

WOMEN LAWYERS *of* UTAH

2020–2021 Annual Report





The mission of Women Lawyers of Utah is to provide opportunities for women lawyers to develop and advance their careers and to further the cause of women in Utah generally. The objectives of its mission are to educate and inform, to offer support, to encourage community affiliation for professional success, to seek greater responsiveness to women's need from Utah's justice system and better living and working conditions for all Utah women.



WOMEN LAWYERS *of* UTAH

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WOMEN LAWYERS *of* UTAH

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Letter from WLU President Kimberly Neville

I had the privilege of serving WLU as its Pandemic President from 2020-2021. Simply stated: *“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.”*

WLU continued to meet and thrive during a very challenging time in our nation and state’s history. The pandemic was particularly hard on women – and especially hard on working mothers – who faced additional challenges associated with homeschooling children, caring for aging parents who were unable to leave their homes for fear of contracting the virus, and the incredible uncertainty in the legal market as firms dealt with the economic pressures of a global pandemic. 2020 was also a year that brought us unprecedented social unrest, bringing us the #metoo movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and an attack on our nation’s capital. We also witnessed the passing of our matriarch, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who gracefully reminded us every day that “Women belong in all places where decisions are being made.”

WLU also faced difficulties in our own ranks, with the release our 2020 Initiative Report, entitled: “Barriers to Advancement: Findings from the 2020 Study of Gender & Racial Bias in Utah’s Legal Profession.” Although we had initially commissioned this study with the goal of showing the progress that our profession had made since 2010, we quickly learned that the findings were disappointing. More than 60% of our respondents reported that they had no senior women working in their place of business, and our ladies further reported increased incidents of sexual harassment and workplace discrimination. The wage gap also continued, as well as impairments to women seeking partnership and management roles. We also found that women of color were particularly underrepresented in our profession, with less than 5% achieving positions of authority. WLU also witnessed personal attacks within our judicial branch against some of our most respected members, which taught us that our fight would still be ongoing for at least another generation.

Fortunately, our organization has never been defined by its challenges, but is always remembered for how we responded. WLU rose to the challenges of 2020 in a number of ways, including:

- Offering meaningful virtual programming to educate the bar and business community regarding gender discrimination and implicit bias;
- Providing virtual CLEs, committee meetings, and social events that offered our ladies an opportunity to connect in a time of social distancing;
- Launching a mentorship program to assist women attorneys in advancing to partnership or leadership positions in in-house roles;

- Partnering with the Utah Center for Legal Inclusion, the Bar Commission, and the National Conference of Women’s Bar Associations to establish best practices and resources for firms;
- Expanding our judicial outreach programs to prepare more women to apply for and take the bench in Utah;
- Expanding the work of our historian committee, to preserve our place in history for generations to come;
- Encouraging and promoting candidates for the Utah Bar Commission and bar leadership positions, to improve our representation within our own profession.

Most importantly, WLU was a resource for countless women who reached out to us in confidence seeking help with job searches, employment issues, or networking and support needs. We often accomplished our most significant work quietly and behind the scenes, as so many professional women do.

I was grateful and proud to serve as WLU President during this very unusual time, and am even more thankful for the wonderful friendships I have developed along the way. I am looking forward to watching the next 40 years of this terrific organization.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Neville

Partner, Dorsey & Whitney LLP
WLU President, 2020-2021

Membership and Publicity

Chair: Anne Freeland

Committee: Lena Daggs, Brit Merrill, Daphne Oberg, Ashley Walker, Bethany Warr

Through the hard work of our committee members, we were able to get the word out about our many events and other information of interest to our members via our weekly announcements, and were able to inform graduating law students about the many benefits of joining the WLU via flyers distributed at graduation and word of mouth.

In the 2020 fiscal year, Women Lawyers of Utah had a total of 906 members. Of those, 179 were Utah State Bar members for three years or less and 727 were Utah State Bar members for more than three years. The Utah State Bar does not currently collect data on an attorney's sex, but reported 13,449 active, inactive and House Counsel members in good standing.

