

# ALWD

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ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL WRITING DIRECTORS

April 25, 2018

TO: Council of the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar  
Maureen O'Rourke, Chair  
Barry Currier, Managing Director

FROM: Association of Legal Writing Directors (ALWD)  
Megan McAlpin, President 2017-18

RE: Report of Activities Since October 2017

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Thank you for inviting ALWD to submit a written report of activities over the last few months. ALWD values its long affiliation with the Council on behalf of the legal writing discipline and appreciates the opportunity to engage with the Council's members and its work.

1. **ALWD Strategic Plan:** Since our last report, ALWD has been moving forward with its strategic action plan.
  - a. **Organizational Diversity and Policies to Ensure Inclusion:** ALWD adopted a Diversity Strategic Action Plan, which contains concrete steps for promoting diversity and inclusion within our organization. As an initial step towards making our organization more inclusive, ALWD adopted a new process for choosing the site for our biennial conference. This process will help to ensure that we choose sites that are welcoming to our diverse membership. We hope that this new policy can serve as a model to other organizations within the legal academy as they choose locations to host conferences and events.

In addition, as part of the Diversity Strategic Action Plan, the Board is in the process of hiring a diversity consultant to help us evaluate our practices as an organization to ensure that we are creating an inclusive environment. As part

of this evaluation, we hope to offer training to our membership and to have the consultant help us to review and expand the plan itself.

- b. Leadership Academy:** Currently, ALWD's Leadership and Development Committee is planning for ALWD's first ever Leadership Academy to be held in the summer of 2019. The goal of this academy is to help members grow as leaders in their own right and to provide mentoring to a new generation of leaders. ALWD believes that this investment in leadership will not only serve ALWD but will also provide benefits to individual law schools and other organizations within the academy.
  
- c. Website and Online Journal:** In early summer, ALWD will unveil a completely redesigned website that will make the resources we provide to members, including scholarship and teaching grants, even more accessible. As a part of this website redesign, ALWD will take its journal, *Legal Communication and Rhetoric*, completely digital.

**2. Annual Activities:** In addition to working toward its priorities for this year, ALWD also engaged in the annual support for teaching and scholarship that has been a focus of its mission for many years. This support includes:

- funding both teaching and scholarship grants;
- publishing a scholarly journal;
- hosting scholars fora; and
- funding a visiting scholars program.

**3. Survey of Members:** ALWD also annually works with its sister organization, the Legal Writing Institute (LWI), to conduct a survey of the legal writing community. This survey is crucial for collecting information about the legal writing curriculum in law schools as well as those professionals who teach legal writing across the country, many of whom continue to be the most vulnerable members of law school faculties.

This survey, which is typically completed by about 95% of law schools nationwide, collects data about emerging practices in legal education. Next year, the survey will include questions about online and distance education. ALWD continues to watch with interest the ABA's proposed changes to Standard 306. There is no question

that education in the online and distance format is already very much a part of university and professional school offerings. And online and distance education tools may be used to enhance educational opportunities for law students. Nevertheless, there is some question about whether law schools will use online and distance education as cost-savings measures without sufficient regard to any negative impact on the learning experience or vulnerable faculty members. Online and distance education are relatively new developments in legal education, and we have yet to see whether schools will recognize that (1) not all online education is equal; (2) not all courses in law school lend themselves equally well to online instruction; and (3) not all faculty are similarly situated in terms of power to push back against improper use of online education that may be inconsistent with best practices. For these reasons, ALWD will begin gathering information about how online and distance education is being used in law schools. In particular, ALWD will be trying to understand whether faculty with the least security of position are being coerced into creating online and distance education without regard for whether their courses lend themselves to online instruction or whether this new responsibility creates a disproportionate workload for the already lowest-paid faculty members.

4. **New ALWD Officers and Directors:** Last month, ALWD elected new officers and directors. Beginning in August, I will serve as Immediate Past President; Jodi Wilson (Memphis) will step into the role of President; and Anne Mullins (Stetson) will leave her seat on the Board to become President-Elect. Tamara Herrera (Arizona State) will continue to serve as Secretary, and Catherine Wasson (Elon) will continue to serve as Treasurer. Continuing on the Board of Directors are Katrina Lee (Ohio State); Ellie Margolis (Temple); Brenda Gibson (North Carolina Central); Susan Salmon (Arizona); and Amy Vorenberg (New Hampshire). Our four newly elected or re-elected members of the Board are Mary Adkins (University of Florida); Shailini George (Suffolk); Laura Graham (Wake Forest); and Tonya Kowalski (Washburn).

Again, ALWD very much appreciates the opportunity to share its recent work with the Council, and we look forward to continuing to work with you in ongoing efforts to improve the quality of legal education.