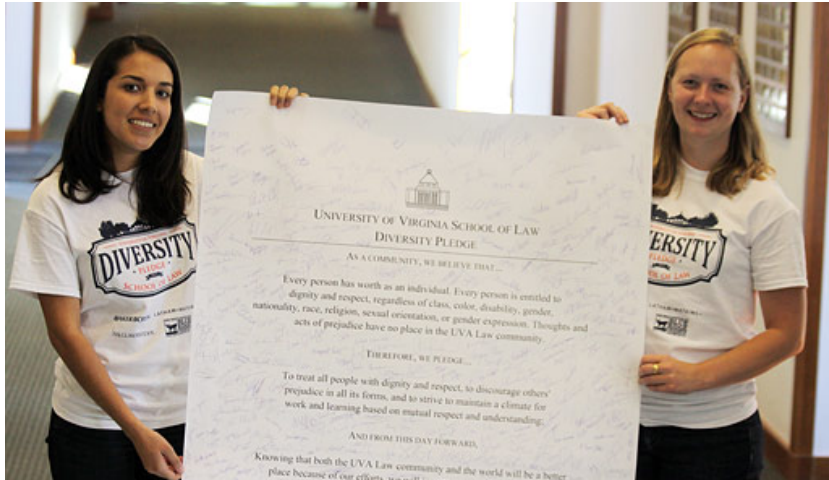




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Law School Community Members Sign Pledge to Support Diversity



Cynthia Castillo (left), co-chair of the SBA Diversity Committee, and Sarah Griffiths, who sits on the board of Virginia Law Women, hold up this year's Diversity Pledge.

More than 500 students, faculty and staff at the University of Virginia School of Law signed the Diversity Pledge this week, an annual tradition that was moved this year for the first time to the fall semester.

"This year we decided to move the pledge to the fall to show it is an important part of the Student Bar Association's agenda," said Cynthia Castillo, co-chair of the SBA Diversity Committee.

On Wednesday the SBA invited students, faculty and staff to sign the pledge, a statement of respect honoring the diverse people and ideas at the Law School. Signing the pledge, Castillo said, sets the tone for the academic year and shows that our Law School community respects other people regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender or religion."

The pledge, which began seven years ago, was written by the SBA with input from student affinity groups and others interested in providing a way for students to take a symbolic stand against intolerance.

"The Diversity Pledge is basically a reaffirmation of the values of the University," said SBA Diversity Committee Co-Chair Billy James Easley II. "It's a way for students to demonstrate how dedicated they are to providing an environment that's inclusive."



Sarah Griffiths, who sits on the board of Virginia Law Women, also signed the pledge. She said she has witnessed the value of diversity in the classroom during her three years in law school.

"I think of [diversity] more in terms of results," Griffiths said. "For example, in class when you're approaching a problem, and you have people coming to the table from different backgrounds and different perspectives, I think you're able to learn a lot more."

Castillo and Easley said the Diversity Pledge is meant to have implications beyond law school as well. "It's specifically important for the field of law because, as attorneys, you need to be able to consider all viewpoints available," Castillo said. "The best lawyer is one that can see every argument that can be made — and when you have exposure to diverse viewpoints, you're able to be that type of lawyer."

REPORTED BY ERIC WILLIAMSON