

B. Convocations/Conclaves

Another possible function of a state professionalism commission is to hold periodic convocations that bring together representatives from the practicing bar, the judiciary, and the law schools to discuss issues of ethics and professionalism. In Georgia, statewide convocations on professionalism were conducted in the early years of the Commission. They were deemed highly successful in drawing interest to the subject of professionalism and in defining the ideals and practice of professionalism. The Georgia convocations have addressed the following topics:

- "The Practice of Law - Is There Anything More to It than Making Money?"
- "A New Era of Professionalism"
- "The Social Responsibilities of Lawyers in the Practice of Law - The Lawyer as Citizen"
- "Professionalism - Passing it Along"
- "Town Hall Meetings - Attorney Concerns about Ethics and Professionalism"
- "Ethics-Beyond the Code"
- "Town Hall Meetings - Professionalism in Client Relations"
- "Professionalism and Community Service"
- "Professionalism and Public Service"

In Georgia, statewide Convocations on Professionalism allow conversation around one or two issues. The format has been adopted by State Bar sections where it is helpful to address professionalism in the practice of law, i.e., Family Law Convocation on Professionalism. Similar convocations have been held in New Jersey and elsewhere.

The New York State Judicial Institute on Professionalism in the Law conducted, as its inaugural public event, a convocation titled, *The Face of the Profession*. It was designed to explore the transition from law school to legal practice and the roles that law schools and legal employers play in shaping the professional values of new lawyers. The convocation brought together leaders of the practicing bar and select representatives of the state's law schools to examine the profile of students accepted into law school, the socialization of law students into the profession, and law students graduating and starting employment. Among the questions that participants explored were: How successful is the LSAT in choosing students for admission? What is the role of law schools as gatekeepers of the profession? Why do people choose law school? What is the impact of clinics on students' sense of professionalism? What is the extent and impact of economic stress upon law students? How do law professors perceive their role in the formation process? What are the expectations of new law graduates? What types of employment do new graduates seek? What principles and values do employers look for in graduates?

The New York convocation included breakout sessions in which groups of lawyers, judges, and academics discussed how to improve the relationship between the practicing bar and the academy. The groups reported their findings to the general assembly. According to the organizers, the groups suggested excellent ideas for "a major bridge-building effort to wed the idealism of law school with the practicalities of modern practice."⁶ Some of these suggestions included a recommendation for a mentoring program for law students, a recommendation that more clients be brought into the classroom, a recommendation for a pro bono requirement for law students, a suggestion that law professors write more often for practice-oriented publications rather than focusing predominantly on law reviews, and the

suggestion that law professors strive to bring more real-life examples and stories into the classroom discussions.¹

The Illinois Commission held its first conclave in December, 2007, with the co-sponsorship of the Illinois Judges' Association, Illinois State Bar Association, and the Chicago Bar Association. The outcome of the conclave was the identification of initiatives in two specific areas: the diversity of our profession; and the appropriate balance of the traditional core values of the profession in a more competitive marketplace.

¹ John Caher, *Call for Bridge From Academia to Practice*, N.Y.L.J., Nov. 15, 2000.