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General Information

American Inns of Court (AIC) are designed to improve the skills, professionalism and ethics of the bench and bar. An American Inn of Court is an amalgam of judges, lawyers, and in some cases, law professors and law students. Each Inn meets approximately once a month both to "break bread" and to hold programs and discussions on matters of ethics, skills and professionalism.

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Looking for a new way to help lawyers and judges rise to higher levels of excellence, professionalism, and ethical awareness, the American Inns of Court adopted the traditional English model of legal apprenticeship and modified it to fit the particular needs of the American legal system. American Inns of Court help lawyers to become more effective advocates and counselors with a keener ethical awareness. Members learn side-by-side with the most experienced judges and attorneys in their community.

An American Inn of Court is not a fraternal order, a social club, a course in continuing legal education, a lecture series, an apprenticeship system, or an adjunct of a law school's program. While an AIC partakes of some of each of these concepts, it is quite different in aim, scope, and effect.

American Inns of Court actively involve more than 25,000 state, federal and administrative law judges, attorneys, legal scholars and law students. Membership is composed of the following categories: Masters of the Bench—judges, experienced lawyers, and law professors; Barristers—lawyers with some experience who do not meet the minimum requirements for Masters; Associates—lawyers who do not meet the minimum requirement for Barristers; and Pupils—law students. The suggested number of active members in an Inn is around 80.

Most Inns concentrate on issues surrounding civil and criminal litigation practice, and include attorneys from a number of specialties. However, there are several Inns that specialize in criminal practice, federal litigation, tax law, administrative law, white-collar crime, bankruptcy, intellectual property, family law,

or employment and labor law.

The membership is divided into “pupillage teams,” with each team consisting of a few members from each membership category. Each pupillage team conducts one program for the Inn each year. Pupillage team members get together informally outside of monthly Inn meetings in groups of two or more. This allows the less-experienced attorneys to become more effective advocates and counselors by learning from the more-experienced attorneys and judges. In addition, each less-experienced member is assigned to a more-experienced attorney or judge who acts as a mentor and encourages conversations about the practice of law.

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History



The American Inns of Court concept was the product of a discussion in the late 1970's among the United States' members of the Anglo-American

exchange of lawyers and judges, including Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and Chief Judge of the Ninth Circuit J. Clifford Wallace. Chief Justice Burger subsequently invited Rex E. Lee (then Dean of the J. Reuben Clark School of Law at Brigham Young University and later United States Solicitor General) and Dallin Oaks (then president of Brigham Young University and later Justice of the Utah Supreme Court) to test the idea.

At the suggestion of Rex Lee, a pilot program was entrusted to Senior United States District Court Judge A. Sherman Christensen (pictured at right), who honed the idea into a feasible concept. The first American Inn of Court was founded in 1980 in the Provo/Salt Lake City area of Utah, and included law students from Brigham Young University. Within the next three years, additional American Inns formed in Utah, Mississippi, Hawaii, New York, and Washington, D.C.

In 1983, Chief Justice Burger created a committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States to explore whether the American Inn concept was of value to the administration of justice and, if so, whether there should be a national organization to promote, establish and assist American Inns, and promote the goals of legal excellence, civility, professionalism and ethics on a national level. The committee reported to the Judicial Conference affirmatively on the two questions and proposed the creation of

the American Inns of Court Foundation. The Judicial Conference approved the reports and, thus, endorsed the American Inn concept and the formation of a national structure. In 1985, the American Inns of Court Foundation was formally organized.

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Mission and Goals

Mission of the American Inns of Court

The Mission of the American Inns of Court is to foster excellence in professionalism, ethics, civility, and legal skills.

Goals of the American Inns of Court Foundation

I. To promote the American Inns of Court mission by encouraging members of the legal profession to participate in an American Inn of Court.

II. To help ensure the vitality and continuity of local Inns.

III. To communicate a culture of excellence in professionalism, ethics, civility and skills to the legal community and generally.

