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# Membership Structure and Recruitment

**Slide notes**

The core component of an Inn is its membership. This module will examine the basic building blocks by which a robust Inn can be created and maintained.

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## **Membership Structure & Recruitment**

- Categories of membership
- Activity status
- Vacancies and understanding diversity
- Structured recruiting efforts
- Finding the "Right" members

### **Slide notes**

Serving as a guide map for some and as a reminder for others, we'll focus on the following topics:

- Categories of membership, which should be defined in your Inn's operational procedures or local Bylaws,
- Status of activity of a member in the Inn ,
- Determining vacancies and understanding diversity,
- Structured recruiting efforts, and
- Finding the "right" members.

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## Categories of Membership

- Master of the Bench: 15 or more years
- Barristers: 3 to 15 years
- Associates: 0 to 3 years
- Pupils: law students

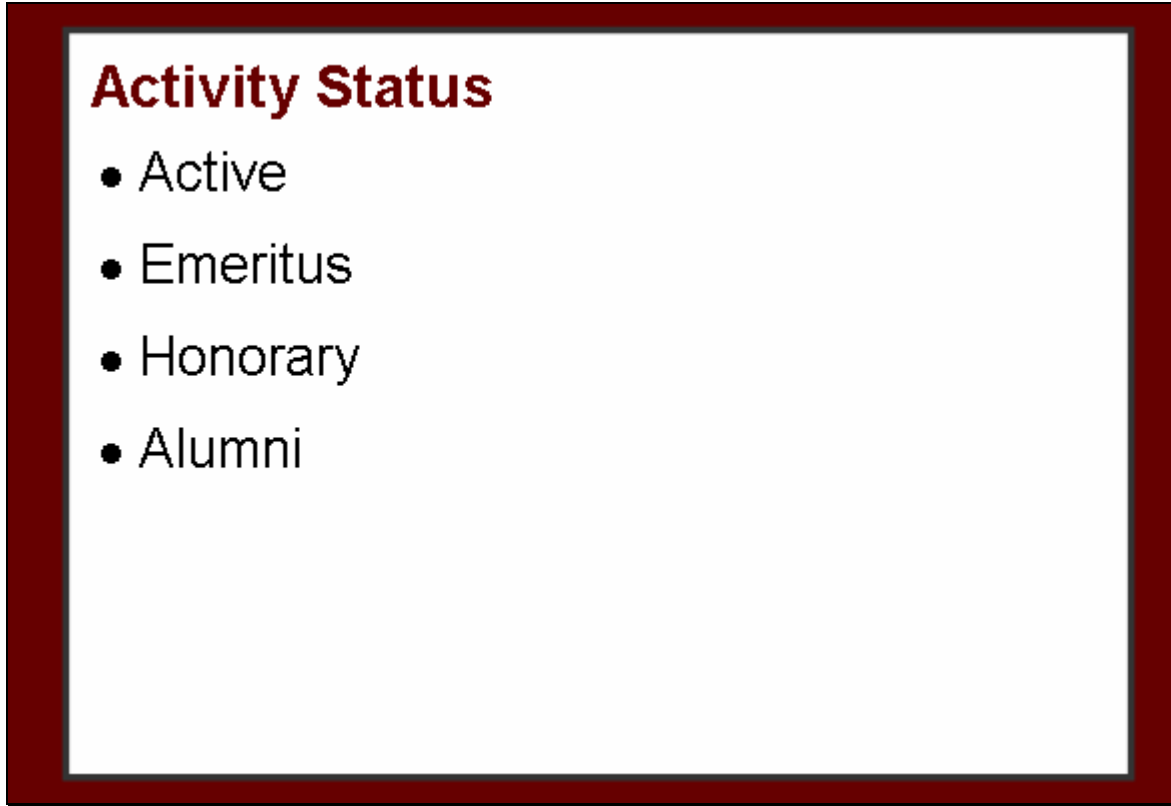
### Slide notes

Active membership in an American Inn of Court may be in one of four categories as determined by years of experience. The experience levels indicated here are guidelines only. Each Inn may determine its own experience requirements.

