

Uldaho Law

Digital Commons @ Uldaho Law

Articles

Faculty Works

2018

The Development of SEALS Committees

Linda Jellum

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.law.uidaho.edu/faculty_scholarship



Part of the [Legal Education Commons](#)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEALS COMMITTEES

Linda D. Jellum*

I joined the academy fulltime in 2004. Mercer University School of Law hired me to teach, among other courses, Administrative Law. The summer before my first year, I read every administrative course book I could find, or should I say, I tried and failed to read them. You see, I had a problem: I would begin reading one of the books and then fall asleep. This outcome did not bode well for success with my students, who were surely less interested in and more scared of the topic than me. I began to despair. Finally, I opened a book jointly authored by Professors Bill Funk, Sid Shapiro, and Russ Weaver.¹ The authors used a problem-based, practical approach to administrative law. I loved it, and immediately bestowed on the authors the status of junior deity.

What, you may wonder, does this story have to do with the administrative structure of SEALS, which is my assigned topic?² Hang on. I'm getting to that. In 2004, I attended SEALS for the first time at Kiawah Island in South Carolina. I agreed to moderate a panel for Joan Hemingway about Enron. I had no idea what SEALS was, and apparently, I had no idea how to moderate (but that's a story for another day). Shortly before my panel, I met Russ Weaver, the Executive Director of SEALS. I was thunder-struck! Not because he was the Executive Director of SEALS, but because I had just met one of the authors of my chosen casebook. I blurted out, "I just selected your book for my course this fall." If you know Russ and all that he has accomplished, you won't be surprised by his answer, "Oh? Which book?" I felt a bit deflated. I had clearly not made much of an impression.

Or so I thought. Shortly after the meeting concluded, Russ asked me to chair a SEALS ad hoc committee that he wanted to create called the Young Scholars Committee (later renamed "New Scholars Committee" and now named the "Beginning and Newer Law Scholars Committee."³ Russ believed, correctly so, that the care and feeding of junior scholars was essential and should be a focal point of any national organization dedicated to enrichment of the legal academy. A few years earlier, he and Kent Syverud had created the "young" scholars program. That program invited junior scholars to present works-in-progress in a

* Ellison Capers Palmer Sr. Professor of Tax Law, Mercer University School of Law. I would like to thank Nancy Levit for the opportunity to reflect on my time at SEALS.

¹ WILLIAM F. FUNK ET AL, ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE AND PRACTICE: PROBLEMS AND CASES (2001). The book is now in its fifth edition.

² I drew the short straw for topics, as you can see.

³ At various points, SEALS had (in addition to the steering committee) the following committees: Nominating Committee, Site Selection Committee, Local Arrangements Committee, and Program Committee. The 2005 SEALS Steering Committee Minutes indicate the addition of two new committees: Distance Learning Committee and New Scholars Committee. In 2006, the Board approved the Website and Site Coordination (now Hospitality) committees. In 2007, committee reports became standard; that year, two new committees, Mentor Committee and International Committee submitted reports (along with the New Scholars and Distance Learning committees), albeit all reports were very short. E-mail from Gail Richmond to author (July 3, 2017, 10:22 AM) (on file with author). These reports are now included on the committee websites.

non-threatening, thought-provoking process. The process is non-threatening, in part, because the presentations are understood to be from junior scholars who are working to develop presentation skills, but simultaneously the process follows a traditional panel format, which allows the audience members to offer questions, suggestions, and comments. Junior scholars were also paired with mentors, somewhat randomly selected, who would assist with the development of the paper and SEALS presentation. The “young” scholars’ presentations were something unique to SEALS, and Russ believed it was critical to make the program the best it could be. I was asked to chair a committee that would evaluate the existing program and make recommendations for improvements. Having never chaired a committee before, the request was somewhat daunting, but I was excited. I feigned nonchalance.

Unknown to me when I started, Russ filled my early committees with members who were willing to work hard and were thoughtful about the topic. Some of those members are well-known in SEALS today, including Jeff Hirsch, Marcia McCormick, Caprice Roberts, Ben Barton, Nancy Levit, and Greg Bowman, to name just a few. We met as a committee over drinks at SEALS and discussed the current program. The meeting is a tradition that stuck, although now the committee meetings take place over lunch sans alcohol but with the Executive and Deputy Executive Directors. In any event, with such great committee members, my job was made easy. We made a number of recommendations to the Board, including changing the name to “New Scholars,” grouping presentations by topic when possible, assigning senior mentors who shared research areas with their mentees, and assigning planning of the new scholars’ presentations and matching mentors to the committee. A star was born! (or at least a new standing committee).⁴

⁴ The mission statement for the New Scholars Committee provides as follows:

The SEALS New Scholars Committee coordinates the SEALS New Scholars Workshop, which provides opportunities for New Scholars to interact with their peers and experts in their respective fields at the SEALS Annual Meeting. For over a decade, the New Scholars Workshop has provided new scholars with the opportunity to present their work in a supportive and welcoming environment. The New Scholars Committee accepts and reviews nominations to the program, organizes new scholars into colloquia based on subject matter, and coordinates with the Mentors Committee to match each new scholar with a mentor in his or her field. We also hold a New Scholars Luncheon at the Annual Meeting at which New Scholars and their mentors can get to know one another and the members of the New Scholars Committee. To ensure that the annual program runs smoothly, members of the New Scholars Committee attend the colloquia and, following the conference, survey the New Scholars to solicit their feedback and comments on the program’s success. Additionally, the Committee traditionally has organized at least one substantive panel or discussion group on a topic of particular relevance to new law teachers, including navigating the tenure track; balancing the demands of service, scholarship, and teaching; and effective self-promotion. In recent years, the Committee has organized a social

I failed to understand the level of work I had agreed to take on. Many a December break, Jeff Hirsch and I would be frantically sending emails back and forth to assign both new scholars to panels and mentors to new scholars. I was usually visiting my in-laws in Minnesota for Christmas, so finding a reason to be ensconced in a private room was actually a plus for me.⁵

In any event, finding and matching new scholars with mentors was not an easy task. Mentors were required to attend their individual new scholar's presentation, a recommendation our first committee had made. It was common for someone to agree to mentor, but then discover that attending the conference was not feasible. So, we were often looking for last minute substitutes and trying to fit them into a room block that was never big enough! At some point, the committee created a list of willing and able mentors and their topic areas. This resource guide helped substantially to lessen the burden these last-minute defections caused.⁶

Given the overwhelming amount of work there was for one committee, I recommended to Russ and the Board that the mentor component of new scholars be assigned to a new committee that I offered to chair: the Mentor Committee.⁷ Russ and the Board agreed.

function at which New Scholars could meet and interact with one another at the Annual Meeting.

2017 New Scholars Committee, SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS (2016), <http://sealslawschools.org/boards-and-committees/new-scholars/> (last visited July 5, 2017).

⁵ I doubt that Jeff shared my enthusiasm for the timing of the work.

⁶ As a result of the committee structure, the process runs smoothly today:

Our process for matching each new scholar with a mentor is now routine: each member of the Mentor Committee locates mentors for one or two panels. Members each choose the panel or panels for which they wish to locate mentors, based on their own areas of expertise. We always face the challenge of late cancellations or additions, but we have managed to handle those relatively efficiently by keeping a roster of emergency mentors for these occasions. Our work with the scholars presenting at the works-in-progress panels is handled similarly, primarily by the co-chairs.

2017 Mentor Committee, SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS (2016), <http://sealslawschools.org/boards-and-committees/mentors/> (last visited July 5, 2017).

⁷ The mission statement for the Mentor Committee provides as follows:

The mission of the SEALS Mentor Committee is to match each SEALS New Scholar with a faculty mentor in her or his subject matter area at another SEALS member or affiliate school. Mentors provide their New Scholars with advice and guidance on their presentations and their article drafts. The mentors also attend their New Scholars' presentations at SEALS and provide them with feedback afterwards, often over coffee or a drink. New Scholars and Mentors find the experience a very rewarding way to develop new (and often lasting) relationships within the legal academy. We also draft an annual report on our activities.

