MEMORANDUM

TO: Council of the American Bar Association Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar

FROM: Judith Areen, Executive Director, Association of American Law Schools

SUBJECT: AALS Activities Report

This report summarizes the major activities of the AALS from April through July 2019.

Thank you to the Council and your Chair, Dean Jeffrey Lewis, Chair-elect, Diane Bosse, and Managing Director of Accreditation and Legal Education, Barry Currier, for your willingness to work with the AALS on issues of common concern to our organizations and constituencies.

Overview

Over the last few months, AALS hosted the AALS Conference on Clinical Legal Education in San Francisco, the AALS Workshop for New Law School Teachers in Washington, D.C., and continued preparations for the 2020 Annual Meeting, also in Washington, D.C. In addition, the association launched new resources on our website for those interested in law teaching and announced a research initiative focused on law school leadership.
AALS Faculty Recruitment Services

AALS staff and faculty committee volunteers have worked to enhance services and improve information provided to applicants and faculty appointments committees in advance of the Faculty Recruitment Conference this fall in Washington, D.C. The materials are hosted on a new website, “Becoming a Law Teacher,” at https://teach.aals.org. The goal of the site is to make the process of obtaining a teaching job as transparent as possible, and to provide useful information to potential candidates. The website explains the faculty recruitment process, provides resources, and includes multi-media interviews with recently hired professors and directors of law school programs for aspiring faculty. Additional material will be added to the site in the months to come.

AALS Meetings

AALS hosted the 42nd Annual AALS Conference on Clinical Legal Education from May 4-7, 2019 in San Francisco. The conference had its highest attendance in history with more than 750 attendees enjoying over 350 speakers and 100 sessions organized under the meeting’s theme of “Teaching the Next Generation of Lawyer Leaders in a Time of Polarization.” The conference featured innovations including shorter concurrent sessions and new “lightning” sessions, designed to spark novel thoughts and ideas. The conference was preceded by the Clinical and Experiential Law Program Directors Workshop.

AALS welcomed more than 70 new law school faculty to the 36th AALS Workshop for New Law Teachers, held June 6-8, 2019 in Washington, D.C. The workshop supported attendees in their transition into the legal academy with sessions focused on the competing demands of teaching, scholarship, and institutional service required in an academic career. Sessions were led by distinguished deans and faculty at law schools from across the country.

Planning continues for the 2020 Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. AALS President Vicki Jackson (Harvard Law School) announced her theme for this year and the 2020 Annual Meeting as “Pillars of Democracy: Law, Representation, and Knowledge.” To better support AALS faculty, AALS staff has provided clearer information on our website on how to propose a program to be considered for inclusion in the meeting. Meeting planners have also clustered section programs on major topics to make it easier for attendees to plan their schedules.

Connecting with the Bar and Bench

Kirkland & Ellis has become the fifteenth law firm to join the AALS Project in Support of American Legal Education. The other firms are: Akin Gump, Arnold & Porter, Covington & Burling, Cravath, K&L Gates, Proskauer, O’Melveny & Myers, Paul Weiss, Sidley Austin, Sullivan & Cromwell, Wachtell, White & Case, Williams & Connolly, and WilmerHale.

For the fifth year, AALS will host a coffee reception for members of the practicing bar and bench on the morning of Friday, January 3, 2020, in conjunction with the AALS Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. Invited attendees will include representatives from local law firms, corporate counsel departments, public interest groups, bar association officials, and the local and
national judiciary. AALS has been providing timely updates about AALS to previous bar and bench event attendees from Annual Meetings in New York, San Francisco, San Diego, and New Orleans.

**Study of the American Law School Dean**

AALS has been awarded a grant from AccessLex Institute to support research and professional development, including a “study of the American law school dean” which will cover such topics as how law school deans are recruited and selected, career paths to the deanship, the leadership attributes most sought after in law school deans, the selection process, and the most pressing issues deans currently face. The study was inspired by the *American College President Study* prepared by the American Council on Education (ACE), now in its eighth edition.

A survey of all law school deans will be the cornerstone of the new report and is planned to commence in fall of 2020. The goal of the study is to make the process of becoming and serving as a law dean more transparent to the benefit of legal education and higher education.