PUBLIC SERVICE & PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

“I am interested in what I can do for the D.C. Bar. I am ready to serve. I want to contribute and am at a place in my career that I can now do so.”

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

PROMOTING ACCESS TO JUSTICE
The D.C. Bar is committed to promoting and supporting access to justice for low-income individuals by working to increase pro bono services in the District of Columbia while also focusing on expanding public awareness of this challenge.

HIGHEST ETHICAL STANDARDS
The D.C. Bar will provide resources to support the membership in upholding the highest ethical standards of practice and to ensure the appropriate enforcement of the D.C. Rules of Professional Conduct.

TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE & TECHNOLOGICAL COMPETENCE
The D.C. Bar will serve the profession and the public interest by providing continuing legal education that reaches members locally, nationally, and globally as a component of its efforts to invest in and support its members’ technical and technological proficiency, as well as their overall professional excellence.
An overwhelming number of member responses focused on the desire to network and connect, both in person and virtually, to other individuals and organizations within the profession.

They cited the D.C. Bar as uniquely positioned to convene groups and foster opportunities for self-directed exchanges of ideas and information around practice specialty and issue areas locally, nationally, and internationally.

Members further indicated a desire for connections that highlight their value and contributions to the corporate community, the general public, and the complementary professions with which they engage on a regular basis.

**FOSTERING COMMUNITY & CONNECTIONS**

“Networking needs to be relationship building, not only face to face but also through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.”

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

**COMMUNITY OF CHOICE**

Members will see the D.C. Bar as an important in-person and virtual professional gathering place that fosters rewarding connections that focus on being part of a critically important profession.

**BRIDGING BOTH PRACTICE AREA & DEMOGRAPHIC SPECTRUMS**

The D.C. Bar will facilitate connections within its dispersed and diverse community of members through a sharing of expertise and experience.

**LOCAL, NATIONAL & GLOBAL FOCUS**

Recognizing the widely dispersed nature of the D.C. Bar’s membership, and its location in the nation’s capital, the Bar will provide opportunities virtually and in person, and will aggressively move to migrate its catalog of offerings online and make them accessible wherever a member may be located.
WHAT'S NEXT: 
D.C. BAR STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Following the Board of Governors’ approval of the Strategic Priorities and Objectives, the D.C. Bar undertook a series of conversations to identify the specific implications of those statements — what they actually mean for the enterprise — and identified a number of strategic initiatives to be carried out in the next five years.

NEW HEADQUARTERS BUILDING
A multi-year effort to design and build a state-of-the-art headquarters in Mount Vernon Triangle where members can network and learn, congregate, and connect.

REDESIGN OF WASHINGTON LAWYER MAGAZINE
A complete overhaul of our flagship publication both in print and digital formats to better engage with our membership and to address key content areas.

DC BAROMETER TOUR
A multi-city listening tour to engage the nearly 40 percent of the Bar’s membership that live and work outside the District of Columbia.

UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS
An effort to engage with area law schools to help prepare students to enter the practice of law successfully.

LUNCH WITH A LAWYER SERIES
A unique opportunity for members to connect veteran practitioners with lawyers considering a switch in expertise areas.

ONLINE 50
An expansion of the Bar’s Continuing Legal Education Program offerings with the development of 50 unique online courses.

D.C. BAR SMARTBRIEF
A daily email newsletter delivering a summary of major legal news stories on topics of interest as identified by the membership.

REVAMP OF THE BAR’S CAREER CENTER
A comprehensive redesign of the Bar’s online Career Center to better support the membership’s professional development and transitions throughout the arc of their legal careers.
For updates on these and our other strategic initiatives, visit dcbar.org/strategic-plan