

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2013

## Shartsis doubles female partners

54-lawyer SF firm goes from four to eight partners to satisfy No Glass Ceiling initiative

By Ryne Hodkowski  
Daily Journal Staff Writer

**S**an Francisco-based Shartsis Friese LLP doubled its number of female partners this past week with the addition of Winston & Strawn LLP partner Nicole Dogwill and the promotion of three associates — Christina Hamilton, Larisa Meisenheimer and Lisa Jacobs.

The 54-attorney firm now has eight female partners out of 35, meaning the firm's partner ranks now stand at roughly 23 percent women. According to a March 2012 Daily Journal survey, only 15 of the 50 largest firms in California had a higher ratio of female partners based in the state. Best Best & Krieger LLP had the highest percentage overall at nearly 33 percent.

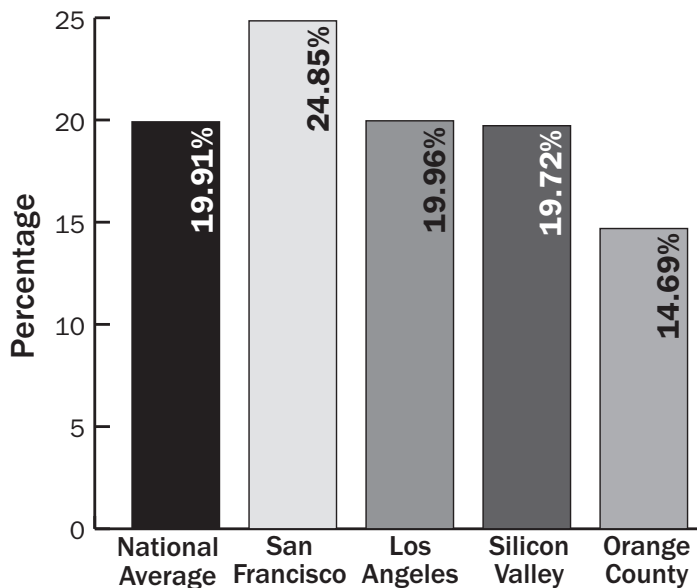
Co-founder Art Shartsis said the firm, which focuses on litigation, business, investment funds, securities and intellectual property, among other things, seeks to attract and retain the best attorneys first and foremost, regardless of gender. Shartsis Friese is an "opportunistic" firm, he said, adding that lateral hires are infrequent and growth is not a priority.

That said, according to Shartsis, the firm is striving to reach goals outlined by the Bar Association of San Francisco's No Glass Ceiling initiative, which asks that by Jan. 1, 2015, 30 percent of firm partners be female, 5 percent be women of color and that 30 percent of a firm's executive, partner compensation and partnership evaluation committees be women.

"BASF created goals and timetables to help increase the retention and promotion of female attorneys to partnership," said Tracy Salisbury, a Shartsis Friese partner who co-chairs the firm's litigation department and chairs its women's initiative. "We have [made] the conscious decision to encourage the hiring and retention of qualified women."

Dogwill said she was attracted to the firm because while other firms paid "lip service" to diversity, Shartsis Friese showed devotion to it. Dogwill, current treasurer of the

### Percentage of female firm partners by geographic region



Source: National Association for Law Placement Inc.

National LGBT Bar Association and its president-elect, said the firm was also very accepting and interested in her involvement with the association.

'We have [made] the conscious decision to encourage the hiring and retention of qualified women.'

— Tracy Salisbury

Dogwill focuses her practice on fiduciary duty, antitrust and commercial litigation. She said she didn't leave Winston & Strawn because of a low number of female partners. According to the Daily Journal study, 30 percent of Winston & Strawn's California partners last year were female. Instead, Dogwill said she made the move based on the same reason many litigators are leaving big firms — a desire for increased flexibility and ability to work with diverse clients.

"It's more expensive at big law, and the clients are pushing back on that," she said. "I like having an eclectic mix, and I felt I needed to move to have more flexibility."

Shartsis Friese's hires come on the heels of a December 2012 National Association of Law Placement study showing that 19.91 percent of partners nationwide were female.

This is in line with slow but consistent growth from 2009, when the nationwide average was 19.21 percent.

Of 42 cities and regions surveyed in the study, San Francisco had the second highest percentage of women partners at 24.85 percent, behind only Ft. Lauderdale/West Palm Beach at 25.62 percent. Los Angeles and the San Jose area — defined by the association as Menlo Park, Mountain View, Palo Alto, Redwood Shores, Sunnyvale and San Jose — were closer to the national average, coming in at 19.96 and 19.72 percent, respectively, while Orange County was the third-lowest region nationally overall, with women accounting for only 14.69 percent of partners.

According to the study, there's no indication that firm size has any impact on the percentage of female attorneys. The percentage of women partners ranged from 19.43 percent to 20.29 percent in five distinct categories of firm size.

Salisbury agreed, saying the struggles of women attorneys are universal, regardless of firm size.

"It's not any easier to be a woman litigator at a small or a mid-sized firm than it is to be one at a big firm," she said. "Or to be a woman lawyer, period. Whatever difficulties exist can be just as pronounced at a small or mid-sized firm."

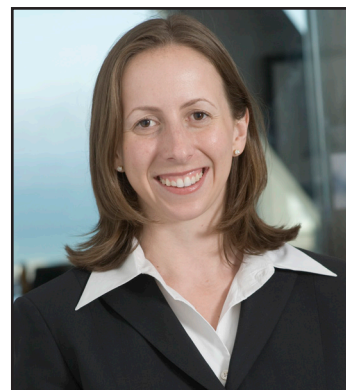
ryne\_hodkowski@dailyjournal.com



DOGWILL



MICKELSON



JACOBS



MEISENHEIMER