

# **WILLAMETTE VALLEY AMERICAN INN OF COURT**

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The American Inns of Court Foundation: <https://www.innsofcourt.org>.

***Mission of***  
**THE AMERICAN INNS OF COURT**

*To foster excellence  
in professionalism,  
ethics, civility and  
legal skills for judges,  
lawyers,  
academicians and  
students of law  
in order to perfect  
the quality,  
availability and  
efficiency of justice  
in the United States.*

This Handbook will introduce you to the American Inns of Court and to the Willamette Valley American Inn of Court (AIC 30175). Its purpose is to acquaint you with the history of the American Inns of Court movement in the United States and in Salem, Oregon.

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## **AMERICAN INNS OF COURT**

The American Inns of Court is the fastest growing legal organization in the country. Today, there are 350 chartered American Inns of Court in all fifty (50) states, the District of Columbia, and London. Over 25,500 judges, lawyers, law professors, and law students are active members of an American Inn of Court, including federal and state judges. There are nearly 67,000 alumni members. Many Inns are affiliated with one or more of the nation's top law schools.

American Inns of Court are patterned after the English Inns of Court that began in 1292 when King Edward I directed his Chief Justice to satisfy a growing need for skilled advocates at the Royal Court at Westminster. The English Inns of Court grew in number and importance during the Middle Ages. They emphasized the value of learning the craft of lawyering from those already established in the profession. Their collegial environment fostered common goals and nurtured professional ideals and ethics.

In 1977 Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and other American lawyers and judges spent two weeks in England as part of the Anglo-American Exchange. They were particularly impressed with the collegial approach of the English Inns of Court and with the way in which the Inns passed on to new lawyers the decorum, civility, and professional standards necessary for a properly functioning bar. Following his return, Chief Justice Burger authorized a pilot program that could be adapted to the realities of law practice in the United States.

Chief Justice Burger, former Solicitor General Rex Lee, and Senior United States District Judge A. Sherman Christensen founded the first American Inn of Court in 1980. The Inn was affiliated with the J. Reuben Clark School of Law at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. The number of Inns increased slowly at first, but the growth

of the movement began to accelerate in 1985 with the creation of the American Inns of Court Foundation.

American Inns of Court are designed to improve the skills, professionalism, and legal ethics of the bench and the bar. They help lawyers become more effective advocates with a keener ethical awareness by providing them the opportunity to learn side-by-side with the most experienced judges and lawyers in their community. The vision, mission, and goals of each Inn are as follows:

**Vision of the American Inns of Court**

- A legal profession and judiciary dedicated to professionalism, ethics, civility, and excellence.

**Mission of the American Inns of Court**

- The American Inns of Court inspire the legal community to advance the rule of law by achieving the highest level of professionalism through example, education, and mentoring.

**Strategic Goals:**

**To promote a high quality member experience**

- A. Identify the earmarks/components of a high quality member experience and determine how to assess whether an Inn is providing this experience to its members.
- B. Empower and enable local Inns to provide a high quality member experience
- C. Enhance the quality of programs provided directly to members.

**To have a greater impact on the profession**

- A. Identify opportunities to expand and increase membership in Inns.
- B. Assess and re-define the American Inns of Court's relationship with law schools for the purpose of increasing student and faculty awareness of and involvement in the Inns of Court.
- C. Develop strategies to recruit and retain judges at all levels.
- D. Re-engage the alumni in the strategic planning and goals of the American Inns of Court.
- E. Develop new programs and expand existing programs to use the American Inns of Court Foundation's national and international reach to make a greater impact on the profession.

**To be a primary resource for mentoring and education focused on professionalism, which includes ethics, civility, and excellence**

- A. Have more Inns of Court with mentoring programs.
- B. Assist new lawyers in finding a mentor.
- C. Encourage more education opportunities focused on professionalism for small firm lawyers, solo practitioners and other underserved areas of the profession.
- D. Expand our branded program offerings to non-members.

**To be widely recognized as a leader in promoting professionalism, which includes ethics, civility, and excellence**

- A. Have a clearly defined brand.
- B. Communicate our brand widely and consistently.
- C. Partner with other national legal organizations to promote professionalism.
- D. Increase the visibility of the American Inns of Court by developing an organizational communications plan.

**To have effective ongoing communications with members and alumni of the American Inns of Court**

- A. Develop a plan for improving communications generally, and incorporate improved communications into the ongoing operations of the organization, including each of its programs and services.
- B. Establish a clear methodology for ongoing evaluations of the effectiveness of communications.

**To establish a highly effective governance structure and culture**

- A. Implement a strategic, efficient and effective committee structure.
- B. Review board member, officer and staff roles.
- C. Implement a continuing board and staff education program.

**To grow and diversify American Inns of Court revenue streams**

- A. Create a permanent capital development structure.
- B. Implement the permanent capital development structure.

**WILLAMETTE VALLEY AMERICAN INN OF COURT**

The Willamette Valley American Inn of Court was founded in 1992. However, its history dates back to 1990 when Chief Justice Edwin Peterson approached Marion County Bar Association President Michael C. McClinton with a proposal to start a local chapter of the American Inns of Court. Thereafter, McClinton contacted numerous members of the Bench and Bar to test their willingness to support an Inn. The initial response was lukewarm, but enthusiasm mounted over the next two years. Consequently, in the spring of 1992, McClinton scheduled an organizational meeting with Federal Judge Michael Hogan, President of the Eugene Inn, and Al Menashe, President of one of the Portland Inns, as speakers. They both gave inspiring presentations about the value of an Inn. At the end of the meeting, a vote was taken about whether we should proceed to form an Inn and the large audience unanimously answered yes.

Mike McClinton then recruited Marion County Presiding Judge Greg West and former Marion County Bar Association Presidents Kathy Evans and Don McCann to

develop the structure of the Inn, establish the dues, select team leaders, and develop a program schedule. McClinton and Evans traveled to Chicago to receive the American Inns of Court Foundation Charter Number 175 to give official status to the Inn. The first meeting was held at the courthouse September 17, 1992. Justice Peterson's team presented the Inn's first program: "The Clash of the Titans".

Today, the Willamette Valley American Inn of Court is thriving. One of the objectives is to "promote excellence in legal advocacy at the trial and appellate court levels" through a membership of judges, lawyers, and legal educators. The Inn seeks to foster greater understanding of, and appreciation for, the adversary system of dispute resolution in American law. The Inn emphasizes legal ethics and the highest professional standards of excellence. The Inn provides continuing legal education. It promotes interaction or fellowship to raise the sense of community among the membership, and to "minimize misapprehensions, misconceptions and failures in communication that obstruct the effective practice of law."

The Inn also takes seriously its charge to provide leadership and development of law students, recent law graduates, and less experienced lawyers. The group tries to "promote collegiality among professionals and to transmit ethical values from one professional generation to another."

At the 1995 American Inns of Court Annual Meeting, the national organization presented the Willamette Valley Inns Team of former Chief Justice, Wallace P. Carson, Jr., with an award for its development and presentation of one of the top 10 presentations by Inns in the United States.

In 1998, Justice Edwin Peterson was nominated by the Willamette Valley Inn, as well as all the other Inns of Court in Oregon, to be recognized for his professionalism. He received the American Inns of Court Professionalism award for the Ninth Judicial Circuit of the United States. The award honors a senior law practitioner whose life and practice demonstrate the highest character and integrity, coupled with an ongoing dedication to the highest standards of the legal profession and the rule of law. Then, in the fall, Justice Peterson was awarded the Lewis F. Powell, Jr. Award for

Professionalism and Ethics given by the American Inns of Court. This prestigious award is given only for extraordinary contributions, and past recipients include The Honorable Lewis F. Powell, Jr., and the Honorable William J. Brennan, Jr. Justice Peterson received the award from Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy at the US. Supreme Court on October 24, 1998.

In March 2005, the Willamette Valley Inn first nominated then Chief Justice Wallace P. Carson, Jr. for the Lewis F. Powell, Jr. Award for Professionalism and Ethics. More than 50 lawyers, judges and law students and all the other Inns in Oregon supported the nomination. In the summer of 2006, The American Inns of Court selected Justice Carson for its professionalism award which was presented in Washington, D.C. on October 21, 2006.

In 2005 the Willamette Valley American Inn of Court received the third highest score in the country in competition for the American Inns of Court “Model of Excellence” Award. In 2006, at the suggestion of the Willamette Valley Inn, the American Inns of Court instituted a “Circle of Excellence” award to recognize a category of inns highest caliber.

### **BENEFITS FROM THE FOUNDATION**

Members of the Willamette Valley American Inn of Court receive benefits from the American Inns of Court Foundation. They receive a subscription to *The Bench*, the Foundation's quarterly magazine, and a national membership directory. Members of the local Inn are also entitled to attend the annual national meeting and to purchase videotaped programs such as the *Visions of Excellence Series*. Members traveling to England may also obtain letters of introduction to one of the four English Inns of Court. The American Inns of Court Foundation has a comprehensive website <https://www.insofcourt.org>. The Willamette Valley American Inn of Court started its own website in the spring of 2005, currently at <https://inns.insofcourt.org/members/inns/the-willamette-valley-american-inn-of-court/>.



## MEMBERSHIP

Willamette Valley Inn of Court members are divided into four classifications.

Those classifications are:

- 1) **Masters of the Bench ("Masters"):** A group that include lawyers and law professors with fifteen or more years of experience and federal, state, and local judges.
- 2) **Barristers:** Includes lawyers and law professors with five to fifteen years of experience.
- 3) **Associates:** Includes lawyers with less than five years of experience.
- 4) **Students:** Principally includes law students who usually are in their final year of law school.

The Inn's lawyer members are drawn from attorneys residing or practicing in Marion, Polk, Linn and Yamhill counties in the State of Oregon. The Inns' student members are drawn from Willamette University College of Law. Membership is open regardless of race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, or ability. The Willamette Valley American Inn of Court reflects the rich diversity of the population in the locale. The Inn is professionally diverse. It includes representatives of the plaintiff's bar, defense counsel, solo practitioners, government lawyers, corporate counsel, law professors, persons working in large firms, lawyers working in small firms, and federal, state and local trial and appellate judges. The Inn is committed to maintaining and enhancing its diversity.

Masters, Barristers and Associate members may continue membership as long as they qualify under the standards of the American Inns of Court.

## SELECTION OF MEMBERS

All lawyers, judges, and law professors living or working in Marion, Polk, Linn and Yamhill Counties are eligible for membership in Willamette Valley American Inn of Court. Students enrolled at Willamette Law School are eligible for Student membership.

The Inn is open to lawyers, judges, law professors, and students who agree to the principles of the Inns of Court Creed.

### **COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY**

The Willamette Valley American Inn of Court embraces and encourages diversity and inclusiveness and has adopted the American Inns of Court's Diversity Policy as its own.

More than just an organization, the Willamette Valley American Inn of Court is the embodiment of an ideal. We are dedicated to upholding the standards of the legal profession, to practicing law with dignity and respect, and to encouraging respect for our system of justice. Achieving a higher level of excellence and developing a deeper sense of professionalism occur only with an abiding commitment to the goals of diversity and inclusiveness.

The Willamette Valley American Inn of Court firmly believes that personal diversity in all its aspects is essential to our ability to accomplish our mission. Diversity embodies all those differences that make us unique individuals and includes people of different race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, gender, religion, age, personal style, appearance, physical ability as well as people of diverse opinions, perspectives, lifestyles, ideas and thinking. We value the differences in views and perspectives and the varied experiences that are part of a diverse membership. Diversity enriches and broadens our membership, which in turn leads to more creative and meaningful programs.

For the same reasons, the Willamette Valley American Inn of Court values professional diversity. Legal professionals and law school faculty, administrators, and students, from all disciplines, from all practice types, from

both the public and private sectors, from all economic strata, and from the least experienced to the most seasoned are vital to maximizing the Inn experience. Only by drawing and retaining a diverse membership will we guarantee the success of our unique organization as well as our respective professional pursuits. Therefore, the Willamette Valley American Inn of Court is committed to creating and maintaining a culture that promotes and supports diversity not only throughout our organization, but in our profession as well.

To further its commitment to diversity, the Willamette Valley American Inn of Court has also adopted the Oregon State Bar's definition of diversity and inclusion: Diversity and inclusion means acknowledging, embracing, and valuing the unique contributions our individual backgrounds make to strengthen our legal community, increase access to justice, and promote laws and creative solutions that better serve clients and communities. Diversity includes, but is not limited to, age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender and gender identity or expression, geographic location, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status, and socioeconomic status. A diverse and inclusive bar is necessary to attract and retain talented employees and leaders; effectively serve diverse clients with diverse needs; understand and adapt to increasingly diverse local and global markets; devise creative solutions to complex problems; and improve access to justice, respect for the rule of law, and credibility of the legal profession.

## **INN GOVERNANCE AND SUCCESSION**

The Willamette Valley American Inn of Court is governed by its Board of Directors and the Board's executive officers.

The executive officers of the Board are the president of the Board, past president, president elect, counselor, secretary/treasurer, program chair, historian and

web administrator. The Board of Directors includes the executive officers, the web administrator, and team leaders. The president and president-elect must be current members in good standing with the Inns who have shown dedication and commitment to the Inns.

In order to best implement and effectuate the policies and ideals of the Willamette Valley American Inn of Court, the Board has previously determined that term lengths of 2 years and alternating terms best serve the members. The secretary/treasurer and counselor will alternate terms with the program chair and web administrator. An officer who desires to maintain their position on the Board may run for election when their term is up. There is no limitation on the number of terms that a member may serve on the Board.

The Board, by majority vote, makes all major policy decisions, amends the handbook, and approves payment of expenses which, in the judgment of the Treasurer, are unusual or not in the ordinary course. The Board may vote by e-mail.

If the Board votes at a meeting, there must be a quorum of at least half of the board members present, and if there is a quorum a majority of those present suffices for any action. If the Board votes by e-mail, there must be a majority of all currently serving board members to approve any action. The president decides whether to call a board meeting for a vote or to request a vote by e-mail.

The Board nominates in the Spring of each year executive officers for the following year. The membership votes on the nominated executive officers at the next regular meeting of the Inn. Nominations may also be accepted from the floor. A quorum is not required, and the executive officers are elected by a majority vote of those members present and voting at the regular meeting of the Inn. The person elected as president for the upcoming year immediately begins to serve on the board as president-

elect.

The president and/or president-elect, with input from the Board, selects the team leaders. The process of selecting team leaders for the following year should begin in the Spring of each year; after the president-elect is chosen in an election year.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

All active members shall attend and participate in the regular meetings of the Inn. Members must notify the appropriate person if they will be unable to attend so that a correct head count can be given to the caterer. A member's failure to give such notice for no good reason may result in the imposition of a fine in the amount of the per plate cost of the meal upon the member by, and payable to, the secretary-treasurer. All assessed fines shall be paid promptly.

### **GUEST POLICY**

The Inn's programs are primarily for the members' benefit. Members occasionally may invite guests to attend Inn programs. Members who wish to invite guests must inform the President in advance of the meeting of their guests' identity. The President, in their own discretion, may deny attendance to any guest.

### **CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION ("CLE")**

Members may earn CLE credit, including ethics program and professionalism program credit, by attending and participating in the Inn's programs. The number of credits available for participating in the presentation of a CLE program is determined by the Oregon State Bar. Members must sign-in to the meetings to obtain CLE credit. The Inn will submit the names of those who have signed-in to the Oregon State Bar for CLE credit; however, members and guests are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the requisite reports are submitted to the Bar.

## **MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS**

The Inn's program year begins in September with a dinner and program prepared by a team formed in the previous program year. Schedule permitting, the meetings occur during the third week of the month, generally on Thursday. However, the Inn recognizes difficulties in scheduling may exist and will provide a yearly schedule to the members with the expected dates of meetings. Thereafter, the Inn holds six monthly meetings every month except December, with a seventh special end of the year meeting in May known as Revels.

Meeting locations will be announced in advance of the regular monthly meeting. Generally, each meeting begins with a hosted cocktail reception at 5:30. Dinner follows the reception, and then one of the Inn's teams presents a program, usually dealing with a practical aspect of the practice of law. Meetings end at approximately 8:00 p.m.

The programs are the highlight of the monthly meetings. They involve practical legal skills with an emphasis on ethics, civility, and professionalism in lawyering. They generally involve a demonstration or presentation of principles, skills, techniques, and relationships involved in trial and appellate court proceedings and in activities preliminary to courtroom appearances. The programs also incorporate opportunities for critique and discussion.

## **TEAMS**

The Inn's active members are divided into eight (8) teams of about twelve (12) members. The president selects the teams with the goal that each team include Masters, Barristers, Associates, and Students who would not otherwise encounter each other frequently in their daily work. Team assignments may be changed for good cause. Members desiring to change teams must do so as early in the program year as possible. They may change teams only with a member of another team that has not yet

presented a program who is willing to change teams. The member requesting a change must inform the president of a reason for changing teams and the name of the replacement.

Each team is led by a team leader. The team leader is responsible for convening the team, for assuring that the team members attend the Inn's meetings and activities, and for promoting contacts among team members between Inn meetings. The team leader supervises the preparation of the team's program and is responsible for all the other team activities.

Each team leader must ensure that their team meets prior to their presentation to prepare for the presentation. Each team must also meet at after their presentation to debrief and continue to build team ties. Teams are encouraged to meet or conference at least once per month to foster member relationships.

Each team must prepare and present one of the Inn's programs. The team's responsibilities in this regard include: (1) Coordinating with the program chair the selection of a program topic; (2) selecting the method of presentation most likely to present the assigned topic in an interesting manner; (3) preparing written materials that meet CLE requirements; and (4) (optional) preparing an American Inn of Court program report to be included in the American Inns of Court program library.

In addition to presenting a program, the teams provide their members with opportunities to become better acquainted with each other. The teams are the principal component of the Inn's mentoring activities. Their diverse membership is intended to build an inter-generational relationship that encourages frank and personal discussions of matters of practice, ethics, civility, and all other aspects of the practice of law. The most experienced members of the team are encouraged to pass on the best of the practice to the less experienced members. Accordingly, Masters are encouraged to

provide their Associate and Student colleagues with opportunities to observe them in court, in deposition, or in the office.

### **ANNUAL DUES**

The annual dues are established by the Board. Dues amounts are based on numerous factors including, but not limited to, membership status in the Inn. The revenue provided by the dues defray the Inn's operating expenses, including the cost of the members' meals at the monthly Inn meetings, the Dues of the American Inns of Court Foundation, and the CLE fees charged by the Oregon State Bar. The American Inns of Court Foundation has received a 501(c)(3) designation from the Internal Revenue Service, and the Willamette Valley American Inn of Court benefits from this designation as an affiliate of the Foundation. Members may deduct their dues either as a business expense or as a charitable contribution. Members electing to deduct their Inn dues as a charitable contribution must reduce the amount of their contribution by the value of the meals and CLE.



## PRESIDENTS

Michael C. McClinton	1992-1993 1993-1994
Kathleen A. Evans	1994-1995
Donald W. McCann	1995-1996
Hon. Pamela Abernethy	1996-1997
Michael B. Brink	1997-1998
Hon. Don Dickey	1998-1999
Gary Rueter	1999-2000
Mary James	2000-2001
Hon. Dennis Graves	2001-2002
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Gordon Hanna	2003-2004
Tom Elden	2004-2005
Hon. Joseph C. Guimond	2005- 2006
Hon. Claudia M. Burton	2006-2007
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Sarah Trout	2008-2009
Hon. Tracy A. Prall	2009-2010
Mark Comstock	2010-2011
Tracy Gregg	2011-2012
Karen L. Moynahan	2012-2013
Shannon Raye Martinez	2013-2014
Hon. Norm Hill	2014-2015
Hon. Lindsay Partridge	2015-2016
Hunter Emerick	2016-2017
Gina Johnnie	2017-2018
Tahra Sinks	2018-2019
Vanessa Nordyke	2019-2020
Hon. Daniel Wren	2020-2021
Melissa Parker	2021-2022