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

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

This report summarizes the major activities of the AALS from February to May 2020.

AALS Support for Law Schools During the Pandemic

AALS has been working hard to support law schools in new ways given the challenges that legal education is facing during the pandemic.

Beginning on March 27, AALS and LSAC have been offering a weekly video conference for law school deans, called the “Deans Dialogue,” to keep them connected and current on developments during the pandemic. Bill Adams has presented each week, providing important updates from the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. Leaders from AccessLex, LSAC, NALP, and NCBE have also presented and provided timely updates. The series has also included university leaders including Syracuse University President Kent Syverud, Tulane University President Michael Fitts, Indiana University-Bloomington Provost Lauren Robel, and University of Illinois at Chicago Provost Susan Poser—all former law school deans. Each week, three different law school deans also share their experiences and perspectives.
AALS has added a section on how the pandemic is affecting law schools to its weekly legal education news and blogs digests. The digests also include advice and resources for online teaching, which can also be found on a new section of the AALS website at [www.aals.org/news/remote-instruction](http://www.aals.org/news/remote-instruction).

AALS also established a new page to its website titled “Legal Education in the Time of COVID-19” at [www.aals.org/covid19](http://www.aals.org/covid19). The page contains documents, resources, and information related to legal education and the legal profession to help law faculty, students, and staff plan for classes and operations through the coronavirus pandemic. The page also contains reports from legal education related organizations including the ABA Section of Legal Education Admissions to the Bar. The page will be regularly maintained and updated.

Many of the Association’s 103 sections have been actively sharing ideas on their listservs and holding webinars for their membership. To support these efforts, AALS has been working since September to improve the infrastructure of section webpages. Leaders of the sections now have more control over the materials they can post, and their members have easier access to materials without the need to log in. AALS is encouraging more section leaders to connect with their membership, and to offer Zoom webinars.

**AALS Meetings**

As with many large spring events across the country, AALS has canceled the 2020 Conference on Clinical Education previously scheduled for May in Orlando and the Workshop for New Law School Teachers previously scheduled for June in Washington, DC. Support for faculty remains as important as ever, so AALS is developing a new weekly series of programs designed for early career faculty including clinical and LRW faculty that should be ready by late May.

AALS continues to prepare for an in-person Annual Meeting in San Francisco in January 2021 while also exploring options for virtual programs should the severity of the pandemic continue to prevent in-person gatherings. The Association is paying close attention to guidelines from the CDC, California and San Francisco, as well as law school re-openings and feedback from our attendees. We expect to have better information to make the decision by fall.

**Study of the American Law School Dean**

AALS has begun work on a *Study of the American Law School Dean* that will explore 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. Originally planned for the fall of 2020, the survey will now be conducted in the spring of 2021. 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.

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.

In February, after reviewing proposals from five nationally recognized research firms, AALS selected the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago (NORC) to conduct the survey.

Faculty Recruitment Services and Conference

Over the past year, a new Faculty Appointments Register platform developed by Interfolio has been adopted that will improve functionality for law teaching applicants and law school hiring teams. AALS also has launched a new website on Becoming a Law Teacher to provide important information about the faculty hiring process. The goal is to level the playing field for faculty candidates from all law schools.