

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT COMMISSION ON PROFESSIONALISM
RELEASES 2008 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism broke new ground during 2008 with a watershed lawyer-to-lawyer mentoring program for new attorneys in the 17th Judicial Circuit.

That is one highlight of the Commission's annual report, approved this week by the Illinois Supreme Court during its September term. The full report will be disseminated widely across the state to members of the bench, the bar and to legal organizations.

The pilot mentoring program in collaboration with the 17th Circuit, which includes Winnebago and Boone counties, pairs every newly admitted lawyer with a more experienced lawyer for a year-long structured apprenticeship. Under the leadership of Chief Judge Janet Holmgren, the 17th Judicial Circuit also has created a Peer Review Council composed of members of the Winnebago and Boone County Bar Associations to review complaints against lawyers and judges whose behavior violates the voluntary code of conduct, Statement of Professional Aspirations, adopted by that legal community the prior year.

Other judicial circuits, including those in Madison and McLean counties, are considering adopting similar professionalism programs designed to encourage behavior toward the ideal.

The Commission also reported approving an extraordinarily high volume of professional responsibility CLE courses and drafting new ways to use CLE to influence changed behavior during 2008. The Commission approved 2,780 courses or activities for professional responsibility credit, most of which were offered by CLE providers from across 40 different states outside of Illinois and most of which were in lecture format.

To encourage more active learning formats, the Commission worked with various providers of CLE to develop a Model CLE course and a Facilitation Workshop. The Report notes that the best practices approach is supported by research showing that adults retain more from courses when they are involved in a program as active learners, sharing their wisdom, perspectives and analysis.

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Commission on Professionalism Releases Annual Report Add One

“This approach is particularly appropriate in the area of professional responsibility, which heavily relies upon experience and judgment (as opposed to mere knowledge superiority) as the touchstone of appropriate behavior.” The Facilitation Workshop gives presenters a chance to learn the tools of facilitation, which is designed to encourage changed behavior by drawing out the experience and perspectives of lawyers in case scenarios.

Early sponsors of the Facilitation Workshops included the Chicago Bar Association and Winston & Strawn and a myriad of organizations sent participants to learn the new delivery method, including the Attorney Registration & Disciplinary Commission, the Cook County State’s Attorney’s and Public Defender’s offices, Foley & Lardner, the Illinois Attorney General’s office, and the Illinois State Bar Association.

The Commission also got its professionalism message out through Supreme Court Justices and practicing lawyers during programs at law school orientation and other events at many Illinois law schools including, Chicago-Kent College of Law, DePaul University College of Law, Loyola University School of Law, Northern Illinois University School of Law, Southern Illinois University School of Law, The John Marshall Law School, and the University of Illinois College of Law.

The Commission on Professionalism was established by the Court in September 2005 to help foster increased civility, professionalism and inclusiveness among the lawyers and judges in the state. Supreme Court Justice Robert R. Thomas, who recommended the formation of the Commission, describes the mission of the Commission as promoting the notion that lawyers can zealously advocate on behalf of a client without aggressiveness or “activities that sometimes degenerate into a Rambo-style, win-at-all costs attitude.”

The full Report will be posted on the Commission’s website, www.ilsccp.org. Jayne Reardon serves as executive director of the Commission.

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