

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROFESSIONALISM

The Honorable Jeri K. Somers, chair

The Standing Committee on Professionalism is charged with responsibility for administration and ongoing oversight of the Mandatory Course on Professionalism, which is required of all newly admitted active members of the Virginia State Bar. The purpose of the course is to encourage attorneys to uphold and elevate the standards of honor, integrity and courtesy in the legal profession. Since institution of the program in 1988, over 22,000 new admittees have taken the course—more than 80 percent of the current practicing bar in Virginia.

The course faculty is distinguished lawyers and judges who represent a broad cross section of the legal profession in Virginia. Faculty members are nominated by their peers and invited by Chief Justice Leroy R. Hassell Sr. to accept appointment for a three-year term.

The course was offered eight times in Northern Virginia, Richmond, Roanoke, Chesapeake and Charlottesville during the 2005–2006 bar year. Due to the Virginia corporate counsel admissions, the course attendance jumped to 1,595 attendees this year. An additional course was provided to focus on corporate counsel practice in Virginia, to meet the needs of the new category of admittees. The committee hopes that the number of corporate counsel registrants will decrease after the initial influx and that additional courses will be unnecessary.

Both the Chief Justice and Senior Justice Harry L. Carrico—who was instrumental in founding the course—continue to demonstrate enthusiastic support. One of the two served as luncheon speaker at each course.

The committee continues to oversee the administrative functions of the course, including faculty selection, course material updates and faculty training activities.

Finally, the committee continues to work with the Professionalism for Law Students program cosponsored by the VSB Section on the Education of Lawyers. This program has become a fixture at all the Virginia law schools, thanks to diligent work by Judge J. Martin Bass.

