SALT - Society of American Law Teachers
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To: ABA Council on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar (the “Council”)
From: Society of American Law Teachers (“SALT”)
Date: October 23, 2017
Re: Update on SALT Activities

SALT’s mission is to foster a more diverse and inclusive legal profession; enhance legal education through innovative teaching as well as incorporation of social justice learning throughout the curriculum; and extend the power of law to underserved communities. We are grateful to the Council for this opportunity to report on SALT’s activities and the ongoing opportunity to work with you toward improvement of legal education and the system of justice it serves.

Since our last written update, SALT has restructured its many committees into three core committees: Legal Education, Access to Justice, and Human Rights & Equality. The threads of SALT’s mission— diversity, justice and academic excellence—are woven through the work of all three committees.

**SALT’s Legal Education Committee** works on all issues related directly to legal education, including:

- protecting academic freedom;
- promoting access to and diversity in the legal profession through pipeline work stretching from BA to JD to law practice to law teaching and administration;
- nurturing social justice-minded students through a consumer guide for prospective students, public interest & social justice retreats, and the SALT Student Advisory Council; and
- leading legal education reform and weighing in on legal education regulation.

*For example—*

In July, SALT participated in the Standard Review Committee’s invitational roundtable, a productive and much-appreciated opportunity to discuss larger issues facing legal education with SRC members and others working to improving legal education. SALT also submitted comments and provided testimony on the effect of revising Standard 403 to eliminate its specific requirement for fulltime faculty teaching after the first year.

In September, SALT and LatCrit co-sponsored our annual Junior Faculty Development Workshop in connection with the LatCrit conference in Orlando,
Florida. The Workshop supports aspiring and junior faculty members in their teaching, service, and scholarship; fosters progressive and critical outsider scholarship; and cultivates a community committed to social justice work on behalf of underserved people.

SALT continues its work toward making bar licensure more appropriate and just. In September and October, SALT provided comments to the California Supreme Court in support of lowering the state’s bar exam cut score to a level more in keeping with the states licensing a majority of the nation’s lawyers.

SALT joined the effort to oppose the University of North Carolina Board of Governors’ threatened prohibition on participation in litigation by the independently funded UNC Center on Civil Rights.

Over the past year SALT co-sponsored regional law student public interest and social justice retreats in New England, the Midwest, the Rocky Mountain states, and the West Coast.

**SALT’s Access to Justice Committee** focuses on using SALT's leadership role in promoting social justice in legal education to address the crisis of unrepresented people facing loss of their most fundamental human rights in criminal and civil courts across the country. The committee focuses on this goal by seeking to support and expand the role of the academy and law school faculty in (1) preparing the current generation of law students to embrace their professional responsibility for providing access to representation, and (2) focusing the profession on its duty to guarantee equal access to justice for all. It also works to establish SALT as a source of advice, expertise, and advocacy for members, policymakers, and the media about access to justice issues including both deficiencies and innovations in the provision of legal services – including but not limited to services provided by lawyers – and in legal systems more broadly.

*For example—*

The Committee’s ATJ Reform Project prepared a public statement by SALT on the White House’s proposed elimination of funding for the Legal Services Corporation, and the Committee is continuing to work on advocacy around LSC elimination. This Project also involves examination of innovations such as limited licensure as means of expanding access to legal services.

The Pledge Project is developing and promoting a pledge that faculty and schools can make to express and reinforce their commitment to teaching about and otherwise working to address the need for expanded legal representation. It is based on Denver Law School’s Pledge for the Public Good. *See generally* Alexi Freeman and Katherine Steefel, *The Pledge for the Public Good: A Student-Led Initiative To Incorporate Morality and Justice in Every Classroom*, 22 Wash. & Lee J. Civ. Rts. & Soc. Justice 49 (2016).

The Committee’s Online Curriculum Project is dedicated to making SALT’s website a valuable resource for gathering and sharing teaching ideas, experiences, and materials that will help faculty incorporate social justice themes, particularly about lawyers’ professional responsibility
to provide access to legal representation, across the curriculum. The Curriculum Project is also an important vehicle for schools and faculty to help to realize a Pledge for the Public Good.

**SALT’s Committee on Human Rights & Equality** uses its resources to a wide range of ends, including supporting and motivating students and SALT members involved in domestic and international human rights work, as well as enriching legal education. The Committee’s conception of social justice is as broad as the issues for which SALT members and allies advocate every day, and the Committee is committed to using its resources in allyship with, inter alia, communities of color, women, people living with physical and mental disabilities, LGBTQ people, immigrants, indigenous people, language minorities, minors, elders, institutionalized people, people living in poverty, including rural poverty, including homeless people, and people threatened because of their identity, culture, beliefs, or human rights activism. This Committee particularly seeks out opportunities to:

- use international human rights law to support equality in access to justice and legal education, including affirmative action, diversity and inclusion;
- support other SALT Committees and members in their ongoing Human Rights projects;
- support progressive advocates in the law professoriate in this and other countries through petitions, amicus briefs, solidarity, and other actions; and
- support progressive causes of importance to our membership and other allies.

*For example*—

The Human Rights and Equality Committee led SALT’s participation in a Brief Amicus Curiae in International Refugee Assistance Project, et al. v. Trump. The brief argued that the Presidential "travel ban" Executive Order at issue in the case inflicted irreparable harm by diminishing the strength and mission of American institutions of higher education which thrive on diversity and the free exchange of ideas across borders, including from students and scholars from Muslim majority countries, and also by legitimizing anti-Muslim suspicion and antagonism that has led to increased hate incidents and violence against Muslim-American and foreign Muslim faculty, staff and students on University and College campuses across the country.

Committee Co-Chair Justin Hansford (Howard) recently appeared and presented as an expert on Monitoring and Investigating Hate Speech and Hate Crimes before the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, 15th session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

Through efforts of the Human Rights & Equality Committee, SALT has been granted Special Consultative status to the United Nations.

**Looking ahead**

On January 1, Matthew Charity (Western New England) and Davida Finger (Loyola New Orleans) will begin two-year terms as SALT Co-Presidents, replacing Sara Rankin (Seattle) and Denise Roy (Mitchell Hamline).
SALT’s 2018 Annual Awards Celebration in San Diego on January 5, 2018, will honor Professor Jeffrey Selbin (Berkeley) as our Great Teacher Award winner, and Professor Robert S. Chang (Seattle) and the Korematsu Center for Law and Equality as our M. Shanara Gilbert Human Rights Award winners. The celebration will feature engaging, interactive presentations by the awardees and a reception. We will also pay tribute in memoriam to SALT founder Norman Dorsen and honor Junior Faculty Teaching Award recipients Katie Eyer (Rutgers) and Lua Yuille (Kansas).

SALT’s 2018 Teaching Conference—on Legal Education for a Changing Society—will be held at Penn State Law School on October 5-6, 2018. We are grateful to Dean Hari Osofsky, a SALT Board member, for hosting the conference. The Conference promises to be inspiring, provocative, and inter-disciplinary.

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN LAW TEACHERS BY:

Sara Rankin
Co-President

Denise Roy
Co-President