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From the Chair: Looking Forward



Honorable Scott Bales
Chief Justice (Retired)
Arizona Supreme Court
2020-2021 Council Chair

2020 will be remembered as a year that upended nearly all our lives – for many, tragically – and transformed institutions across society and around the globe. The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences and the imperative to fight racial injustice pose important challenges for legal education, the profession, and legal institutions more broadly. In such a transformative time, it is essential that law schools and the Council themselves adapt and evolve to better advance the goals of legal education and the accreditation process.

Events this year have highlighted the resilience and commitment of law students, faculty, and the deans and other administrators in law schools nationwide. That they could unexpectedly and quickly switch to online learning formats for nearly their entire programs took tremendous effort and deserves recognition. Similarly, Council staff has ably assisted law schools and the Council in implementing a process for emergency variances that allows law schools to respond to the pandemic while otherwise adhering to the Standards.

The year has been transformative for the Council and staff wholly apart from COVID-19. Bill Adams succeeded Barry Carrier as the Managing Director and Bill's experience as Deputy Managing Director ensured a smooth transition after Barry's long and successful tenure. Stephanie Giggetts has become the Deputy Managing Director, and Kirsten Winek is our new Accreditation Counsel. They all have been working tremendously hard in their new roles, and I know their efforts are appreciated by the law schools and the Council members.

Looking forward, the Council recognizes the need to continually reassess the Standards and how it does its work. Over recent years, we have implemented important changes aimed at making the process less burdensome on schools, more expeditious, and more responsive – such as eliminating the Accreditation Committee and consolidating its functions into the Council, extending the time period between regular site visits to ten years, simplifying reporting by

schools, and focusing more on interim monitoring. We welcome input on how these changes are working or can be improved, as well as ideas for others.

Substantive changes to the Standards are also on the horizon. At its August meeting, the Council approved an ambitious agenda for the Standards Committee, including considering changes related to well-being and professionalism; diversity, equity, and inclusion; student loan data and reporting; admissions testing; and distance education. Last month, the Council hosted a useful roundtable discussion to elicit input on many of these issues; another is being planned specific to distance education. In coming months, the Standards Committee will be developing recommendations for possible Council action and adoption through our usual notice and comment process.

More broadly, the Council will continue to reassess how, in its role as the national accreditor, it can best help ensure that law schools prepare their students for admission to the bar and effective participation in the profession, recognizing the need for innovation, transparency, and accountability. I look forward to hearing others' suggestions and to working with the Council and other Section members toward these goals.

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From the Managing Director: The Outlook for 2020-2021 (At This Moment)



William E. Adams
Managing Director of Accreditation and Legal Education

Law Schools have returned in the Fall facing the uncertainties posed by the challenges of the COVID-19 virus. As the future of the pandemic remains uncertain, the Council and schools will continue to review the situation as it evolves. At its August meeting, the Council approved the plans submitted by all of the schools for the mode of instruction for this academic term and, for some schools, for the entire academic year. Schools continue to share on our listservs how they are adjusting policies and practices as they offer online and hybrid classes. They continue to be innovative in striving to assist their students. Recent conversations have included discussions of the pros and cons of cancelling spring break.

The Council took a number of actions at its August meeting, which was conducted virtually. Some of these items include:

- Approving priorities for the coming fiscal year that begins September 1. The goals include looking at issues involving lawyer well-being and professional responsibility; equity, diversity and inclusion, including bias, cultural competency, and concrete actions; and distance education.
- Reviewing unsettled agenda items from the past few years, such as Standard 501 in regard to the types of evidence a law school may proffer to demonstrate its sound admissions policies; Standard 503's requirement for a valid and reliable admissions test for applicants; and Standard 507 regarding its objectives in regard to student loan data including what should be collected and published.
- Reviewing other Standards and Rules that may need amending, which are listed in the SRS report posted on the [Section's website](#).
- Approving amendments to Rule 2 giving the Council authority to provide temporary relief from identified Standards during emergencies.

