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 November 2019 through January 2020.

Thank you to the Council and your Chair, Diane Bosse, Chair-elect, The Hon. Scott Bales, and Managing Director of Accreditation and Legal Education, Barry Currier, for your willingness to work with AALS on issues of importance to our organizations and shared constituencies.

AALS Annual Meeting

The 2020 AALS Annual Meeting was held in Washington, D.C. from January 2-5 with more than 2,400 law faculty, deans, professional staff, and exhibitors in attendance. The theme of the meeting, “Pillars of Democracy: Law, Representation, and Knowledge” was selected by 2019 AALS President Vicki Jackson, Thurgood Marshall Professor of Constitutional Law at Harvard Law School. The meeting included moderated panels, interactive discussions, and networking events where attendees gathered to discuss pressing legal issues and emerging perspectives on the law and legal education.
The Annual Meeting had a number of notable speakers and presenters, including U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg who discussed her life, career, and commitment to law and to legal education in a conversation with AALS President Vicki Jackson.

One-hundred twenty-eight law school deans participated in the Deans Forum day-long program on Saturday, January 4, for sessions on leadership, peer support, and addressing the challenges facing legal education today. Former New York University President John Sexton was the plenary speaker.

2020 AALS President Darby Dickerson (Dean, UIC John Marshall Law School) delivered her inaugural address and announced her theme for 2020 and for the 2021 Annual Meeting in San Francisco will be “The Power of Words.”

AALS Conference on Clinical Legal Education

AALS staff and faculty volunteers are planning the 43rd Annual AALS Conference on Clinical Legal Education that will take place May 3-6 in Orlando, Florida. The conference theme this year is “Fortifying our Foundation and Building for the Future.” The conference will be preceded by the Workshop for New Law School Clinical Teachers on May 3.

Communications

For the fourth year, AALS measured how much law schools contribute to the delivery of much-needed legal services, through clinics, other experiential courses, and pro bono activities of law students. In fall of 2019, 105 law schools reported that 19,885 law students in the class of 2019 contributed 4.38 million hours in legal services as part of their legal education, an average of about 221 hours per student. Independent Sector, a nonprofit organization coalition, estimates the value of volunteer time to be $25.43 an hour. Using this number, the total value of the students’ time at these schools is estimated to be in excess of $111.5 million. The schools participating in the survey represent more than half of the students in ABA accredited law schools in the class of 2019.

AALS debuted a new webpage last fall that lists books authored by law faculty that is found at www.aals.org/faculty-books/. More than 90 books are currently listed. New books will be added to the page on an on-going basis.
Connecting with the Bar and Bench

AALS leadership and law school deans met with several members of the bench and bar during the AALS Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. for a coffee reception on Friday, January 3. Attendees could also attend Annual Meeting programs that day as part of the invitation.

During the meeting, ABA President Judy Perry Martinez took part in the session on “Confronting the Big Questions About the Regulation of the Legal Profession” on Saturday, January 4. Several other ABA representatives participated in the meeting, including William E. Adams, Jr. (Deputy Managing Director, Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar), Elisabeth Baraka (Director of the Asia & the Pacific Division), David Bienvenu (Chair, Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service), and Kirsten Winek (Manager, Law School Analytics, Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar).

Faculty Recruitment Services

AALS is working on a new Faculty Appointments Register application interface developed by Interfolio, a company with a history of supporting faculty hiring at a number of universities and academic associations. The new platform will be ready for the 2020-21 hiring cycle and will feature enhanced functionality over the existing system for evaluating candidates and digital collaboration. A preview of the system was presented to law school faculty hiring committee members at a session during the AALS Annual Meeting.

New Members of the AALS Executive Committee

At the AALS Annual Meeting, the AALS House of Representatives elected Vincent D. Rougeau (Dean, Boston College Law School) to serve as President-elect of the Association and Austen L. Parrish (Dean, University of Indiana Maurer Law) and Melanie D. Wilson (Dean, University of Tennessee Law) to serve on the AALS Executive Committee for a three-year term. Three Executive Committee members concluded their service: 2019 Immediate Past President Wendy Perdue (University of Richmond Law), Erwin Chemerinsky (UC Berkeley Law) and Camille A. Nelson (American University Washington College of Law).

Study of the American Law School Dean

AALS has begun work on a Study of the American Law School Dean that will look at how law school deans are recruited and selected, career paths to the deanship and after, 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 be conducted in the fall of 2020. The goal of the study is to make the process of becoming and
serving as a law dean more transparent and thereby to benefit legal education and higher education.

The Association is currently reviewing proposals from research firms to assist in the collection of data for the project. An advisory group of deans, former deans, and representatives from legal education and higher education organizations met at the AALS Annual Meeting in January.

Grants in support of the project have been awarded by AccessLex, ETS, and LSAC.