

L. Studies

Another possible function of professionalism commissions is to engage in continued study of the professionalism issues facing lawyers, and how those issues and concerns change over time. For example, the North Carolina Commission, the Florida Center, and the Texas Center have undertaken historical projects that document the varying views of professionalism among members of their respective state bars. The resources include videotaped interviews with pre-eminent lawyers and judges regarding their views on professionalism and the practice of law. In addition, the Florida Center has compiled a collection of famous quotations about the law and the legal profession. These projects give a sense of continuity to the profession, showing both how attitudes have changed and how some values have remained constant throughout the years.

The New York Institute has made studying the profession a central focus of its efforts by initiating several different projects. First, it has appointed a working group on "core values," which seeks to formulate an authentic premise for American professionalism in the twenty-first century. So far, the group has considered existing definitions of professionalism, as well as current notions of professional values described by lawyers, professors, and judges throughout the state. The group plans to identify the essential beliefs and values that will always endure in the profession regardless of the changes occurring in society.

A second project to be undertaken in New York is the "economics and access project," which examines barriers faced by lawyers seeking to enter the profession, lawyers seeking mobility within the profession, and clients seeking affordable legal assistance. One area of concern is lawyer advertising and its implications for professionalism, lawyer competition, and clients. This will include exploration of the role of the Internet in lawyer advertising and the effects that web-based advertising have had on the image and professional values of lawyers.

In addition, the New York Institute will undertake an "accountability project" that is considering topics such as the confidentiality of grievance committees and substance abuse among lawyers. The study will explore the ways in which clients and the public measure the abilities and values of lawyers as individuals and the legal profession in general. The Institute hopes to assess the current disciplinary system, suggest possible alternatives to it, and recommend how the image of lawyers can be improved through education or publicity.

In North Carolina, the Commission sponsored an update to the 1991 North Carolina Bar Association Quality of Life Survey, in conjunction with LAWLEAD/NIELLP, a leadership and professionalism organization headed by Dean Leary Davis of Elon Law School. The State of the Profession Survey was completed in 2003 and addressed professionalism as well as quality of life issues. The results of the survey can be accessed through the Commission's website at <http://www.nccourts.org/Courts/CRS/Councils/Professionalism/Survey.asp>