

Attorney Profiles



Virginia G. Essandoh, J.D.

Chief Diversity Officer

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Practice Areas

Virginia G. Essandoh serves as the firm's Chief Diversity Officer. In this role as a senior firm administrator, she sits on the firmwide Management Committee and is responsible for overseeing, implementing, and providing strategic leadership to Ballard Spahr's diversity initiatives. She also provides strategic guidance and tactical support to the Ballard Women affinity group, helping to develop business and encouraging the development and advancement of female lawyers.

Working closely with the Diversity and Inclusion Council, Ms. Essandoh advises firm constituencies on best practices for ensuring diversity among lawyers and staff. This ranges from high-level development of diversity-related recruitment, retention, and advancement strategies to tactical implementation and execution of such strategies for lawyers at all levels.

Ms. Essandoh meets regularly with diverse attorneys to discuss development and advancement strategies and remains aware of issues that affect diverse attorneys. She serves as the public voice for Ballard Spahr's diversity-related outreach efforts, coordinates the firm's participation in external diversity events, and is a liaison to clients and other external constituencies regarding diversity initiatives.

Before joining the firm, Ms. Essandoh was senior consultant at Altman Weil, Inc. In this capacity, she assisted in developing and implementing diversity and gender initiatives and strategies in private law firms and corporate legal departments; advised on organizational and management structures for law firms and corporate legal departments; and facilitated law firm strategic planning, client satisfaction, strategic marketing, and management structure analysis for her clients.

Professional Activities

College of Law Practice Management, Fellow

Association of Law Firm Diversity Professionals

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Barristers' Association of Philadelphia

LEADERSHIP Philadelphia Class of 2008

Ballard Spahr's Diversity and Inclusion Council

Recognition & Accomplishments

Behavioral Coaching Institute, Certified Master Coach

Recipient, National Diversity Council Special Award recognizing women leaders in Pennsylvania, October 2013

Publications

Co-author, "Build A Better Boat: Women in Law: 47/44/20," *Law Week Colorado*, May 9, 2016

Co-author, "The Leader's Role in Diversity and Inclusion: Transformational Leadership," *Law Week Colorado*, March 21, 2016

"Keeping Watch at the Gate to Implement Diversity, Inclusion," *The Legal Intelligence r*, December 8, 2014

Co-author, "Cultivating More Women and Minority Lawyers in The Garden State," *New Jersey Law Journal*, September 27, 2013

"Eyes to the Future: Working with Constitution High School To Boost Civics Education as well as Diversity in the Legal Profession," *The Philadelphia Lawyer*, Winter 2013

"Friends in High Places: The Rainmaker Mentor Program," *The Legal Intelligencer*, August 13, 2012

"Generation Y and the Law," *Profiles in Diversity Journal*, November 2011

"When Generations Collide: Recruitment, Retention and Advancement of Generation Y in Today's Firms," *New Jersey Law Journal*, May 30, 2011

"Changes in Legal Profession Create New Mentorship Needs," *The Legal Intelligencer*, February 2010

"Law Firm Affinity Groups: A Valuable Resource," *Colorado Diversity Newsletter*, May 2009

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Speaking Engagements

Moderator, "Tackling Uncomfortable Conversations in the Workplace," Mortgage Bankers Association's Summit on Diversity and Inclusion 2016, Washington, D.C., November 17, 2016

Panelist, "Cross-Generational Competence: How to Get Generations to Work Effectively with One Another," 2016 Pennsylvania Diversity and Leadership Conference, Philadelphia, September 1, 2016

"Unlock Your Mind: Advancing The New IQ (Inclusion Quotient)", Internal Revenue Service Chief Counsel Lecture Series, Washington, D.C., July 7, 2016

"Diversity and Inclusion: A Call to Action" "Making the Business Case," Philadelphia Chapter ALA - Diversity & Inclusion Education Session, June 7, 2016

"Handling Unconscious Bias and the Lack of Cultural Diversity in the Legal Profession," Multicultural Judges and Lawyers Section, Delaware State Bar Association, February 2, 2016

"Preparing the Next Generation of Leaders," Women of Color in Law Luncheon, La Jolla, California, April 19, 2015

"Maximizing Employee Resource Groups and Diversity Councils as a Strategic Resource," American Health Lawyers Association, Women's Leadership Institute, April 15, 2015

"10 Habits of Inclusive Leaders," Mountain West Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel, 10th Annual Winter Retreat, Park City, Utah, March 20, 2015

"Increasing Diversity in Law Firms," University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, Guest Lecturer, Gender in the Legal Profession Studies, Baltimore, February 5, 2015

"Insider Tips on How to Survive and Thrive in a Law Firm," University of Colorado Law School "Diversity & Inclusive Excellence, University of Colorado Law School, January 28, 2015

Panelist, "D&I as a Revenue Growth Strategy and Diversity Hot Topics," 2014 Philadelphia Diversity and Leadership Conference, Philadelphia, September 4, 2014

"Affinity Groups," BNY Mellon "Mid-Atlantic Diversity Council, BNY Mellon Employee Resource Group Summit, Philadelphia, June 18, 2014

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"Buy-In, Tie-In and All-In: A Conversation about Diversity & Inclusion," Mountain West Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel, 8th Annual CLO Roundtable, Salt Lake City, June 3, 2014

"Mentoring and Diversity Pipeline," DuPont Minority Counsel Network WebEx, May 29, 2014

Panelist, "Women of Color Professional Development," University of Pennsylvania Law School, Black Law Students Association, Philadelphia, November 13, 2013

"Transition to Law Firm Practice," Drexel University Earle Mack School of Law, Philadelphia, October 15, 2013

Panelist, "Diversity: Is the Message Getting Through?" 14th Annual DuPont Minority Counsel Conference: Building and Sustaining Success through the Power of the Network, Chicago, June 6, 2013

"Beyond the Practice of Law: Alternative and Non-Traditional Career Choices Law Grads Can Pursue" and "Law Firms May Be Committed to Diversity and Inclusion, But Why Is That Advantageous to Pre-Law Students?" 8th Annual National Black Pre-Law Conference and Law Fair 2012, Houston, November 2-3, 2012

"How To Find and Effectively Utilize Women- and Minority-Owned Law Firms," Federal Home Loan Bank Counsel Committee Spring Meeting, Washington, D.C., May 2012

National Symposium on Diversity in the Legal Profession, Philadelphia Bar Association CLE, November 2011

"Minding the Gap: Individualized Positioning for Diversity and Inclusiveness," Denver Diversity and Inclusiveness Summit, March 2011

"Diversity Hiring in a Down Market," Special Counsel, Philadelphia, December 2010

"When Generations Collide: Understanding Motivations, Expectations and Behavior of the Latest Crop of Lawyers," CLE Program, Philadelphia, December 2010

"Diversity Management in Multiple Offices," Association of Law Firm Diversity Professionals Conference, New York, November 2010

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Board Memberships

Smith Memorial Playground & Playhouse, Board Secretary

Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, 2008-2014

Education

John Marshall Law School (J.D. 1999)

Wilberforce University (B.A. 1994, *cum laude*)

Admissions

Supreme Court of Wisconsin

U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin