AIPLA Committee Report

DATE: January 13, 2015 MEETING: Pre 2015 Mid-Winter Institute

COMMITTEE NAME: Membership Committee

COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP: Chair Michael Piper
Vice-Chair Betty Morgan

SUBCOMMITTEES: None

DISCUSS THE OVERALL MISSION OF THE COMMITTEE AS IT RELATES TO AIPLA’s VISION, MISSION, and VALUES:

The Membership Committee is focused on assisting the Board and AIPLA’s Executive Staff find and develop effective ways to serve our membership as well as to evaluate and propose ways to grow and maintain our membership base. The Membership Committee works to maintain a strong community that is open and inclusive and supports membership growth and retention to provide the foundation for financial stability.

PROJECTS:

Plans for stated meetings: We plan to formally meet as a committee at the 2015 Annual Meeting. We anticipate presenting proposals to the Board and/or AIPLA’s Executive Staff at or in between the stated meetings. We are also open to interact with other committees at the stated meeting as both at their committee meetings (on request) and informally by one-on-one interaction between our members and the other committees’ leadership.

Plans for coordination between stated meetings: We meet regularly by teleconference including AIPLA Executive Staff and our Board Liaison in the call. The schedule is flexible to account for when projects and materials which are our primary focus for the relevant call are ripe for discussion. We also regularly e-mail notes and proposals to committee members for feedback and approval in between telephone conferences.

Plans for communication with the committee clusters/board liaisons: We meet with our committee cluster whenever a meeting is called. We frequently interact with a number of the committees in our cluster in the course of working on projects which intersect with their area of expertise and/or operation. We include our Board Liaison in our conference calls and e-mail chains.
Detailed discussions of the various active projects we are working on are included below under the strategic plan pillar they most impact, primarily member services. The projects each have their own sub-heading related to the project.

**ADVOCACY:**

The Membership Committee has worked with the Trademark Committee to engage the association in the PTO review of trademark IDs. The Membership Committee also is working to engage the Copyright Committee in the upcoming review and revision of Copyright Law proposed by the Registrar. These advocacy efforts should assist in both membership recruitment and retention.

**PUBLIC EDUCATION:**

The Membership Committee’s work with the Copyright Committee and to engage it in the revision of Copyright Law will present opportunities for public education efforts for the association.

**MEMBER SERVICE:**

*Membership 2.0: Targeted Outreach Phone-a-thons (in-progress)*

The Membership Committee is working on an alternative recruitment path for investigation. Some peer organizations have had significant recruiting success using designated days and places for members to directly call potential new members. While this would be a new approach for AIPLA and would need to be considered and tailored to work with AIPLA’s culture, the opportunity could have real impact even with a relatively small number of participants from current AIPLA leadership and members.

The Membership Committee will start vetting and investigating the concept with HQ Executive Staff and other sources and based on those investigations potentially bring back a proposal. With her experience from peer organizations, Betty Morgan will lead this exploration for the committee.

*President’s Circle Proposal (in-progress)*

The Membership Committee was asked by the Board Investment and Development Committee to consider, as a potential membership enhancement, the creation of a President’s Circle of AIPLA Members. As a group, the Membership Committee did not believe the vehicle or the timing were right for this proposal.
Affiliations/Affinity Programs (in-progress)

The Membership Committee, primarily through its leadership at this point, is working to assist HQ in considering potential member services and offerings which might be developed to enhance membership in AIPLA as well as to generate additional revenue to support AIPLA programs generally. With her experience from the Audit and Finance Committee, Betty Morgan is heading the effort on the committee’s behalf at this point. In part we are awaiting a new hire in the role of marketing/member development manager and will engage with them on this project and on the idea of the virtual marketplace. One particular set of opportunities identified by one of the Committee’s graduating members follows: “One thing that I have run into is the disparity in the cost of services. For example the big firm subscription cost for IP360 on a per lawyer basis is a fraction of the cost for a single subscription for an in-house lawyer or sole practitioner. The same holds true with technology platforms like concordance and patent docketing systems. I see the potential for an AIPLA Affinity Group to negotiate for lower service costs for members of the Association. Access does not have to be limited to small firms and corporate practices, but bigger groups already have access to lower rates. The sole/small practice members often have to see a greater value proposition to justify the time and money to participate in the AIPLA.”