I established and then chaired the new Mentor Committee beginning in 2007, while Jeff Hirsch took over the New Scholars Committee. The main purpose of the Mentor Committee was to find mentors for the new scholars and provide how-to guidance for those new to the process. The experience of being mentored is the heart of SEALS for new scholars. As Caprice Roberts, now the Program Committee Vice-chair for the Resource Teams, explained:

At the heart of SEALS is a genuine commitment to bring new scholars into the broader academic community. With a well-oiled mentorship matching program and guaranteed new scholar panels, new scholars experience a welcoming environment to showcase works-in-progress, engage in meaningful debate, and receive productive feedback from experts in the field. The SEALS New Scholars Program also fosters genuine relationships that last. The mentorship and feedback I received as a new scholar altered my view of the academy for the better and inspired me to become a mentor each year as well as serve on SEALS committees that promote the advancement of new scholars. The SEALS New Scholar Program is a gamechanger for the development of ideas and establishment of critical connections. I wouldn't miss SEALS for the world.⁸

Under Jeff and subsequent chairs, the New Scholars Committee continued to implement new ideas and make improvements to the conference. For example, a few years ago, the Board added the Works-in-Progress Committee⁹ to provide intermediate and senior scholars (those who are further

2017 *Mentor Committee*, SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS (2016), <http://sealslawschools.org/boards-and-committees/mentors/> (last visited July 5, 2017).

⁸ 2017 *Mentor Committee*, SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS (2016), <http://sealslawschools.org/boards-and-committees/mentors/> (last visited July 5, 2017).

⁹ The mission statement for the Works-in-Progress Committee provides as follows:

The SEALS Works-in-Progress Series is designed to provide intermediate and senior scholars (those who are further along in their scholarship and development than “new” scholars) opportunities to garner feedback from, and to network with, other experienced, well-informed people in their field. It brings together small groups of scholars in specialized areas to discuss their drafts, works in progress, and developing ideas. Presentations are organized by field of study to promote more sophisticated dialogue, when possible. In order to facilitate discussion, participants are asked to provide a short (roughly 10-page) written summary of their article before the conference. At the conference, participants may provide a brief summary of their ideas, which will be followed by an intensive discussion session with the other group members, all of whom are expected to read and offer feedback on each submission in their session. For those newer scholars who seek more extensive feedback, the Series Committee will seek to match individual participants with expert

along in their scholarship and development than “new” scholars) opportunities to garner feedback from and network with other experienced, well-informed people in their field. Presentations are organized topically to promote more sophisticated dialogue. More senior commenters may also be assigned to assist when desired. The New Scholars, Works-in-Progress, and Mentors committees work closely together to meet the needs of the SEALS junior scholars.

By now, you should see a pattern. I create work for myself, regret my decision, recommend another committee take on some of that work, and ease out of the first committee into the second. So then, you may wonder, what was my next committee recommendation? My next recommendation was The Moderator Committee (now Moderator and Coordination¹⁰ Committee), which was created in 2008.¹¹ Currently, the Moderator Committee finds approximately 40-50% of the moderators each year, a major undertaking.¹² Additionally, mentors were not the only people who canceled last minute; even more common were the last-minute moderator cancelations. Given SEALS’ one-panel policy¹³ (no individual

“commentators” in their field.

2017 Mentor Committee, SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS (2016), <http://sealslawschools.org/boards-and-committees/mentors/> (last visited July 5, 2017).

¹⁰ I honestly do not know what “coordination” means or how the committee’s work was changed such that it needed a new name.

¹¹ The mission statement for the Moderator and Coordination Committee provides as follows:

The mission of the SEALS Moderator and Coordination Committee is to place moderators on SEALS panels. Moderators will organize the presentation of the panel, introduce panelists, help with time management, facilitate an effective discussion of the topic with members of the audience, and may also play an active role in the panel’s discussion.

Works-in-Progress Committee, SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS (2016), <http://sealslawschools.org/boards-and-committees/works-in-progress/> (last visited July 5, 2017).

¹² *Moderator and Coordination Committee*, SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS (2016), <http://sealslawschools.org/boards-and-committees/moderator-and-coordination/> (last visited July 5, 2017).

¹³ The policy provides:

Each participant in the Annual Meeting may serve (either as presenter or moderator) on only one panel. This policy is often referred to as the one-panel policy.

Exceptions

- a. A person may serve both on a panel and as a mentor to a new scholar.
- b. Participants in the SEALS Call for Papers panel may serve on that panel and on a non-new-scholars panel.
- c. A person may serve on a second panel as a replacement for a withdrawn panelist, but only
 - 1) if, as of June 15, the panel’s organizer has made good faith, but

can be on more than one panel each conference, including moderators), finding substitutes was especially difficult. In the past, Russ relied on sending mass emails to the members of his Program Committee. With a group of able volunteers from different schools, the Moderator Committee was often able to fill in gaps by inviting members' colleagues to attend, saving those on Russ's distribution list from countless pleading emails.

