

Southwestern Law School Inn of Court: Program Development and Structure

Formalized November 1, 2023 (first implemented September 2022)

This document outlines the program development process and program structure for our Inn.

Inn Meetings

The Southwestern Law School Inn of Court meetings six times per year: September, October, November, January, February, and March. These meetings correspond to the law school's academic year and are held at Southwestern Law School. The Inn also holds an off-campus social event in April.

Meetings begin at 6:00 p.m. and end by 8:15 p.m. Each meeting includes the following elements:

- 30-minute reception, typically with an icebreaker question
- Buffet dinner
- President's announcements; welcome guests and substitutes; share member good news
- Table Talk in small groups
- Table Talk in large groups
- One-hour CLE presentation
- Toast

Pupillage Groups

The Inn has six pupillage groups. Each pupillage group is responsible for planning and presenting one program each Inn year. To the extent possible, each pupillage group includes Masters, Barristers, Associates, and Pupils. The President, with the input of the Executive Committee, creates new pupillage groups each August. An effort is made to shuffle membership each year so more members get to know and work with each other.

A member of the Executive Committee will be assigned to each table, and a member of the Southwestern Law School faculty or administration will be assigned to each table.

One of these individuals will be assigned as the pupillage group leader to ensure the group plans its program in a timely and organized manner that also promotes Inn core values and advances mentoring.

Annual Program Theme

Each April or May, the Executive Committee selects one or two theme options for annual programming. The Executive Committee also has the discretion to appoint a Program Committee to recommend the theme or theme options. The theme should be one that will allow pupillage groups to develop programs of interest to all experience levels. And because we are a general, not specialized, Inn, themes should allow for programs that are relevant to a variety of practice areas. Themes will also take into consideration the Inn [Diversity Policy](#) and other Inn core values.

In 2022, the annual program theme was "Clients." In 2023, the annual program theme was "Ethical Dilemmas," and the other 2023 option was "Law on the Cutting Edge."

The Executive Committee or Program Committee will also develop a list and short description of potential programs related to the theme.

The President will present the theme or theme options in the annual member survey and also solicit input at the annual Meeting of the Masters.

No later than the first week of August, pupillage group leaders will have selected their program month and program topic, using either the list of possible programs, the national [Inn Program Library](#), or their own expertise or inspiration. They must communicate that information in writing to the President and Executive Director.

Before the first meeting, all monthly programs will be announced to the membership and posted on the Inn's chapter website.

Program of the Year

Each year, the Awards Committee or Executive Committee will facilitate a Program of the Year Award. The winning pupillage group will receive the Inn's traveling Program of the Year trophy and a \$500 donation to the charity of the winning pupillage group's choice. The runner-up group will also receive the second-place traveling trophy for the year.

Winners will be based, in large measure, on the results of the monthly program surveys distributed after each meeting.

Categories used to evaluate each program include the following criteria: relevance, research, creativity, educational value, entertainment value, and full group participation.

Monthly Program Development

Each program should relate to the annual theme and promote monthly programs that emphasize practical legal skills, ethics, civility, and professionalism.

The presenting group is responsible for preparing the following materials and program components:

- A **Table Talk topic** related either to the evening's program or current events. The topic or question should be designed to generate discussion within the pupillage groups. It should be broad and general enough so that all members can participate in the discussion without special knowledge or expertise. It should also be designed so that each group can have a meaningful discussion in 10 to 15 minutes. Before the main program, a member of the group should facilitate large-group discussion on the topic for 5 to 10 minutes. The group leader should submit the topic to the Inn's Executive Director no later than the Monday before the meeting. The Executive Director will put copies of the topic or question on each pupillage group's table.
- A **one-hour program** that can qualify for CLE credit in California. The group should prepare a relevant handout related to the topic. The handout should, at a minimum, include a bibliography of materials that members can consult to learn more about the program topic. Slide decks are also encouraged but not required. Groups should strive to limit handouts to no more than 20 pages. The group leader should submit the materials to the Inn's Executive Director no later than the Monday before the meeting. The Executive Director will circulate the materials in advance (electronically) and put limited copies on each pupillage group's table. In addition, at least two weeks before the program, the group leader should advise the Executive Director of AV and set-up needs.

- A **Toast** to civility or the constitution. The toast should be relatively short and need not be submitted in advance.

Pupillage groups should also follow the guidelines below when developing their program and materials:

- Except in extraordinary circumstances, each pupillage group member should participate in planning and presenting the program.
- Each group should have at least three planning meetings with the full group present to ensure the program is well-developed and researched and to advance intra-group mentoring and relationship-building. The group leader is responsible for selecting dates and times when all or most members can participate and delegating responsibilities for program development and presentation.
- To the extent possible, programs should be engaging and interactive. Programs should not include just talking heads. Groups should strive to engage the entire Inn membership during their program. Past programs have included skits with audience feedback and interaction; game shows; story slams; and mock courtroom scenes.
- We encourage groups to be creative and original. But to get ideas, we encourage groups to review the national [Program Library](#) and review the prior year's [winning programs](#). We also encourage groups to consider the [Inn Diversity Policy](#).
- Groups may invite guest experts, but the guests should not be the sole or main focus. And if experts are invited, it should be evident that most group members have interacted in advance with that expert.
- Groups are welcome to use videos and other methods to present materials and are also permitted to photograph or video their sessions to assist with submitting their program to the national Inn Program Library and for national awards.
- The Inn does not have a budget for program development. While groups may purchase materials for their program, those purchases must be borne by the pupillage group members.

- In addition to reviewing the chapter's program evaluation categories, members may also want to review the national Inn's [Program Evaluation Form](#).

The Inn encourages groups to submit their program for [national awards via the national Inn Program Library](#). Program must be submitted within **60 days** of the program date.

California CLE

The Office of the President & Dean at Southwestern will administer the California CLE process, which includes sign-in sheets, program completion surveys, certificates of attendance, circulating program materials in advance, and submitting participant information to the appropriate state bar office. Whenever possible and appropriate, the Office will seek Ethics or other specialty CLE credit.