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May 22, 2025

Delaware Supreme Court creates task force to assess alternative pathways to Delaware Bar admission

Report due to the Chief Justice in June 2026

The Delaware Supreme Court has authorized the creation of a task force to investigate and make recommendations about allowing alternative pathways to gain admission to the Delaware Bar beyond the Bar Exam.

Members of the task force, headed by Justice Gary F. Traynor, will broadly represent the state's legal community, including representatives from members of both the public and private bar, legal aid groups, and local law schools.

Creation of the task force follows through on a key recommendation from the Judicial Branch's 2022 Strategic Plan to improve diversity in the Delaware Bench and Bar. Specifically, the Strategic Plan, and this month's Supreme Court order, cite the Daniel Webster Scholar Honors Program in New Hampshire as a possible model. In that groundbreaking program, started in 2005, the UNNH Franklin Pierce School of Law collaborated with the New Hampshire Supreme Court, the New Hampshire Board of Bar Examiners and the New Hampshire Bar Association to create a two-year apprentice program to graduate and join the bar without sitting for the bar exam. Studies of the New Hampshire program have shown it has been successful in graduating client-ready attorneys who outperformed other attorneys, admitted to practice in the previous two years, based on standardized client interviews.

Similar alternative pathway programs have been adopted in Oregon, Washington, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

The Delaware task force will be assisted by the National Center for State Courts, the AccessLex Institute and Delaware Supreme Court staff attorneys. Once assembled, the group will consider strategic partnerships with Widener University Delaware Law School and Wilmington University Law School and examine different approaches taken by other states. These approaches include a diploma privilege, a program that is part of a law school curriculum, an apprentice program where students work side-by-side with a practicing attorney or attorneys or a mixture of methods. The task force will also consider if participation in the program should be limited to students who make a commitment to public service work.

The report and recommendations will be due to the Chief Justice on or before June 15, 2026, subject to any extensions granted by the Chief Justice.