Young women (women < 3 years): 179

Women > 3 years: 727

Total WLU Members: 906

CLE Committee

Chair: Ashley Gregson

Committee: Rachel Terry, Melinda Birrell, Carolyn LeDuc, Katie Hudson, Sarah Vaughn

The WLU CLE Committee provides high quality, free monthly CLEs to WLU members, and provides assistance with CLE applications for other WLU events. The CLE Committee selects CLE topics that are relevant to WLU members and also gives female practitioners from various practice areas opportunities to participate as panelists and speakers. This year, the CLE Committee provided the following CLE events:

July 30, 2020 – **Where are We on Regulatory Reform: Perspectives from the Profession** (Moderator: Christine Durham, Panel: Jaelynn Jenkins, Ashley Peck, Rebecca Sandefur, Amy Sorenson) (Host: Utah Bar via Zoom) (Attendance: 283)

October 7, 2020 – Offered by ACLU for WLU – **“The Fight” film screening and discussion** (Moderator: Kate Conyers, Panel: Brittney Nystrom, Marina Lowe, Nikila Venugopal, and Valentina deFex) (Host: Utah Bar via Zoom) (Attendance: 37)

November 17, 2020 – **Advancement in the Legal Profession** (Speakers: Lauren Scholnick, Betsy Haws, Kim Neville) (Host: Utah Bar via Zoom) (Attendance: 96)

December 15, 2020 – **Reducing Barriers to Advancement in Law** (Speaker: Dr. Christy Glass) (Host: Utah Bar via Zoom) (Attendance: 215)

January 19, 2021 – **Insights into How Gender Dynamics Impacts the Practice of Law** (Speaker: Dr. Susan Madsen) (Host: Utah Bar via Zoom) (Attendance: 126)

April 20, 2021 – **Ready, Set, Go – The Return of Civil Jury Trials in the Third District** (Moderator: Judge Laura Scott, Panel: Judge Amber Mettler, Judge William Kendall, Judge Patrick Corum, Leslie Jakeman, Alissa Swart, Jenn Jones) (Host: Utah Bar via Zoom) (Attendance: 99)

May 10, 2021 – Co-Sponsored with Litigation Section: **Updates to Utah Rules of Civil Procedure** (Moderator: Cameron Sabin, Panel: Justin Toth, Judge Kent Holmberg, Laura DiFrancesco) (Host: Utah Bar via Zoom) (Attendance: TBD)

WLU thanks the Utah State Bar for providing their Zoom webinar platform so that we can continue to offer CLEs free of charge during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Career Advancement

Chair: Jen Tomchak

Committee: Rebecca Bosen, Evangeline Burbidge, Kathryn Carlisle-Kesling, Anna Crandall, Rebecca Horne, Elise Walker Jones, Larissa Lee, Holly Nelson, Amy Oliver, Kayla Quam, Melissa Reynolds

The Career Advancement Committee typically hosts two events every year: Banter with the Bench and Fireside with Former Chief Justice Christine M. Durham. Last year it added an additional event—Picnic with the Practitioners—in September 2019. But with COVID and the restrictions on in-person gatherings, we only held one virtual event this year. On March 23, 2021, we had a virtual Banter with the Bench. Despite the virtual format—or because of it—we had record attendance, especially from our judges. There were 109 participants with Judges from all over the State. We had judges from every level of the Court (10th Circuit, Federal District, Utah Supreme Court, Utah Court of Appeal, all except the 6th and 7th judicial districts, juvenile, and justice court judges). The event was well received and participants really seemed to like the format. One suggestion for next year would be to keep the introductions to a minimum so that we can spend more time in the small group sessions. We should also consider if there are ways to keep some portion of the event virtual so that we can hear from the judges in more rural districts.

