

VISIBILITY INITIATIVE PROPOSAL

To: Dean Daniel B. Rodriguez
From: SBA Visibility Initiative
Date: May 16, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Increasing diversity has long been a core tenet of Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. Students, faculty and staff have all demonstrated a commitment to diversity in areas like admissions, faculty hiring, student programming, alumni relations, and even legal scholarship.

Continuing in this tradition, the Visibility Initiative (VI) is a student-led effort to update the Law School's aesthetics to better reflect the rich diversity in our school, our history, our alumni community, our geography, and our place in time, among other facets of Northwestern Law. Importantly, we understand diversity as a broad concept. VI's understanding of aesthetics includes not just paintings and pictures on the walls, but also art, music, architecture, engagement with the broader Chicago community, and integrating that hard-to-define concept of how a place, such as our law school, transmits inclusivity and empowerment.

The Visibility Initiative is proud to have cemented itself as a permanent part of the Law School by becoming an official Student Bar Association (SBA) Committee. Now, the Visibility Initiative needs formalized institutional and financial support to ensure it is able to accomplish its goals of increasing aesthetic diversity this year, and in the many years to come.

HISTORY

In the fall of 2013, Brenna Helppie-Schmieder approached Nick Carson, who was representing the SBA Facilities Committee, about an idea for a project. That idea—to increase the diversity of representation on the walls at Northwestern Law—developed into the Visibility Initiative.

Brenna and Nick worked together with other Facilities Committee members, including George Langford, the Committee's administrative advisor, to start VI from off the ground. Over the next two years, VI planned and implemented projects, fielded student

ideas, teamed up with student organizations, and recruited new members and faculty and administrative partners. In the spring of 2015, VI convened a meeting with student leaders, faculty and staff, and Dean Rodriguez to update the school on our progress, solicit feedback, and generate ideas for the future.

At the end of 2015, VI became an official SBA Committee. As a Committee, VI is comprised of student, faculty and staff members, and also has support from several student organizations, the SBA, and various members of the Northwestern Law administration.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In early 2014, the Visibility Initiative organized to procure four new photographs of important legal figures in the LM basement lounge (Thurgood Marshall, Sandra Day O'Connor, Constance Baker Motley, and Harold Washington). Later that year, VI partnered with the WLC to fund and display the print of Dawn Clark Netsch in RB 339. Paintings from Chicago-area artists throughout the new atrium expansion on the second floor and Dawn Clark Netsch's campaign photos in MC 185 are additional examples of projects completed by Facilities Director George Langford while keeping the goals of VI in mind.

In April of 2015, VI coordinated *Connecting the Simple Good: USA & Tanzania Photography Exhibit*, displayed in the atrium. That same spring, VI worked with BLSA to facilitate the framing and installation of the Black Lives Matter picture now displayed outside RB 180. Most recently, VI again teamed up with the WLC to fund a photograph of Ada Kepley, the first woman to graduate from law school, which will be installed and displayed later this year.

Beyond these accomplishments, VI has gained the respect of the faculty and student body, as evidenced by its partnerships with numerous student groups, its recent approval as an SBA committee, and two consecutive years of the graduating class donating to support VI. VI was recently approved as an SBA committee in order to ensure the group is maintained over time after its current student members graduate.

VISIBILITY INITIATIVE

Northwestern University
Pritzker School of Law



Founded: 2013

Goals of surroundings that reflect students now + history of our past

Four photographs of important legal figures placed in **LM basement lounge**

Partnered with WLC to install photo of **Dawn Clark Netsche** in RB339



Visibility Initiative helped shape the **Atrium expansion** featuring local Chicago artists

Tanzanian **photo exhibit** takes place in the Atrium

Collaboration with other student groups continuously brainstorm ideas for the school



Black Lives Matter

portrait of Northwestern students is placed near RB180

Submits a proposal (and SBA accepts) the new **Visibility Initiative Committee**

Two years of graduating classes make it a priority to donate to a cause they **care about**

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*Visibility Initiative Committee
Northwestern University
Pritzker School of Law*

But there is still a long way to go.



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