



## Danielle Reyes

Partner, Goodwin

Danielle Reyes is a Partner in the firm's Financial Industry group and serves as a co-chair of the firm's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) & Impact practice. Danielle worked in-house at USAA for nine years before returning to Goodwin in 2020.

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### In-House Perspective

**Q: Now that you have been on both sides, what was the biggest difference between being the client (at USAA) and being outside counsel at a firm?**

**A:** I think some of the things are the same. I had clients then and I have clients now in my firm role. They are just different types of clients and it is really one client, but you have lots of people asking you questions within that client. In that sense, it is not very different. It was different being able to access multiple different outside counsel firms depending on your needs. That part was kind of nice.

One of the biggest shocks going in-house was learning that legal advice from outside counsel is often just taken under advisement. It is not necessarily followed the whole time. When I was here the first time, I just assumed that my legal advice was being followed and that is just not necessarily the case. That was very eye opening. I think that has really helped me in coming back and being able to think about how to deliver practical advice that is actionable, realistic, etc.

**Q: As co-chair for the ESG and Impact Practice Group, what do you wish people knew about this emerging area of practice?**

**A:** I think there is a misconception that when we say “ESG and impact” we are talking about philanthropy. We are talking about philanthropy, in a sense, as that is one component of the larger ESG practice. However, there are a lot of other things we are talking about. For example, we have clients who do not think that they particularly care about ESG, but the regulatory developments are such that they have to care about ESG, especially our public company clients that have to make disclosures that fall within the ESG category. The market is also moving rapidly towards not just looking for financial returns at any cost but wanting to feel good about knowing exactly what the costs are to get those financial returns. It is becoming more and more mainstream.

ESG is important to a wide spectrum of clients – from the purely for-profit, large public companies all the way to our nonprofits, foundations, and everything in the middle. I would be hard-pressed to think of a client that simply has no ESG or impact issue that they could possibly need to help with.

## Career Perspective

**Q: What made you decide to return to Goodwin?**

**A:** The reason why I came back to Goodwin after nine years in-house was that I had gotten really interested in ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) and Corporate Social Responsibility. I was also interested in practicing law in more of an entrepreneurial setting. That was one thing I wanted to do, and it is something that you cannot necessarily do in-house. You cannot always create, lead or support any sort of revenue-generating function in-house. You are seen as a cost center. I am not saying every in-house experience is like that, but it is pretty standard. Unless you transition out of the legal department, you are really not going to be leading a business function in-house. Leading a business and practicing law at the same time is one of the things that is uniquely a law firm thing.

**Q: What is the biggest change you have noticed at Goodwin after being in-house for nine years?**

**A:** The biggest change I would say is the size. The firm is just much bigger now than it was before. Boston was by far the biggest office, but I think it is much more global and less solely focused on Boston than it was before. I think Goodwin is a lot more diverse now as well. Rob Insolia, the current Chair of the firm, has a mission to make the firm the most inclusive firm in the industry, and you can tell. The numbers are a lot different than they were before. The fact that there is a robust Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team is a huge difference, and they are very impactful. The programming is just really top-notch, and that has been really encouraging to see.

**Q: Has your career trajectory been what you expected?**

**A:** You would think that there would be a straightforward answer to that question, but really there is not because what we call ESG now, did not exist as an overarching concept when I started law school. I was always interested in economic development, as well as traveling and living abroad and really got into what, at the time, we were calling “international development.” I decided then that I was going to work at the World Bank or the IMF (International Monetary Fund), but I did not end up working at either of those organizations. I fell into financial services regulatory work when I was looking to leave the first firm I worked at out of law school, and I had a good friend here at Goodwin who knew that the newly-acquired financial services regulatory team needed junior attorneys. From there, I developed an expertise in the Community Reinvestment Act, which led to more of a focus on corporate social responsibility and ESG when I was working in-house. The rest is history.

**Q: Do you have any career advice for those starting off?**

**A:** Starting off in Big Law is a great thing to do. It is a great way to learn. It is very fast-paced learning, and it is unique in that sense. I would never discourage anyone from starting off in Big Law. I think that it was good that I did that at the beginning. When I was in law school, I did what everyone else was doing in terms of finding my first job – I did on-campus interviewing and went from there. For my in-house job, I got a call out of the blue from a headhunter who thought I might have a connection to Texas, which I do, having been born and raised in Texas. I did not do anything proactively to find that job, and I would say that was a pretty standard way to find a job at the time. Things may have changed since then.

In terms of coming back to Goodwin, I always kept in touch with people. That is my biggest advice – keep in touch with people you like and enjoy working with. Make sure you maintain relationships, especially with good bosses. You do not want to lose touch with them. Networks are really important and they could help you pursue an opportunity that becomes relevant to you in a way you never could have guessed. Cherish the relationships you pick up along the way that you enjoy. It does take work, especially if you do not live in the same town anymore, for example. It is well worth the time to reach out every few months. I think it is really important.

**Q: What role does mentorship play in the legal industry?**

**A:** I have had lots of mentors at various points in my career. A lot of them have been just really good bosses who were not technically in a mentor role, but they served as such during my time with them and are still mentors to me now. I also have lots of mentees, both formal and informal, but mostly informal. I really find that just talking to somebody for a few minutes can really have a huge impact on their day, which might have a huge impact on their decisions, including major life decisions. I always try to make time to talk to people who need to talk. It does not matter if I am their mentor or not, and usually that ends up turning into this sort of informal mentor/mentee relationship.

## Personal Perspective

**Q: If you were not a lawyer, what would you be?**

**A:** I think I would have tried to be a music therapist or a neurologist who focused on music as therapy. I went to a performing arts school for high school and played the cello throughout all my childhood. When I was in college, they had an orchestra for non-music majors. I did that during all four years, and I think that would have been an interesting way to marry my interest in music with my interest in science.

**Q: What do you like to do when you are not working?**

**A:** I have a nine-year-old and he keeps me very busy. We have a little farm less than an hour drive from our house, which is one of the benefits of living in Texas. We have 13 beehives and I learned how to care for them by completing a beekeeping apprenticeship during the pandemic. Now, I have my little apiary. I like to go out there and just relax and take care of the bees. My son is very interested in wildlife science, so he likes walking around and observing all of the animals, animal tracks, and things like that.

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