We still hope to have the Fireside Event some time this summer. When it does take place, though, we have received the names and contact information for women who have been licensed for 40 years or more and we plan to hand out special pins to commemorate their achievements. We also are discussing having the presentation be an interview of the woman who has been practicing the longest in Utah together with words of advice from the women who received the pins. Although we were unable to complete all of the events we have done in the past, we hope that we will be able to put on really great events as soon as in-person events are allowed again.

WLU Attorney Well-Being

Chair: Allison Phillips Belnap

Committee: Maria Cruz, Him Hammons, Susan Motschieder, Holly Nelson, Kayla Quam, Michelle Quist, Kristin Raffone Vazquez, Rebecca Ryon, Arminda Spencer, Bethany Warr

The Attorney Well-Being Committee is committed to raise awareness of and engagement in activities aimed to improve well-being through prevention of substance abuse and mental health crises, treatment of those issues, and to encourage a continuous process toward thriving in all aspects of our lives. The process involves the following six fundamental spheres of well-being: emotional, occupational, intellectual, spiritual, physical, and social.

The Covid-19 Pandemic has increased the importance of well-being and, at the same time, has made it significantly more difficult to connect and engage in the six fundamental spheres listed above. We had hoped to at least provide virtual gatherings focused on personal and professional well-being, but our efforts proved challenging.

This year, we are acknowledging that we have all suffered various personal and professional setbacks and even life-altering losses over the course of this pandemic. And we are encouraging kindness, allowance, and space for ourselves and each other as we process the fall-out of the last year. Sometimes, acknowledgement, acceptance, and witnessing are the only and best actions we can take in moving towards increased well-being. Please know, we are all in this together, and it has not been easy for anyone. Be gentle with yourselves.

Community Outreach

Chair: Grace Pusavat

Committee: Mary Squire

The Community Outreach Committee hosts social, community service, and mentoring events. Past events include providing meals for youth at the Homeless Youth Resource Center, empowering children experiencing homelessness through the Girl Scout Troop at the Road Home Midvale, providing mentoring to law students, and connecting WLU members through networking opportunities.

While many of our more recent events were postponed due to the pandemic, the Community Outreach Committee looks forward to hosting its full range of in-person events and services again in the near future.

Chapters

Chair: Sarah Hafen

Northern Utah Chapter Liaison: Mara Brown

Central Utah Chapter Liaison: Amy Fiene

Southern Utah Chapter Liaison: Michelle Christensen

WLU Chapters Committee has a goal to provide meaningful CLE events in a variety of locations for our members and other attorneys throughout the state, and then to warmly invite and welcome them to attend. The Chapters Committee has been making an effort to host and sponsor events for WLU members and attorneys in all three of our Chapters. The Chapters Committee has a goal to help plan a CLE each year in South Salt Lake or Utah County for the Central Utah Chapter, and has historically helped coordinate an event that is often held in the Silicon Slopes area. Similarly, in an effort to serve WLU members throughout the state and provide more convenient CLE locations, the Chapters Committee has focused on hosting and sponsoring events in both Northern and Southern Utah as well.

Due to unique circumstances this year, the Chapters Committee has had to postpone planning in-person events, including some events that it has hoped to make annual events, but expects to resume planning and hosting events again when possible. Among the events the Chapters Committee still hopes to host are a few Satellite Banter with the Bench events in Northern Utah similar to events held in recent years, as well as an event in Central Utah. The Chapters Committee also would like to plan an event in Southern Utah for WLU members and attorneys in the area. One upside of the remote circumstances this year is that many CLEs have been available in a virtual form, providing access to virtual events over videoconferencing platforms to members across the state. The Chapters Committee hopes to continue to provide increased virtual access to events in the future. Ultimately, the Chapters Committee hopes to support and provide opportunities for WLU members and attorneys in all of our chapters.