IV. To ensure the long-term financial viability and growth of the American Inns of Court.



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David Carey to Retire as Executive Director of the American Inns of Court Foundation

AIC Executive Director Description of Responsibilities and Accountability

March-April 2010 Bencher Mentoring Conference

State/Regional Leadership Summits

Board of Trustees Nominations Open

Celebration of Excellence

2009 Christensen, Powell, O'Connor and Burger Award Recipients Announced

State Liaison Network: We're still looking for a few good Inn members

American Inns of Court holds National Board of Trustees Meeting

The American Inns of Court Announces Professionalism Award Winners for 2009

AIC Board of Trustee Member, Hon. Robinson O. Everett Passes Away

New Trustees begin terms on National Board

LexisNexis® Becomes a Foundation Partner for American Inns of Court to Help Strengthen Bar, Rule of Law

Digital Bencher Opt In Virginia Principles of Professionalism

The five Delaware American Inns of Court hold joint meeting

American Inns of Court Foundation Sets Its Sights on the Future

Beginning in October 2004, the Board of Trustees of the American Inns of Court Foundation began laying the groundwork for redefining and advancing the mission of the American Inns of Court nationwide. The completed process will provide the necessary, long-range vision and framework needed to define and successfully accomplish the goals of our mission to perfect the practice of law in America.

The Strategic Planning Committee is chaired by the Foundation's Vice President, Donald G. Kempf and includes board members Emmet Bondurant, Jan Michelsen, Dean Robert Walsh, Justice Don Lemons and John Robinson. Under their leadership, in October, 2005 the board of trustees adopted the following revised mission statement, goals and objectives for the American Inns of Court.

MISSION OF THE AMERICAN INNS OF COURT

The Mission of the American Inns of Court is to foster excellence in professionalism, ethics, civility, and legal skills.

GOALS OF THE AMERICAN INNS OF COURT FOUNDATION

Goal One: To promote the American Inns of Court mission by encouraging members of the legal profession to participate in an American Inn of Court.

Objectives

- Encourage the formation of sound and locally rooted American Inns of Court throughout the United States.
- Strive to develop a culture of inclusiveness, so that any interested members of the legal profession may participate in an American Inn of Court, giving particular attention to personal and practice diversity.

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- Assist law students and recent graduates making the transition from law school to the practice of law.

Goal Two: To help ensure the vitality and continuity of local Inns

Objectives

- Assist new Inns in establishing themselves
- Provide ongoing support to existing Inns
- Enhance the individual membership experience

Goal Three: To communicate a culture of excellence in professionalism, ethics, civility and skills to the legal community and generally.

Objectives

- Promote the American Inns of Court mission to the legal profession.
- Promote public awareness of the mission and activities of the American Inns of Court.
- Promote the American Inns of Court mission through cooperative arrangements with other suitable organizations in the United States.
- Maintain and foster an ongoing relationship with the English and Irish Inns of Court and other leaders of the legal establishment in those countries.

Goal Four: To ensure the long-term financial viability and growth of the American Inns of Court.

Objectives

- Utilize dues income in maintaining programs and services for local Inns.
- Periodically adjust dues to keep up with inflation.
- Fully endow awards and international scholarships, setting sunset provisions based on utility, cost and endowment status of each program.
- Explore opportunities for developing non-dues income.

The strategic planning process will take some time and considerable effort. The staff of the Foundation is researching and formulating a comprehensive action plan that will fully implement the goals and objectives as defined by the board of trustees. A significant part of the action planning process is the Member Needs Assessment which has been sent to a statistical sampling of our members to help determine which of the many programs and services that the Inns and Foundation provide are meeting the needs of our members and which aren't.

If you have received a notice asking for your participation, we hope that you will take a few minutes to complete the survey. This is a valuable opportunity for you to share your perceptions with us, and be a part of our planning for the future of the American Inns of Court.

Throughout this process, the board and staff are committed to increasing the vitality and value of the Inns to the American legal profession and ensuring that each member's experience in the American Inns of Court is of the highest quality possible.

We encourage all our members to be a part of this dynamic planning and growth process.

Please send your thoughts, ideas and suggestions to:

David P. Carey, Executive Director

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