In 2010, I left committee chairing (possibly Russ and the Board feared that I would recommend even more new committees) to serve as Deputy Executive Director for the first time. I am currently serving as Deputy for a second time, finishing up this year (2017) to become Treasurer. My former work creating and chairing committees has served me well in my position as Deputy. As part of my current duties, I oversee, assist, prod, cajole, and encourage the committee chairs with their responsibilities and communications with the Board and Executive Director. For example, I have helped each committee chair develop annual reports and a mission statement, which are posted on the committees' respective websites. I have worked closely with Peter Jetton, master extraordinaire of all things web-based, to create inviting and informative committee webpages, with pictures and testimonials. And I have worked with all the new committees that have been added with or without my suggestion, such as The Beginning and Newer Law Teachers Committee,¹⁴ Distance Learning Committee,¹⁵ Hospitality Committee,¹⁶ Inclusiveness Committee,¹⁷ Prospective

unsuccessful, efforts to find a replacement not already on a panel, or

2) if the panelist to be replaced withdrew on or after June 15; and

3) in either case, only with the permission of the Executive Director.

d. If a publisher or other non-member of SEALS sponsors a lunch or other program with a speaker, the sponsor can designate the speaker for that event. That event is not subject to the one-panel rule, and the Executive Director may exempt the event from other Program Participation rules as warranted.

e. In extraordinary circumstances, the Executive Director may, in his or her discretion, grant permission to a person to serve on more than one panel.

Board Approved Policies, SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS (2013), <http://sealslawschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/SEALS-Board-Approved-Policies-Posted-August-2014.pdf>.

¹⁴ "The Beginning and Newer Law Teachers Committee creates programming aimed at ... the three primary elements of a professor's job – teaching, scholarship and service –, with the emphasis on teaching and scholarship." *Beginning and Newer Law Teachers Workshop Committee*, SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS (2016), <http://sealslawschools.org/boards-and-committees/beginning-and-newer-law-teachers/> (last visited July 5, 2017).

¹⁵ The Distance Learning Committee brings opportunities and information about distance learning to the membership.

¹⁶ "The Committee authors the SEALS Conference Hospitality Directory each year, which provides registrants with important information about the conference hotel and the local community." *Hospitality Committee*, SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS (2016),

Law Teachers Committee,¹⁸ Scholarly Research Committee;¹⁹ and, most recently, the Resource Teams Committee.²⁰

The Deputy role has been my favorite of all the roles I have undertaken for SEALS. It is a bird's eye view on all the players and the plays. The hard work that the committee members and chairs put into SEALS is nothing short of remarkable. Most recently, for example, the Scholarly Works Committee organized two of the discussion groups into law review symposia, one at Kentucky School of Law and the other at Mercer University School of Law.

Today, there is simply no way that this organization could function so successfully without the committee contributions. For the most part, these chairs and committee members serve in the shadows, while those of us in more visible positions receive credit for their work. As I turn over the deputy reins to my former committee member Ben Barton, I find that I am a bit reluctant to go (and that's not just because I'm taking on a new role that involves math).

Finally, I was not asked in this piece to address all that SEALS has done for me personally, but I credit this organization for the many opportunities that I have received over the years, from speaking engagements, to law review articles, to finding friends and mentors. And I want to thank Russ Weaver, for overlooking my initial naiveté and starstruckedness to see potential in me to serve as a leader for this terrific organization.

<http://sealslawschools.org/boards-and-committees/hospitality/> (last visited July 5, 2017).

¹⁷ This committee assists the Executive Director on all issues related to inclusiveness, including on programming, contracting with hotel sites, arranging special meals, etc.

¹⁸ The Prospective Law Teachers now involves mock job talks, interviews, and one-on-one c.v. reviews. "The mission of the Prospective Law Teachers Committee is to provide aspiring law professors with targeted feedback and advice from seasoned law professors." *Prospective Law Teachers Workshop Committee*, SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS (2016), <http://sealslawschools.org/boards-and-committees/prospective-law-teachers/> (last visited July 5, 2017).

¹⁹ This committee works to improve the scholarly components of the meeting by, for example, arranging symposia.

²⁰ "The primary function of the Resource Teams is to encourage additional programming in specific subject areas and consolidate overlapping proposals." *Resource Teams*, SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS (2016), <http://sealslawschools.org/boards-and-committees/resource-teams/> (last visited July 5, 2017).