Judicial Mentoring

Co-Chairs: Lauren Shurman, Holly Nelson, and Judge Laura Scott

Our goal of equal representation of women at all levels of the judiciary is not only right for women lawyers and the legal profession, it is necessary for the achievement of a more just rule of law. By their mere presence, women judges enhance the legitimacy of courts, sending a powerful message that our courts are open, transparent, inclusive, and representative of the people whose lives judicial decisions affect. The presence of women judges also enhances the fairness of adjudication because a system comprised of judges with diverse experiences increases the probability that biases will be identified and eliminated, resulting in more balanced and impartial decisions on matters coming before the court.

In an effort to increase the representation of women in our judiciary, the Judicial Mentoring Committee launched “Project Pipeline” in October 2018 as a more focused approach to judicial mentoring. Although we are still a long way from our goal of gender equality in our courts, we are making steady progress towards closing the “gavel-gap” in Utah. Indeed, since Project Pipeline started, Governor Herbert has appointed eighteen judges, twelve of whom are women.¹ Governor Cox has appointed two judges, both of whom are women.

This progress would not be possible without the exceptionally qualified women who are willing to step forward to be considered for judicial positions. And we continue to be grateful for all of the judges and WLU board members who have devoted significant time and effort to Project Pipeline.

¹ Governor Herbert nominated an exceptionally qualified woman to the Utah Court of Appeals in November 2020 but the Utah Senate refused to schedule a hearing to consider her nomination.

Retreat

Chair: Emily Tabak

Committee: Annika Jones, Ashley Peck, Beth Kennedy, Bethany Warr, Breanne Miller, Brit Merrill, Ellie Rudolf, Holly Nelson, Jan McCosh, Judge Kim Hornak, Kaileen Balzano, Kate Conyers, Kim Neville, Kristen Olsen, Kristin Fadel, LaShel Shaw, Leah Farrell, Luisa Gough, Rita Cornish, Susan Motschieder, Whitney Krogue, Susie Brancaccio, Grace Pusavat, Pat Christensen

Women Lawyers of Utah was unable to hold its 2020 Annual Fall Retreat due to the pandemic, but the Committee is in full swing with preparations for the 2021 event, which will be the organization's 40th Anniversary Gala held at the St. Regis Deer Valley on November 5-6, 2021.

The 40th Anniversary Gala celebration on Friday evening will have a special focus on WLU's past, present, and future, including shared anecdotes from WLU Past Presidents and members highlighting our history and our goals. We are planning speakers and panelists for Saturday morning, as well as the presentation of the 2020 Reva Beck Bosone student scholarship to Darian Hackney, the 2021 Reva Beck Bosone student scholarship, the Cora Snow Carleton student scholarship, and the WLU Mentoring Award.

We expect to host approximately 250 of our members holding various legal positions in our community, including many former and current Utah judges, attorneys in private practice and in the public sector, and law students. We look forward to celebrating this significant anniversary and enjoying the much-missed camaraderie of the past year with all of you.

Special Projects

Co-chairs: Mica McKinney and Scarlet Smith

Past Co-chairs: Ashley Peck and Kim Neville

Initiative Committee: Julie Bartlett, Patricia W. Christensen, Yvette Donosso, Peggy Hunt, Beth E. Kennedy, Tanner Lenart, Brit Merrill, Allison Phillips Belnap, Emily Schilling, Tiffany D.W. Shimada, Rachel Terry, Jenn Tomchak, Juliette P. White

Initiative Advisory Board: Liz Butler, Christine Durham, Heather Farnsworth, Evelyn J. Furse, Kimberley L. Hansen, Peggy Hunt, Kristy Kimball, Kristy M. Larsen, Herm Olsen, Margaret Plane, Tiffany D.W. Shimada, Heather L. Thuet, Melanie J. Vartabedian, Elizabeth Kronk Warner, Juliette P. White

In 2020 the Special Projects Committee released the [*Barriers to Advancement: Findings from the 2020 Study of Gender & Racial Bias in Utah's Legal Profession*](#) (2020 Study). Drawing on a statewide survey of members of the Utah State Bar as well as interviews of women attorneys in Utah, the 2020 Study illuminates the experience of women attorneys in Utah and the continued barriers they face in advancing their legal careers.

