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Dear First Year Student:

Congratulations on beginning your law school journey! Law school is just that - a journey where you will learn more about yourself, the law, and how to apply the law. As a law student, a professor once said to me "Life doesn't stop for law school." And, that statement is so true. Balancing law school and personal commitments is difficult, but you are not alone on this journey. You have amazing staff/faculty members and the **Minority Bar Association of Western New York (MBAWNY)** to help you when you need it.

I know none of you expected to enter law school amidst a pandemic. I'm sure when you decided to attend law school you did not imagine being quarantined the summer before, social distancing amongst family and friends, wearing masks all day, and living in such uncertainty. Luckily, you are joining an amazing law school with great faculty and staff. You will meet wonderful people who will become your colleagues and some, your lifelong friends. Currently, I serve on the board of the MBAWNY with 3 of my law school friends. Law school brought us together, but our experiences bonded us for life.

So - **what is the MBAWNY?** The MBAWNY is a non-for-profit organization comprised of over one hundred members who are from diverse ethnic backgrounds that represent the varying races, cultures and beliefs in Western New York. Our membership consists of attorneys, public officials, academia, law students and legal professionals who work or live in the Western New York area.

The purpose of the MBAWNY is to facilitate and advance equality and excellence in the legal profession; aid in the progress of minorities in the legal profession, address legal issues affecting minorities, encourage the personal and professional development of lawyers and students, advocate for the civil rights of all people and to enhance the legal services available to minority communities.

To this end, some of our objectives are to improve the integrity and standards of professionalism in the legal community, elevate the public's confidence in the judicial system and the administration of justice, and encourage the promise of equality and fairness for all under law.

We hope that you will consider joining the MBAWNY, but more importantly – **we hope you will take advantage of our mentorship program.** The purpose of this program is to establish a mentoring relationship that will provide you with a personal support system and the opportunity to realize both professional and personal development goals. If you would like to be paired with a mentor from the MBAWNY, please email the minoritybarassociationofwny@gmail.com.

The law school will also provide you with a mentor. However, it is beneficial to you to have more than one mentor. You will need as much of a support system now more than ever and the MBAWNY is here for you. I am looking forward to meeting you all soon! Until then, good luck.

Best Wishes,

Jamila A. Lee
MBAWNY President