

Paula Hinton Wins the Texas Minority Counsel Program's 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award

MAY 31, 2022

Winston & Strawn Houston Partner Paula Hinton—a member of Winston's Executive Committee and the Diversity & Inclusion Committee—was honored with the Texas Minority Counsel Program's 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award. This award, which she was initially a finalist for in 2019, recognizes outstanding leadership for the promotion of diversity and inclusion and is presented to attorneys who have demonstrated extraordinary support and advocacy for the advancement of racial/ethnic minorities, women, and LGBTQ+ people in the legal profession.

Throughout her legal career, Paula also served as an active internal and external champion for diversity by providing visible and vocal support for diversity and inclusion efforts as well as personally mentoring and championing generations of women, racial/ethnic minority, and LGBTQ+ lawyers. Since joining Winston in 2013, Paula has:

Recognized Diversity as a Strategic Business Goal: Paula was a key driver in getting Winston's Executive Committee to adopt increasing diversity and inclusion as one of 10 primary goals in the firm's strategic business plan. She is a firm believer that what gets measured gets done, so she helped establish aggressive five-year, measurable goals for the representation of women and attorneys of color in partnership, leadership positions, and among the firm's most highly compensated. Her efforts have led to a measurable increase in each category.

Launched the Sponsorship Program: In 2016, through the Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI), Paula and her partners launched a one-year sponsorship program that matched the firm's most influential partners with senior women and racial/ethnic minority associates and junior partners. This initiative was designed to identify and cultivate sponsor relationships for diverse lawyers at critical stages in their careers. Sponsors and proteges participated in formal programming over the course of a year and engaged in activities centered around individual goals, career planning, and professional and business development. In 2018, the program was revamped and it now matches women, racial/ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+ associates in their fifth and sixth year of practice with a sponsor from the firm's Executive Committee. Paula is one of the leading sponsors in the program and has sponsored two proteges every year.

Expanded the WLI Outside the United States: Paula believes that the firm's diversity and inclusion efforts should be global. Under her leadership, she expanded the WLI to Winston's Paris, London, and Hong Kong offices. Every Winston office now has an active WLI.

Adopted the Mansfield Rule: In 2017, Paula was instrumental in ensuring that Winston was one of 44 leading law firms that began a one-year pilot of the Mansfield Rule, which measures whether law firms have affirmatively considered women and attorneys of color—as at least 30 percent of the candidate pool—for leadership roles, key committee appointments, lateral positions, and advancement within the firm. We are pleased to report that the firm has achieved Mansfield Certified Plus status every year since 2018, and Paula is the Partner Champion for Winston’s participation in Mansfield Rule 5.0.

Implemented Business Development Training and Targeted Professional Development Programs for Women Lawyers: Under Paula’s former leadership of the WLI, Winston has provided numerous business development training and other targeted professional development programming to women lawyers to help them advance within the firm. Through the WLI—the cornerstone of programs aimed at increasing the hiring, retention, and promotion of women lawyers at the firm—Winston has provided training on effective communication, gravitas, mindfulness, executive presence, effective feedback, and leadership, among other topics.

Created Family-Friendly Policies: Paula was one of the architects of the firm’s revised reduced-hours policy and its gender-neutral parental leave policy, which provides 20 weeks of paid parental leave, coaching for new parents, and new benefits such as free overnight breast milk delivery. The parental leave policy has led to an increase in the amount of leave that both men and women take after the birth of a child and the support they receive to reintegrate back into the firm and into premium workstreams.

Provided Opportunities for Women Lawyers: Paula led a Winston trial team of primarily women attorneys in successfully defending McGinnes Industrial Maintenance Corporation (MIMC), a subsidiary of Waste Management, in a case *The Texas Lawbook* lauded as “one of the greatest defense victories in Texas history.” While putting together her trial team, Paula was guided by the principle that your trial bench should resemble the community. She believes diverse trial teams lead to better results for clients.

Advocated for Civil Rights: Paula has devoted countless hours of pro bono work to benefit women and children. In one of her most notable cases, she worked with the Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP) trial counsel for a scheduled federal court trial representing a 16-year-old high school student who alleged that her privacy rights under the United States and Texas Constitutions were violated. The student’s coaches held her in a locker room, threatened to kick her off the softball team if she didn’t admit she was dating another girl, and then “outed” her to her mother against her will—and was still kicked her off the team. On the eve of the trial, Paula and the TCRP trial team secured a settlement that included payments to the student and stipulated that the school district hold training sessions on sexual orientation and privacy policies and update its student/teacher handbook to include specific language about the district’s anti-discrimination policy relating to sexual orientation. Paula received the “Kristi Couvillon Pro Bono Award” from the Texas Civil Rights Project for her work on this matter.

Fought for Equity Nationwide: Paula is part of the Winston team working with activists across the country that helped bring about Illinois’ historic ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 2018 and is now supporting ratification efforts in Congress.

Paula’s Impact

Today, women represent 25% of our partners and 44% of our associates, and women partners hold significant leadership positions throughout the firm, including as office managing partners, practice group leaders, and members of the Executive Committee. Women represent 25% Executive Committee, 50% of our office managing partners, and 20% of our Compensation Committee. Lawyers of color represent 11% of our partners, 29% of our associates, 16% of our Executive Committee, and 4% of our Compensation Committee. Many of the diversity successes accomplished by Winston within the past five years would not have been possible without Paula’s support, active participation, and advocacy.

Watch Paula’s [acceptance speech here](#).

[Learn more](#) about what makes Winston & Strawn a great place for diverse lawyers and talent.

5 Min Read

Related Locations

Houston

Related Topics

Texas Minority Counsel Program

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Women's Leadership Initiative

Related Regions

North America

Related Professionals



[Paula Hinton](#)