The Council held a special meeting in September to recommend amendments to Rule 29 on Teach-Out Plans to comply with new federal Department of Education regulations. The amendments were put out for Notice and Comment. The Notice concerning these amendments is also posted on the [website](#).

The Council also invited groups and others interested in legal education to virtual roundtables in October to discuss the above priority issues as well as issues concerning transparency and admissions tests. A summary of the comments received have been posted on the [Section's website](#). I believe that interesting and useful conversations occurred, and the Council received useful input on these issues. I hope that we will have more of these events in the future. I am also hopeful that at some point in the not-too-distant future we can hold them in person so that we can allot more time for the discussions.

The first virtual site inspections have started to be conducted. The staff will discuss the experience with chairs of those inspections and provide additional direction and tips as appropriate to chairs and schools being inspected in the Spring. After the Spring visits conclude, the staff will analyze whether we should recommend to the Council that using the virtual process, at least in part, should be considered in the future.

As the safety of travel remains challenging, the Council will have another virtual meeting in November. The agenda for the meeting will be posted on the [website](#).

Schools have just finished completing their Annual Questionnaires. The office will review the data and attempt to catch data entry errors. In my next column, I will review the enrollment data and what it indicates as to trends and how they may have been impacted by the virus.

As the pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges to law schools and society as a whole, it has presented the office with questions that require us to ponder how the Standards apply to situations not previously encountered. I thank our staff for continuing to strive to address those questions. I am also particularly grateful to Immediate Past Chair Diane Bosse and current Chair Scott Bales for their assistance to me as I assumed my new role in the Spring. They were always patient and provided wise advice on a nearly daily basis through the Spring and Summer. Scott, along with Chair-Elect Leo Martinez, continue to assist me through the Fall. As we continue to confront new questions, I feel confident that they and the rest of the Council will assist the office to address ongoing issues.

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From the Section Director: Opportunities for Law Students



Erin Ruehrwein
Section Director

Throughout the year, the ABA offers various opportunities and programs for law students including internships and writing competitions. Below I highlight a few of them.

ABA Judicial Intern Opportunity Program

The [Judicial Intern Opportunity Program](#) (JIOP), offered by the ABA's Section of Litigation, is a summer internship program open to all first - or second - year diverse law students. JIOP students intern for a minimum of six weeks during the summer with a participating state or federal judge. The program offers a \$2,000 award to each student and students can also elect law school credit or coordinate their award with their work-study financial aid. Applications open for all students on **November 4, 2020** and close on **January 10, 2021**. Last year, internships were granted to 135 law students representing 63 different law schools in locations throughout the country.

Alaska Bar Association Scholarship Program

The Alaska Bar Association offers a scholarship program for Alaskans in law school. As the only state without a law school, applicants come from law schools all over the country. This scholarship is aimed at Alaska students who demonstrate ties to Alaska, and the intent to return to Alaska after graduation. Applications can be found on the [Alaska Bar Association](#) website and are due **March 1, 2021**. To view the flyer, [click here](#).

2021 ABA Judicial Clerkship Program (JCP)

Planning is underway for the 2021 ABA Judicial Clerkship Program (JCP). The 2021 program will be held virtually February 18-20, 2021 in conjunction with the ABA Midyear Meeting. Please visit the [ABA Judicial Clerkship Program page](#) to download the 2021 program brochure and participation form.

Since its inception in 2001, over one-thousand law students have participated in the JCP – a joint initiative by the ABA Council for Diversity in the Educational Pipeline (*formerly the Council for Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Educational Pipeline*) and the ABA Judicial Division. The JCP’s mission is to increase the number of diverse judicial clerks in the justice system. The JCP consists of a three-day mock clerkship centered around a current legal issue before the United States Supreme Court. Law students, working with and mentored by judges, discuss, research, and ultimately prepare an outline of the legal opinion. The three-day experience includes the Spirit of Excellence Awards, presented by the ABA Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession.

We invite your law school to consider participating in the JCP. Please feel free to contact Selina Thomas at selina.thomas@americanbar.org for additional information.