Comparing the experience of women in 2020 to the experience of women in 2010, the 2020 Study indicates that little improvement has been made in women's representation in the Utah legal market, particularly in leadership and senior positions. Similarly, representation of women attorneys in Utah trails far behind women attorneys nationally. The 2020 Study also revealed that women attorneys continue to experience harassment and bias. Nevertheless, the 2020 Study also showed areas of improvement—in 2020, more women reported having access to mentors and to flexible work arrangements. These improvements are a credit to [*The Utah Report: The Initiative on the Advancement and Retention of Women in Law Firms*](#), released ten years earlier and the initiatives that started as a result of that report.

Following the release of the 2020 Study, the Special Projects Committee has been actively working to get the word out about the 2020 Study. The release of the 2020 Study was covered by the [*Deseret News*](#) and the [*Salt Lake Tribune*](#). Additionally, the 2020 Study was presented at a WLU-sponsored CLE, during the Spring Bar Convention, to the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce, and as the focus of the SJ Quinney College of Law Dean's Book Review. Additional presentations are planned for the coming year. In addition, the committee is working on a variety of ways to educate the bar about the Recommendations in the 2020 Study and will be partnering with UCLI, UMBA and others to implement best practice for creating equitable opportunities for all lawyers.

The 2020 Study is available at: <https://initiative.utahwomenlawyers.org>.

WLU's work on the Initiative would not be possible without the support of generous sponsors:

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Holland & Hart
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Parsons Behle & Latimer
Ray Quinney & Nebeker
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Kirton McConkie
Parr Brown Gee & Loveless
Snell & Wilmer, LLP

BRONZE LEVEL:

ClydeSnow
Fabian VanCott
Strong & Hanni

Historian Committee

Chair: Brit Merrill

Committee: Pat Christensen, Anne Freeland, Luisa Gough, Roberta Kuehne, Ellie Rudolf, and LaShel Shaw

The WLU Historian Committee goals are to (1) collect and preserve Utah women lawyer's experiences and (2) document and preserve WLU's organizational history.

The Historian Committee continued interviewing and collecting stories from retired and senior women attorneys. The interviews are recorded, transcribed, and housed at the Aileen H. Clyde 20th Century Women's Legacy Archive at the University of Utah.

In addition, the Historian Committee began sorting through WLU records thoughtfully saved over the past 40 years by Pat Christensen, WLU past president (1988–1989) and current WLU advisor. Thank you, Pat, for this incredible gift to WLU and the historian committee! Pat's files will be housed at the Aileen H. Clyde 20th Century Women's Legacy Archive.

Finally, the Historian Committee is preparing to celebrate WLU's 40th anniversary next year. At the WLU annual retreat, scheduled November 5–6, 2021, the Historian Committee will have a recording booth where WLU members can record their memories. On Friday evening, the retreat will have a special focus on WLU's past, present, and future, including shared anecdotes from WLU Past Presidents and members highlighting WLU's history.

The Historian Committee prepared this Annual Report to further its goal to document and preserve WLU's organizational history.

Women's Law Caucus Report - S.J. Quinney College of Law at the University of Utah

○ WLC Board 2020–2021

- President: Talley Ransil
- Vice President: Natalie Beal
- Treasurer: Ally Eagan
- Secretary: Taylor Beal
- WLU Liaison: Tamara Lemmon
- WLU Liaison: Cassandra James
- Development Director: Havilah Coady
- Communications Director: Helen Lindamood
- 3L Representative: Lauren Boone
- 2L Representative: Lauren Brown-Hulme
- 2L Representative: Sophia King

○ Mentorship Program

- In this unprecedented year of remote education, we felt it was more important than ever to facilitate connection among our members. To that end, we created a brand new mentorship program that connected 1Ls with 2L and 3L student mentors and 2Ls and 3Ls with attorney mentors. We had over 80 students and attorneys participate and the feedback was that students found these connections to be very beneficial. We plan to continue the mentorship program this coming year.

