C. Town Hall Meetings/Public Education

Professionalism commissions might also use the format of town hall meetings to bring together lawyers, judges, law professors and deans, and members of the public to discuss matters of professionalism. Most notably, Georgia conducted two successful series of town hall meetings, each of which drew about 1000 participants. The first, conducted during the period from 1992 to 1994, was titled, “Attorney Concerns about Ethics and Professionalism.” Conducted in twelve communities, the meetings brought together members of the legal profession to develop a shared vision of the profession of law. The discussions contributed to the later work of the Commission in a variety of ways. In particular, two new programs - the Law School Orientations on Professionalism and the Law Practice Management Program - were developed in response to the concerns of lawyers at the meetings. In 1993, the Town Hall Meetings received the ABA's E. Smythe Gambrell Professionalism Award.

The second set of Georgia town hall meetings, conducted from 1994 to 1996, was titled, “Professionalism in Client Relations.” Members of the community and clients were invited to participate to better explore client concerns about representation, client relationships with lawyers, public access to the justice system, public perceptions of the justice system, and effective communication between clients and lawyers. In response to the concerns articulated at these meetings, in 1995 the State Bar of Georgia established the Consumer Assistance Program to resolve non-disciplinary complaints through conciliation, negotiation, and education. Also in response to these town hall meetings, in 1996 the State Bar established a Committee on the Standards of the Profession to investigate the bar's responsibility to train new lawyers in competent and professional client representation. As a result, Georgia adopted the first mandatory mentoring program for new lawyers, the Transition Into Law Practice Program (TILPP).

The Texas Center for Legal Ethics engages in public education in the form of presentations to civic groups, clubs, schools, and other lay groups. In addition, the Center recently created a new blog entitled *On the Merits* on its redesigned web site at www.LegalEthicsTexas.com. *On the Merits* looks at media accounts of lawyers and the legal system with an eye toward correcting the common myths and misconceptions that increase public cynicism about how the legal system works. It is designed to take advantage of Facebook and other newer forms of social media to educate the public about what lawyers do and why the rule of law is essential to a democratic society.