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Third Party Comments Invited for Law Schools Undergoing Accreditation Site Visits in Spring 2021

The law schools listed below are scheduled for sabbatical, provisional, or full approval site evaluation visits in spring 2021. For an up-to-date listing, including any additional visits scheduled after the date of this memo, visit https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/accreditation/law_school_site_visits/.

Consistent with Internal Operating Practice 4(a), written comments related to current compliance with the ABA Standards for the Approval of Law Schools may be submitted to the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. Comments on law schools with spring 2021 visits should be sent by January 15, 2021. Third party comments must be submitted using the online form available at https://americanbar.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2iBnYKVCOpLlwpL.

Law schools undergoing accreditation site visits in spring 2021 are:

- Atlanta's John Marshall Law School
- California Western School of Law
- Capital University Law School
- Charleston School of Law
- Drake University Law School
- Mercer University School of Law
- New York Law School
- University of North Dakota School of Law
- Ohio Northern University College of Law
- UNT Dallas College of Law
- Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico School of Law
- Regent University School of Law
- Roger Williams University School of Law
- University of San Diego School of Law
- Touro College Law Center
- Vermont Law School
- Western Michigan University Thomas M. Cooley Law School
- Western State College of Law
- Widener University Commonwealth Law School
- Widener University Delaware Law School

Note: Your comments must be signed. Only comments directly related to the [ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools](#) will be considered.

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ABA Announcements: National Celebration of Pro Bono, Legal Education Police Practices Consortium, Practice Forward, ShopABA Credit for Poll Volunteers, and Why Hire Lawyers With Disabilities?

National Pro Bono Celebration

The end of October marked the 12th Annual National Celebration of Pro Bono. The ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service began the National Celebration in 2009 to showcase the incredible difference that pro bono lawyers make to our nation, to our system of justice, to our communities, and, most of all, to the clients they serve.

If you are interested in providing pro bono assistance, recognizing attorneys who do the important pro bono work of assisting clients in need, or providing education and training in areas of particular need to your community, please reference the valuable [resources](#) offered by the Standing Committee and visit the National Celebration of Pro Bono [website](#).

Legal Education Police Practices Consortium

The ABA has collaborated with dozens of U.S. law schools to form a Legal Education Police Practices Consortium to contribute to the national effort to examine and address legal issues in policing and public safety, including conduct, oversight, and the evolving nature of police work. The consortium will work on projects aimed at developing and implementing better police practices, supporting effective policing, promoting racial equity in the criminal justice system, and eliminating tactics that are racially motivated or have a disparate impact based on race.

The ABA's Criminal Justice Section will house the Consortium and each participating law school will develop opportunities for one or more of its law students to engage in consortium activities such as promoting existing ABA policies at the local, state, and national levels; engaging with police departments and local state and national leaders on police practices; and developing model curricula for law schools related to consortium goals, among others.

[Read the Press Release.](#)

Practice Forward

To address emerging needs in the legal profession in light of the coronavirus pandemic, the ABA created Practice Forward, a member-focused, solutions-oriented website that seeks to provide lawyers, law students, and legal professionals valuable insights and practical tools to move their practice forward amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The Practice Forward initiative, of which the website is one part, seeks to address potential long-term changes to the practice of law and the judicial system.

The ABA's Practice Forward website provides practical tools and resources to support and advance the practice of law and the judicial system amid potential long-term changes due to the coronavirus pandemic. [Visit the website.](#)

Poll Volunteers – Earn ShopABA Credit

If you volunteered at your local polling place for the 2020 general election, you may earn a \$50 credit to use towards a book, CLE, webinar, or other purchase in ShopABA, sponsored by MyCase. This offer is valid to the first 300 ABA members who complete the verification form. Forms must be received by 11/6/20 to be eligible. Members who qualify for the promotion will be emailed the discount code by 11/16/20.

For more information and to submit your form, [click here.](#)

Why Hire Lawyers With Disabilities?

As you may be aware, October marked the 75th observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. In an effort to celebrate that and the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the ABA Commission on Disability Rights and the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) created a video, [Why Hire Lawyers with Disabilities?](#) We encourage you to watch and share this video with your contacts.

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