○ WLU Retreat

- We were sad that COVID made the WLU Retreat impossible this year. Darian Hackney was the Reva Beck Bosone Scholarship recipient.

○ Virtual Paint Night

- In the Fall we hosted a virtual paint night where we sent paint kits to members who then connected via Zoom for a fun night full of painting, talking, and laughing. We had over 60 students, faculty, and attorneys in attendance.

○ Virtual Lunches

- Also in the fall semester, our WLU Liason put together two weeks of virtual lunches where groups of 3-4 students were able to spend 45-60 minutes during the lunch hour with WLU attorney volunteers. The feedback from our students was overwhelmingly positive and we hope to continue the event next year. (Maybe in person?)

○ WLC Spring Panel

- We hosted a Spring Panel that discussed the Pink Recession in the COVID era.

- o **Lunch and Learn**
 - We co-hosted a well-received Lunch and Learn Panel with BYU's WLC.

- o **Movie Night**
 - We co-hosted a virtual screening of the Ruth Bader Ginsburg documentary film.

- o **Equal Rights Panel**
 - We co-hosted the Equal Rights Amendment panel.

- o **WLC Elections for 2021–2022**
 - We are pleased to announce our board for the 2021–2022 school year. We once again had more enthusiastic, qualified applicants than we had positions:
 - President: Madi Rooker
 - Vice President: Niki Crabtree
 - Treasurer: Aisea Odencrantz
 - Secretary: Darian Hackney
 - WLU Liaison: Tamara Lemmon
 - WLU Liaison: Alyssa Florack
 - Development Director: Nicole Johnson
 - Communications Director: Zara Guinard
 - Mentorship Program Coordinator: Maddie Whittier
 - Mentorship Program Coordinator: Brooke Porter Coles
 - 3L Representative: Talley Ransil
 - 2L Representative: Hannah Picket
 - 1L Representative: TBD

Women in Law Report - J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University

Though it was unlike any other, BYU Women in Law enjoyed another successful year!

We began by hosting a Women in Law conference where Melinda Bowen, executive director of the Utah Center for Legal Inclusion, gave the keynote address. Next, we ran our annual "Stump the Professor" event, raising money for the Center for Women and Children in Crisis. Additionally, we hosted a service project to collect donations for a local domestic violence and sexual assault shelter.

Toward the end of the year, we partnered with the University of Utah and WLU to host a career exploration panel for our students to hear from women lawyers working in government practice. And on International Women's Day, we held a speed-mentoring event, where our members were able to get to know many of the women faculty of BYU law. Finally, we had a wonderful closing social, where we played jeopardy and said our goodbyes to the graduating 3Ls. BYU Women in Law is enthusiastic to see where next year takes us!

2020–2021 Award Recipients

Women Lawyer of Utah Awards

2020 Christine M. Durham Woman Lawyer of the Year Award: Margaret Plane

2020 Reva Beck Bosone student scholarship: Darian Hackney

Utah State Bar Awards

2020 Dorathy Merrill Brothers Award: Jen Tomchak

2021 Dorathy Merrill Brothers Award: Aida Neimarlija

2021 Professionalism Award: Margaret Plane

2021 James B. Lee Mentoring Award: Judge Laura Scott

The WLU supports and recognizes women lawyer's accomplishments. For the 2020–2021 year, the WLU Board expanded its Awards initiative and nominated deserving women lawyers for every award presented to attorneys in the state of Utah. Whether they win the award or not, we notify the women we nominate so they know we and others in the community value them and their contributions.