The CLEO EDGE AWARD

Recognizing Education, Diversity and Greater Equality In the Legal Profession

During the CLEO EDGE Honors reception held each November, the Council on Legal Education Opportunity, Inc. honors a TBD number (typically 4) of individuals, law schools, and/or organizations that have made significant accomplishments or demonstrated commitments to Education, Diversity, and Greater Equality in the legal profession. Called the CLEO EDGE Award, submitted nominations are thoroughly reviewed by an internal committee based on the below criteria and forwarded to the CLEO, Inc. Board and Advisory Council for final selections.

CLEO EDGE Award Recipient Criteria

- Has demonstrated support for CLEO and its mission to increase diversity in the legal profession.
- Promotes and supports individuals from communities historically under-represented in the legal profession to attend law school and pursue a legal career.
- Develops innovative classes, programs, seminars, etc. to increase the quality of the study and practice of law.
- Significantly advances skills training in the profession in a positive, educational environment.
- Furthers community engagement in diversity dialogue and education.
- Promotes an understanding and appreciation of differences contributing to the body of research on diversity.
- Demonstrates compassion, courage, and leadership to eliminate discrimination, oppression, and injustice locally, nationally, and/or globally.
- Increases advancement opportunities for lawyers who have been historically under-represented in a particular job setting or practice area of the legal profession.
- Works with and mentors diverse lawyers and/or law students.
- Demonstrates a sustained, long-term commitment to encouraging, increasing and/or retaining diversity in the legal profession.
- Actively, affirmatively, consistently, and enthusiastically recruits, retains, and promotes diverse lawyers/students to leadership positions within the organization.
- Integrates diversity and inclusion concepts and values into management and/or operational functions.
- Displays/promotes encouragement and understanding between persons of different races, gender, age groups, ethnicity, religious heritage, national origin, indigenous heritage, socioeconomic status, disability, or sexual orientation.
- Demonstrates passion for justice and tirelessly advocates on behalf of minorities and/or economically disadvantaged.
- Demonstrates and engages others through actions that promote the ideals of cultural diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice.
- Advances access for disadvantaged communities through publications, social media, education, action, legislation, litigation, counseling, advocacy, or other activities.
- Positively transforms the organizational fabric or culture through the inclusion of different groups (e.g. women, LGBT, disabled, veterans, various religions, different nationalities, etc.)
- Recognizes excellence in activities that have contributed toward the achievement and advancement of women, minorities, persons with disabilities and/or persons of differing sexual orientation and gender identities.
Individual EDGE Award Supplemental Information
(Taken from the CLEO 50th Anniversary Gala Program Book)

Lawyers impact every aspect of American life. More than 50 years ago, CLEO’s founders recognized the importance of producing a legal profession that mirrors the mosaic of this great nation. Building on the pillars of Education, Diversity, and Greater Equality, they worked together to develop the foundation for a program that would weather many storms over the next half century. The CLEO EDGE Awards honors those individuals, law schools, and organizations that have helped to sustain and expand CLEO’s mission through their collective passions toward balancing the scales of justice for all Americans.

Education – Nelson Mandela said that, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” The Education category winner recognizes and exemplifies this awareness.

Diversity – R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr. captured the essence of our commitment to a more diverse legal profession in his book, “Building a House for Diversity.” The book begins with a fable about a giraffe, who living in a house designed to meet the needs of his tall, slender frame, invites an elephant in for a visit. The elephant unintentionally demolishes the walls and foundation of the giraffe’s beautiful home and the fable concludes with the realization that a giraffe house could never accommodate an elephant. In this spirit, CLEO’s Diversity honorees understand the importance of “building a house” for diversity and respecting the differences that make each of us who we are.

Greater Equality – It encompasses a human tapestry; a panorama that includes race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, and sexual orientation, in addition to individual choices and preferences. Over the last five decades, the legal profession has played a major role in weaving components, e.g. Civil Rights Act, Equal Pay Act, Women’s Movement, Gay Rights Movement, Americans with Disabilities Act, Immigration Movement, towards Greater Equality in America. The Greater Equality honorees are indeed egalitarians who share CLEO’s commitment to the equality of all people and have helped advance our society.