

D. Annual Symposia

On a rotating basis, every year a law school in Georgia presents a symposium on Ethics and Professionalism. The Commission assists the law school with the design and presentation of these programs, supported by funds allocated pursuant to a 1998 settlement order of the U.S. District Court for the Middle of District of Georgia. The programming is applicable to both law student and legal practitioners.

Since 2001, these symposia have addressed a wide variety of topics starting with the first symposium presented by Professor Patrick E. Longan of Mercer Law School on “Ethics in Settlement Negotiations.” This program was based on the ABA Litigation Section’s Proposed Guidelines. The 2002 symposium, “Problems in Discovery and Professionalism,” was spearheaded by Professor C. Ronald Ellington of the University of Georgia School of Law, followed in 2003 by Emory’s conference created by Professor Anita Bernstein, “What Do Clients Want?” In 2004 Professor Clark Cunningham led Georgia State University College of Law in presenting its symposium on “Teaching Ethics and Professionalism” and inaugurated the National Award for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching Professionalism. The second cycle of symposia started in 2004 with Mercer’s symposium on “Professionalism and Ethics in Judicial Selection. Professor C. Ronald Ellington of the University of Georgia Law School in 2005 presented “Taking Your Case to the Court of Public Opinion.” In 2007, Professor Anita Bernstein hosted Emory’s symposium, “Lawyers and Disability.” In 2008, it was Georgia State’s turn, with their program, “International Conference on the Future of Legal Education.”

The Georgia commission is also a founding sponsor of The National Institute for Teaching Ethics and Professionalism (“NIFTEP “), which was established in 2005 through the leadership of Georgia State University College of Law to provide the opportunity for legal practitioners to join with law school faculty and creatively engage in an educational discourse on teaching ethics and professionalism as continuing legal education and in the law school classroom. During 2005-2008, the first three years of operations, three NIFTEP workshops were held to which participants were invited as fellows. The fellows include law professors, practicing lawyers with substantial CLE teaching experience and state bar officials from several states. Session topics have included 1) Pilot Project for Professional Proficiency Testing; 2) Teaching Demonstration: The O.M. Client Meeting Exercise; 3) The Practice of Law as a Business: Not a Bad Thing?; 4) Teaching Ethics and Professionalism as Part of a Course on Fundamentals of Law Practice; 5) development of moral decision-making and ethical commitment during law school and the first five years of practice and 6) what can be done in one hour and how to design a one-hour class or CLE session that makes a difference. Funding is provided by a grant from the Commission and from other sponsors.