

TRAILBLAZERS

MIDWEST

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**What was the genesis of the idea/path that has made you a trailblazer?**

Chicago is the economic and cultural capital of the Midwest. Knowing the market well through my decades-long corporate and capital markets law practice, I recognized Chicago's future potential. As an early advocate of Cooley opening a Chicago office, and with assistance from Michael Lincoln, I masterminded Cooley's 2021 Chicago launch and served as a crucial influence in market diligence, recruitment, and vision. I keenly focused on building an office matching Cooley's collaborative culture, practitioner excellence, and focus on DEI.

What sort of change has resulted from the concept?

When researching the market, it became apparent that Chicago firms lacked our strong focus on DEI. By keeping with the goal of becoming the most diverse firm worldwide, I led efforts to acquire an innovative leadership team and recruit nine stand-out partners from top competitors – notably without the use of recruiters. 57.8% of our current lawyers are women and 48.9% are racially diverse or identify as LGBTQ+.

With a monumental impact on the Chicago emerging companies and venture capital/startup ecosystem, our office has become the first and fastest-growing full-service office in Chicago law firm history to organically acquire so many outstanding lawyers – more than 50 attorneys, 21 staff, and a pipeline of numerous high-level attorneys – all while establishing the most diverse major law office in the city.

What bearing will this have on the future?

By championing an exceptionally diverse and innovative team, I aim to raise standards for future generations of firms. I aspire for Cooley to set a new tone of inclusiveness and excellence in Chicago. As an advisory board member of Chicago:Blend, a leading nonprofit focused on diversity in the Chicago VC community, I hope my vision can influence a more equitable Chicago VC ecosystem.

Cooley