Small Practice Attorneys (in-house or private) Efforts (in-progress)

The Membership Committee is discussing ideas to address an opportunity for reaching out to and supporting small practice in-house counsel (start-ups and small companies) and small practice private practice attorneys (solo and small firm practitioners) (collectively Small Practice IP attorneys). Ideas under consideration include: the benefits of the theme networking receptions at the annual meeting; the need for access to a community of similar lawyers as sounding boards and for solutions; potential affinity products meeting common needs such as docketing software, billing/billing management software, and lists of vendors with ratings/discussion; and potential online programs targeted at the group’s needs including docketing set-up and procedures as well as other law practice management and substantive topics common to in-house and private small practices such as NPE letter responses, online copyright filing, discovery/spoliation, and TM prosecution. The committee has been reaching out to the Corporate Practice Committee, the Law Practice Management Committee, and the Online Programs Committee for ideas on how to pull from the expertise of each committee to get a coordinated offering and potentially homes for this significant group of practitioners. Rick Matthews has agreed to head up a small working group with Jim Ruland and supported by our Board Liaison Karen Canady as sounding boards. Rick continues to have coordinated discussions with the identified committees on these topics. Law Practice Management is probably the most engaged committee on the topic at this time while Corporate Practice is focusing on its in-house efforts.
Implementing Idea Submissions from Committee Expo at 2014 Mid-Winter Institute

The Membership Committee continues to work through idea submissions from the Mid-Winter Institute. Including the following short list of the key suggestions:

HQ is looking into an auto-renewal program to be built into AIPLA’s new e-commerce database. If asked by HQ we can help try and study the potential costs, exposures, and benefits. We were generally favorably inclined towards the idea of such a program.

HQ will send us the aggregate results of the non-renewing member questions from each of the last several years. We will review them and consider if there are any trends we think we might have ways to address.

We will work with HQ to consider modifying the Welcome Letters and Thank You for Renewing Letters for affiliate members to more clearly inform them of their ability to vote on committees and participate in committee leadership. This effort is targeted to occur with the rollout of AIPLA’s new e-commerce database.

We are exploring ideas for local events with the various committees working on them and consider if we can help find ways for some of the different membership type and substantive committees to work together in an inclusive way where opportunities present themselves. Key to this is working with Todd Baker on diversity initiatives.

TSC Committee Liaison Program (in-progress)

The Membership Committee had taken a leading role in reviving the liaison program between the target committees of Women In IP, New Lawyers, Corporate and Diversity with the substantive committees. Rick Matthews has taken a lead role coordinating the recruitment of liaisons from the target committees and substantive committees.

New Lawyers/Law Students (in-progress)

The Membership Committee has been reaching out to leadership for committees for NewLawyers/LawStudents to support their efforts targeting professors, targeting law students, and building a network of IP Law Societies. The committees are considering trying to do careers in IP panels at several places around the country to support law societies and campus efforts. The Membership Committee may be able to assist their Board liaisons in providing bridging efforts and connections for these activities possibly also providing an additional source for leadership mentoring for their leaders and brainstorming both to help them generate ideas and on ways to support or implement ideas they already have. The Membership Committee can also potentially support their efforts by bringing them into the ideas we have on the ambassador program and the structures being worked on with HQ to
build around that. There has also been discussion of how to create and support Student Block Captains or Law Student Ambassadors which could fit into this model.

One other idea which came up in our discussions on the new lawyer front was potentially developing a “bundle/CLE subscription” for a new lawyer which would potentially be affordable for the new lawyer to pay for themselves as a pathway to create opportunity to join, make two meetings (with mentoring such as suggested for new corporate), and successfully get involved such that their firm might be willing to sponsor membership and activity in the future. The current thinking is to watch how the potential corporate bundling moves forward and in what form and then potentially follow this path as a next step.

Ad Hoc Marketing/Recruiting Assistance (in-progress)

We will identify with HQ specific target audiences (or the general audience) where recruiting talking points would be of most assistance and work with HQ to bring ideas for such talking points to use with the various efforts HQ puts together. Specifically we will coordinate with the new communications person at HQ once they are in place.

Other Potential Ideas (in-progress)

Potential additional ideas brought up for discussion in our next meeting include:

The expansion of the student membership category to include undergraduate and graduate students with an interest in IP Law.

The creation of a veterans’ committee.

Revisiting earlier initiatives with new or newly assigned HQ staff to best assess opportunities to refresh or assist.

GLOBAL OUTREACH:

While the Membership Committee is not currently directly supporting the global outreach efforts of the association, if it is successful in its efforts at increasing the size and diversity of the association, this may assist the global outreach pillar.
ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION: **FINANCIAL STABILITY**

The Membership Committee’s work on new categories provided an effort to grow the membership base but also to do so in a way which supports financial sustainability. Specific assessments of potential financial impacts are a part of each effort of the committee. If the Membership Committee is successful in its overall effort of increasing the base of membership and its engagement in AIPLA programs and activities, both overall and in specific targeted areas such as corporate counsel, as well as improving retention, this also speaks directly to the bottom line of financial sustainability.

**SUBCOMMITTEES:**

While the Membership Committee does not have any formal subcommittees, it is not uncommon for it to break into small working groups on an ad hoc basis to assist with various projects the committee undertakes.