- Master of the Bench are judges, law professors, and lawyers with 15 or more years of experience;
- Barristers are lawyers with 3 to 15 years of experience;
- Associates are lawyers with 0 to 3 years of experience; and,
- Pupils are law students

The charter requires the Inn to have active members in the Master of the Bench and Barrister categories and also in either the Associate or Pupil category. Some Inns have members in all four categories.

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**Activity Status**

- Active
- Emeritus
- Honorary
- Alumni

### Slide notes

Each member of an Inn has a membership status of active, emeritus, honorary, or alumnus.

Active members are those that currently pay dues, attend meetings and participate in the program presentations and mentoring activities.

Emeritus members are designated by Inns from among Masters of the Bench on the basis of long and distinguished service to their Inns and do not pay dues, but may pay for meals when attending meetings. Emeritus members may not participate on pupillage teams.

Honorary members are designated by Inns on the basis of distinguished service to the bench or bar, furtherance of the American Inns of Court objectives, or other noteworthy achievements. Both emeritus and honorary members are exempt from attendance requirements.

Alumni members are members that have rotated out of the Inn or withdrawn for other reasons and do not attend meetings or pay dues. This group of former members can be a resource for Inns and they may want to think of ways to keep alumni members involved.

Inns do not pay dues to the Foundation for Honorary, Emeritus, or Alumni members nor do these members receive The Bencher.

The American Inns of Court recently launched a new initiative to help Inns keep their alumni members engaged: the American Inns of Court Alumni Association. More information on this new opportunity is available by clicking on the resource link.

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## Vacancies and Diversity

- Set targets for membership
- Average Inn- approximately 70 members
- Establish a ratio
- Term limits and rotation
- Diversity: segments of the legal community

### Slide notes

The Executive Committee, with participation by the Membership Committee chair, should set targets for membership, including how many members in each category. Setting membership targets gives the Membership Committee clear objectives that support the overall operation of the Inn. The maximum number of active members of each local Inn should not exceed the number of people who can participate actively in programs, discussions, and other activities of the Inn. This is generally thought to be approximately 80 members. The average Inn has approximately 70 members.

When we discuss ratio, we are talking about the number of active members that must be evenly spread among the categories of membership. This usually works best when it is related to the number of pupillage teams. For example, each pupillage team might have one judge, two or three additional Masters of the Bench, two Barristers, two Associates and two Pupils. If the Inn has eight meetings and eight pupillage teams each with 10 members, this would keep the total active membership to 80.

The purpose of membership rotation is to provide opportunities for membership to more people while keeping the Inn at a manageable size. Masters of the Bench continue Inn membership indefinitely or at least for five years. Rotation of Barristers and Associates is suggested but is not mandatory. The length of Barrister and Associate terms is usually one to five years as determined by the Masters of the Bench. Pupils, generally third year law students, join the Inn for one year. Inns should strive to maintain a waiting list of qualified applicants who may fill slots as they become available.

Inn membership should be diverse and reflect the open and equal opportunity available to all segments of the population. An equally important consideration is the inclusion of as many segments of the legal community as possible. Federal and state judges, law school deans and professors, and law students should be included in the diversity of the Inn. It is important to include a cross section of legal practice such as solo or small practice attorneys, large firm attorneys, plaintiff's bar, defense counsel, public defenders, prosecutors and other government attorneys in the membership of the Inn. This balance of legal practice should be deliberately and methodically encouraged.

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## Structured Recruiting Efforts

- Membership committee
- Selection process
- Membership renewal

### Slide notes

An Inn must constantly strive to retain its existing members, and to fill any vacancies with committed, quality people. Finding and keeping members should be a year-long thoughtful process. The Inn must understand why people join in the first place and be able to use that knowledge to recruit members and to keep them coming back for more.

Approaching membership recruitment in a systematic way ensures that this important function occurs and that the Inn will have a full complement of members when the new Inn year begins.

The Inn should have a Membership Committee that reviews applications or nominations. The chair of the committee should be part of the Inn's executive committee. The committee should meet periodically throughout the year to assess the waitlist, membership openings, and applications or nominations received.

It is important that whatever process is implemented, whether nominations or applications, it should be followed consistently and fairly. If the Inn strays from a consistent approach to recruiting and admitting members, it can be perceived as elitist, exclusionary or even discriminatory. A sample membership application can be found under related resources.

