



Member Spotlight: Vikas Sunkari

TITLE: Senior Legal Counsel

COMPANY: SSM Health

In current position for: 5.5 years

Years in-house: 5.5 years

Law School: Chicago Kent College of Law

Undergrad: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The best thing about my current job is: The ability to advise leaders at all levels of the organization related to significant projects or initiatives, especially those that positively impact the lives of patients. A particular highlight is seeing those projects go from inception to reality; for example, a construction project progressing from its planning stages to a medical office building seeing patients.

What I look forward to in my career: Continuing to develop areas of expertise, participating in major projects from a legal and business perspective, and managing a team of legal professionals.

The most challenging thing about my current job is: Managing timelines for numerous projects with varying levels of risk and importance; or, handling legal matters out of my areas of expertise.

My most pivotal career move: Leaving a career in telecommunications industry to practice real estate law in-house at SSM Health; I have expanded beyond real estate into health law, which has been rewarding and a better fit than I would have expected.

The worst job I ever held was: In college I was a guard at a small art museum; my job was primarily to ensure the students wouldn't wear their backpacks and bump into the paintings. There were a lot of great exhibits but after seeing them daily, it got to be pretty dull.

Hardest lesson I have learned as a lawyer: Since I work in the healthcare industry, understanding that my work can have very real and significant effect on patients

Advice I would give to new lawyers, in-house or otherwise: Advocate for yourself and your abilities; apply every skill you've gained in school or previous jobs and continue to build upon those skills. When you are unsure of how to handle a matter or need to obtain additional information, don't hesitate to reach out to others who can guide you and provide you the resources you need to succeed.

Joined ACC in what year: 2016

Why did I join ACC: I attended a few events with coworkers, but really wanted to get involved because of the Street Law program. I had a great experience and through that was able to get involved with the Diversity Committee, which I've been an active member of since.

What I like most about the ACC St. Louis Chapter: Through the Diversity Committee and the Diversity Summer Internship Program, I've gotten to meet and work with a lot of young people who are just starting off their careers in the legal profession. I really value the ability of my colleagues and I to have an impact on the lives of those individuals. On a similar note, I am able to meet many different types of attorneys across multiple disciplines, who have provided advice and serve as role models and mentors to me as I progress in my career.

My favorite pro bono or volunteer activity is: Volunteering at the St. Louis Area Volunteer Foodbank with my coworkers.

I achieve work-life balance by: I start off mornings getting some exercise and then playing with my 2 year old son before getting to work. Once I've wrapped up my work for the day, I may read a few emails but I tend to table my work until the next day. I take the evenings to spend time with my family, cook dinner, and relax by watching my wife and I's favorite TV shows or reading.

If I were not practicing law, I would probably be: Cooking or maybe running a restaurant.

When I'm not working, I like to: Spend time with my wife and son, cook, exercise, travel, and explore St. Louis.

My all-time favorite movie is: Back to the Future.

People may be surprised to learn that I: Have a decent sized record collection.

The place I've never been but would most like to visit: Ireland.