



Board of Directors

Deborah Martin Owens

First elected to the WCC Board in October 2016, Deborah was elected as WCC Chair in August 2020. Deborah Martin Owens is the Global Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Vinson & Elkins LLP. In her role, she will further develop and implement firmwide DE&I initiatives, as well as serve as a strategic advisor on the retention and promotion of underrepresented lawyers.

Deborah was most recently the East Coast Diversity Director at Sidley Austin LLP, where she developed and implemented programs, policies, and initiatives that support Sidley's strategic diversity and inclusion goals for its Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C. offices.

Previously, she served as the Executive Director of the Office of Diversity & Inclusion at the New York City Bar Association, where she guided the Association's inclusion initiatives for the legal profession through engagement with law firms, corporate legal departments, nonprofits, government agencies and academia. She advised leadership on best practices for pipeline initiatives, diverse membership engagement, policies and procedures, and managed 200 volunteers to establish standards for equity and inclusion efforts in the legal profession, among other responsibilities.



Prior to that, she was a Staff Attorney at Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan, LLP, for nearly 12 years and earlier, a Junior Court Attorney for the New York State Unified Court System. While in law school, Deborah interned for the Honorable Sonia Sotomayor when she served as jurist on the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

Throughout her career, Deborah has volunteered at a number of organizations to support women and issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. She has held membership and leadership roles in Corporate Counsel Women of Color, Association of Black Women Attorneys, National Bar Association, Metropolitan Black Bar Association and the New York State Bar Association. She previously served on the board at Friends of the Island Academy. Deborah is currently a member of the National Association of Legal Professionals and the Association of Law Firm Diversity Professionals.

Among her many awards, she most recently was among Crain's New York Business' 2021 Notable Women in Law. She also received the National Bar Association's Presidential Awards (2019, 2012), and the NAACP Mid-Manhattan Branch's Shirley Stewart Farmer Women of Excellence Award (2018), as well as awards from the Metropolitan Black Bar Association and the National Association of Women Judges.

Given her vast experience addressing issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, Deborah is frequently invited by universities, associations, nonprofits and the media to speak about gender and pay equity, the challenges women face in the practice of law, and on workforce diversification. Amid heightened social justice movements across the country, she regularly writes about issues regarding institutional racism and inequity.

Deborah is a graduate of the Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University and the State University of New York at Albany.