The selection process for incoming members varies from Inn to Inn, but many Inns have found it useful to have a Membership Committee to gather and screen potential members for recommendation to the Masters. The selection of Barristers and Associates is ultimately approved by the Masters. When the local Inn is affiliated with a law school, Pupils are usually chosen by the school or a member of the faculty.

At the end of the Inn year, members who are eligible and wish to continue their membership in the next year, should be asked to complete a membership renewal form. A sample renewal form can be found under related resources. There should be a firm deadline for members to indicate their renewal intentions, so that the Membership Committee can decide how many and what type of openings are available for the coming year.

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### Finding the "Right" Members

- Communicate needs
- Monthly Inn meeting
  - Invite guests
  - Take the show on the road
- Casting your net
  - Involve all members in the process
  - Personal contact

#### Slide notes

Once membership openings have been determined, the next process is to recruit new members. The first and best source is the Inn's existing members. Specific membership openings should be communicated to the Inn's members, who can either nominate or encourage their colleagues to apply. Existing members should understand the specific types of members being sought. Also, the Inn should clearly convey in its recruitment efforts what it expects from its members, such as: the term of commitment, the level of participation required, and their agreement with the American Inns of Court Professional Creed.

The Inn should announce membership opportunities through the local bar associations, either at meetings or through publications. If there is a local legal press outlet, or if the local newspaper has a legal section, consider advertising in those outlets. Many local courthouses and law schools have bulletin boards where membership notices may be placed.

Keep in mind that one of the best recruiting tools you have is your monthly meeting - use it! Based on responses from Inn Annual Self Evaluations, many current members joined after attending an Inn meeting as a guest. Send out a general invitation to the local bar and encourage members to personally invite a guest or two.

Also, state and local bar associations are always on the look out for good CLE programs for their meetings. Arrange to put on one of your best for them. Again, don't forget to take a stack of brochures with local contact information along.

Your members are distributed throughout the legal community and know interested prospects.

Including your members in the recruitment process encourages them to talk to others about the Inns of Court and its benefits, which will increase your members' sense of ownership of the Inn.

Your Inn and members are known and respected in the community. Their personal contact is a tremendous recruiting tool: it demonstrates the camaraderie focus of your Inn.

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## Promoting Your Inn

- Articles in local/state bar
- Guest panelist for local bar association
- Honorary member
- Special events

### Slide notes

There are also many other ways to promote your Inn. Make your Inn the brightest spot on your city's legal skyline. Stand up, stand out - be seen and known in the legal community. Many practitioners know nothing about the Inns of Court. Others have the wrong idea of who we are and what we do and stand for. Increasing you Inn's visibility is a great way to boost interest.

Write an article for local and state bar publications. Programs can provide the basis and much of the body of a good article. The Bencher is also a good source for great articles - reprint permission is easily available through the national office and you can include a tag line about your Inn.

Encourage Inn members to serve on panels and programs for local bar associations and take some brochures along.

Honor a local hero; incoming or retiring judge, bar president or founder of a firm with a special reception before the regular meeting. Invite them, and a few others. Many are potential members.

Activities like Law Day and special school assemblies or civic clubs provide a good opportunity for community involvement.

When your Inn has a special program, project or speaker, invite the newspaper's legal reporter to cover it. Or, send a press release to the local newspaper(s) and bar journal(s). Give a little information about the Inn, the organization and the event - be sure to include a contact name and number or your Inn's Web site address.



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## Resources at Your Fingertips

- National publications
  - The Bencher
  - Professional Creed
  - Brochures and more
- Local Inn brochure/flyer
- Online information  
[www.innsforcourt.org/inns/your inn's site](http://www.innsforcourt.org/inns/your_inn's_site)

### Slide notes

There are resources available to help your Inn with recruiting efforts.

National publications, such as The Bencher, American Inns of Court Professional Creed, recruitment brochures and more, are available through the National Office. Orders for these materials can be placed online or over the phone.

Create a brochure that tells about your Inn, its history, goals and other information - pass it out at bar meetings and to others at work.

Refer prospects to your Inn's Web site hosted by the American Inns of Court. For information on managing your Inn's website, see the related resource.