

Report of the Executive Board Annual Meeting VIP Program Reassessment Task Force

Members:

Mrs. Kathleen Brown (Chair)
Ms. Amy J. Eaton
Ms. Suzanne Thorpe
Mr. Ronald E. Wheeler, Jr.
Ms. Jean M. Wenger (Board Liaison)
Ms. Kate Hagan (Staff Liaison)
Ms. Kim Rundle (Staff Liaison)
Ms. Margaret (Meg) Butler (ex officio)
Ms. Holly M. Riccio (ex officio)

Purpose: To assess and update the Annual Meeting VIP (Valued Invited Participant) programs (SIS, Chapter, and LAC) to ensure they effectively promote the value of law librarians.

Charge: The Task Force will:

- Identify benchmarks of the existing VIP programs
- Evaluate the impact of the respective VIP programs by assessing promotional benefits that have been derived over the past 3-5 years
- Recommend strategies to increase the effectiveness of the VIP program and ensure sustainability

Work Performed by the Task Force to Date: During the Spring Executive Board Meeting, the Task Force met to discuss information about the VIP program available on ALLNET and the initial observations about the program in its current state. Amy Eaton provided a brief history, including the program's original intended purposes.

Members participated in a conference call, discussing the information and recommendations for Chapters and SISs available on AALLNET. The Task Force agreed to investigate whether the recent implementation of the VIP Program yielded the outcomes initially expected by the AALL Executive. The Task Force planned to survey groups that have participated in the VIP program in the past five years. A list of questions was fine-tuned by the Task Force members. The survey was distributed to current Chapter and SIS leaders. Task Force members contacted Local Arrangement Committee (LAC) chairs from the last five years to gather information about how they utilize the VIP program and recommendations. Task Force members reviewed initial draft reports prior to conference calls.

Overview of Data Gathered

Survey respondents included 11 Chapters and 5 SISs. Four of the responding groups indicated that they had not participated in the VIP program.

VIPs were diverse in occupation, including deans, legal research and writing faculty, state bar leaders, judges, court administrators, and trustees of library

boards. A “tour guide” was assigned to the VIP the majority of the time. If a guide was not available, the respondents instead recommended programming for the VIPs to attend. Half of the VIPs spoke at the Annual Meeting the year they were invited. About half of the VIPs spoke or wrote about the experience of participating as a VIP after the Annual Meeting.

Of the 12 groups who used the program, nine respondents received feedback from the VIP after the event. All feedback was positive, and in one instance the positive experience cemented a positive relationship with the local bar. Most feedback indicated that it was an informative experience, while some of the comments indicated surprise at the number of librarians in attendance and the level of professionalism demonstrated by the librarians.

Though there are pages on AALLNET devoted to the VIP program for Chapters and SISs, one group indicated it follows its own written protocol for VIPs. Most other groups do not have their own individual protocols.

Cost was a factor for 11 of the respondents, although survey comments support the view that cost is not the determining factor for whether a VIP is invited. Instead, it may affect the selection of a VIP (preference for those located near the conference site) or the frequency of invitation (biannual, rather than annual).

Four of the five most recent LAC Chairs provided feedback in interviews. A majority of the responding LAC Chairs indicated they were involved in identifying potential local VIPs and submitting those names to headquarters. LAC selected VIPs based on their stature in the local legal community, to build relationships, or because of a personal connection with the individual. The LAC’s involvement with the VIP often ended after the nomination process. A few LAC’s did not know whether the invited VIPs even attended the Annual Meeting.

Assessment

The members of the Task Force believe the VIP program has historically provided benefits to the Association but in recent years have been underutilized by the SIS’s and Chapters. Based on survey responses from these two membership groups the Task Force believes that contributing factors for non-participation are a reduction in public relations for the program, a lack of clear structure or timeline for the program, perceived and actual costs for a VIP, and a low return on investment to the group after the meeting by the VIP. The LAC VIP program structure also needs to be modified to ensure it is a positive experience for everyone involved.

The Task Force believes the VIP program currently provides value to the Association. The value to the Association and members will significantly increase with implementation of the recommendations below. Participation in the program by individual stakeholders in the legal community increases awareness of what law librarians do for a living and supports the Association’s strategic vision that librarians are the authority on legal research. This report recommends some changes that apply to all groups inviting VIPs, as well as changes that are specific to each type of participating group (Chapter, SIS, LAC).

Recommendations for All Groups

- The hosting group (LAC, SIS and Chapter) should provide the VIP with a “tour guide” during the meeting and solicit feedback about the VIP’s Annual Meeting experience after the occasion.
(Chapter Presidents, SIS Chairs, LAC VIP subcommittee, SIS Council Chair, and the Chapter Council Chair)
- A letter will be sent to all VIPs who attend the meeting from the current AALL President. This letter will include a thank you for their attendance, the offer of a one-year membership upon request and an invitation to contribute a response regarding the conference to Spectrum and/or the Spectrum Blog or other publications.
(AALL President and Headquarters staff)
- A letter will be sent to all VIPs from the Chapter or SIS Leadership thanking the VIP for their attendance at the meeting and inviting them to contribute to the group’s publication.
(Chapter Presidents, SIS Chairs, SIS Council Chair, and the Chapter Council Chair)
- AALL will provide and post a sign in the exhibit hall listing all attending VIP’s names.
(Headquarters staff, Chapter Presidents, SIS Chairs, LAC VIP subcommittee, SIS Council Chair, and the Chapter Council Chair)
- AALL will provide VIP ribbons to all VIPs at registration so they will be easily recognized by others as invitees.
(Headquarters staff)
- Interviews with select VIPs will be written prior to the meeting and then published in the Annual Meeting newspaper/blog.
(Headquarters staff, Editor for the Annual Meeting paper, Chapter Presidents, SIS Chairs, LAC VIP subcommittee)
- A roster of current and past VIPs and their employer affiliations should be listed on a new page on AALLNET.
(Headquarters staff, Chapter Presidents, SIS Chairs, LAC VIP subcommittee, SIS Council Chair, and the Chapter Council Chair)
- Recognizing that the Chapter or SIS ultimately bears the cost of inviting a VIP, the Executive Board may identify alternative cost and prepayment options with set timelines for these groups.
(Executive Board and Headquarters staff)
- The description of the VIP program and suggested protocols for Chapters and SISs available on AALLNET should be revised and clarified to make deadlines

more prominent and highlight the value of the program and the importance of following up with the VIP after the Annual Meeting.
(Executive Board, Headquarters Staff, LAC VIP subcommittee, SIS Council Chair and the Chapter Council Chair)

- The Board will investigate ways to increase publicity for the VIP Program to remind the membership of the programs values.
(AALL Executive Board)

Recommendations for Chapters

- Chapter VIPs should be invited to Chapter business meetings and/or social functions.
(Chapter Presidents and Chapter Council Chair)

Recommendations for SISs

- VIPs should be invited to the business meeting and/or social functions of the SIS and seated with other VIPs and SIS leadership.
(SIS Chairs and SIS Council Chair)

Recommendations for Local Arrangements Committees (LAC)

- The LAC should create a subcommittee for VIPs in the fall that coordinates with headquarters. Additionally the members will act as or identify individuals to be hosts for VIPs during the meeting.
(LAC VIP subcommittee and Headquarters staff)
- The LAC subcommittee will provide a list of identified potential local VIPs to the SIS and Chapter Council Chairs in the late fall.
(LAC VIP subcommittee and Headquarters staff)

Recommendations for the Executive Board

- In three years reevaluate the VIP Program.
(Executive Board)