

AIPLA

AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW ASSOCIATION

mentoring guidelines

prepared by the
AIPLA mentoring committee

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overview

The AIPLA mentoring program seeks to foster the professional growth of its members, both as IP lawyers and as members of AIPLA, via a traditional mentoring process with these features:

- each Mentor is assigned no more than two Mentees and each Mentee is assigned to only one Mentor.
- Mentors are encouraged to meet with each Mentee at least one hour per quarter.
- Mentors serve for at least one year.
- Mentors are paired with Mentees according to responses to a pairing questionnaire.
- Mentor/Mentee relationships will be evaluated annually.
- Mentor/Mentee pairings are established three times each year after each of the AIPLA's Stated Meetings: the Annual Meeting in October, the Mid-Winter Institute in January, and the Spring Meeting in May.

introduction

One of the key goals of the AIPLA's current strategic plan is to "stimulate the growth, diversity and participation of the membership". And one of the express objectives of the plan is to establish mentoring opportunities. These guidelines describe the protocols of the AIPLA's mentoring program.

Mentoring facilitates learning by creating relationships between groups of willing participants, typically guided by generally accepted mentoring techniques. Formal mentoring can accelerate an attorney's professional development. The AIPLA mentoring program strives to facilitate the process by which attorneys achieve their personal best as professionals. Hence, this mentoring program is based upon modern attorney mentoring methods taught by well-known and well-recognized authorities on attorney mentoring.

The mentoring program consists of carefully designed relationships by which a Mentor is assigned to serve

as a role model and counselor to one or two Mentees. The initial efforts of the Mentoring Committee will focus on mentorship pairings for the Target-Substantive Committee (TSC) Liaisons, specifically, target committee attorneys who are working to increase their AIPLA participation through contributing to the work of a substantive committee and through mentoring a new member. The target committees are:

- new lawyers
- corporate practice
- women in IP
- diversity

However, the Mentoring program is also available to any AIPLA member.

Law students wishing to be paired with a Mentor should contact the New Lawyer Committee leadership. Go to www.aipla.org, Committee Center, Committee Pages and click on the link to the New Lawyer Committee.

.. introduction (continued)

Attorney mentoring commonly evolves where an attorney, a Mentor, having greater skill or ability in a particular field of endeavor helps another attorney, a Mentee, learn the same skills or abilities that the Mentor has found to be most valuable. Bearing in mind that Mentees may learn such skills or abilities on their own, although less well or more slowly, effective Mentors create a context and environment for Mentees to learn in a more efficient manner.

Mentoring is an ongoing process whereby attorneys tend to learn new skills as they develop needs and interests that the new skills will satisfy. Therefore, a discussion of the Mentee's needs and interests is an appropriate starting point for the mentoring process, so that the Mentor's professional experiences can be mined. From there, the Mentor could encourage and facilitate active participation by the Mentee in a series of professional experiences or AIPLA events, engaging the Mentee in follow-on discussions.

The ongoing challenge of any mentoring program is to provide the Mentee with valuable career guidance. The focus of this program is to improve the likelihood of success of the Mentee's career in the IP field and within AIPLA, by introducing the Mentee to new skills, and reinforcing skills that the Mentee has already acquired. Moreover, the Mentee's development can be enriched through exposure to the Mentor's professional contacts. Thus, the efforts of both the Mentor and the Mentee are focused in an effective manner.

The AIPLA is proud to facilitate mentoring with its mentoring program, but the responsibility for the success of the mentoring experience is up to the Mentor and the Mentee.

mentor selection

Criteria

Mentors will be selected based upon the combination of their desire to voluntarily serve, as well as their willingness to devote a minimum of one hour of uninterrupted time, per quarter per Mentee, to meet with each assigned Mentee. Ideally, the Mentor will be able to devote more time to each Mentee. The Mentor should be a successful IP professional and recognized leader, and a member of AIPLA.

Pairing

Mentors will be paired with Mentees by a sub-committee of the Mentoring Committee, upon evaluation of a pairing questionnaire, such as that attached as Appendix A, completed by the Mentor. Pairing considerations include the Mentor's area of IP expertise, level of professional experience and level of activity in AIPLA. Each Mentor will have no more than two Mentees. Mentor pairing will be conducted without regard to race or gender. Pairings are established three times each year after the three AIPLA Stated Meetings.

Time Commitment and Duration

Mentoring sessions can be conducted telephonically. However, to encourage in-person contact, geographic preference will be an important factor considered. Each Mentor will serve for one year, beginning with the Annual Meeting in October, and ending at the Annual Meeting in October of the following year. The Mentor's term is renewable indefinitely.

Confidence

The Mentor should inspire his or her Mentees with confidence that the entire process is being conducted with the utmost confidentiality. Each Mentee should feel comfortable discussing various aspects of their career development as well as involvement in AIPLA, with the Mentor.

.. mentor responsibilities

Principal Responsibility

Mentors are to offer the Mentee advice and guidance likely to improve the potential for the Mentee's advancement within the IP field and growth within AIPLA. The one-hour per quarter meeting can be either telephonic or in person. However, the meeting must not be interrupted; the Mentor must devote his or her total attention to providing the Mentee with advice and guidance.

Metrics

At the conclusion of each one-year term, the Mentor is asked to provide the Mentoring Committee with a written evaluation of the mentoring program such as by filling out the form attached as Appendix B. Measures of success of the Mentor's efforts will be to have the Mentee (a) advance in position and responsibility at work and/or (b) increase his/her involvement in AIPLA, such as through committee work, leadership, and the successful mentoring of new AIPLA members.

Discussion

Effective mentoring occurs when the Mentor's guidance reinforces the Mentee's existing skills, and facilitates the Mentee's acquisition of applicable

new practice skills. For instance, if the Mentee is working in a corporate IP law department (or would like to work in a corporate IP law department), then the Mentor's advice and guidance should be directed to skills that are appropriate to that context. The advice and guidance should be based upon the Mentor's career experiences and professional training. Examples and stories help illustrate key points. The Mentor should frequently request feedback from the Mentee through insightful questions.

Mentoring feedback is a two-way function, and the Mentee should feel comfortable asking the Mentor questions that demonstrate the Mentee's career growth and increased involvement in AIPLA. In this way, the Mentee is encouraged to draw new skills from the Mentor and to have the Mentor reinforce existing skills.

Confidentiality

The entire mentoring process should be conducted with the utmost confidentiality, and the substance of the Mentor-Mentee discussions should not be included in the Mentor's program evaluation.

mentee selection

Criteria

Mentee selection will be based upon the Mentee's interest in the program, coupled with a willingness to devote a minimum of one hour of uninterrupted time per quarter to meet with the Mentor. The Mentee must be a member of AIPLA.

Pairing

Mentees will be paired with Mentors by a sub-committee of the Mentoring Committee based upon results provided on the pairing questionnaire. Pairing considerations include the Mentee's area of expertise, level of professional expertise, level of activity in AIPLA, career development interests, and areas of particular interest in AIPLA. For instance, pairing will be made according to the various technical specialities within the patent prosecution and litigation fields, according to the trademark prosecution and litigation fields, and according to the various copyright specialties. Although mentoring sessions can be conducted telephonically, geographic preference will be an important factor, to encourage in-person contact. Mentee pairing will be conducted without regard to race or gender.

Time Commitment and Duration

The Mentee should meet with the Mentor for at least one hour per quarter, either by phone, or in person. The meeting should be uninterrupted, so that the Mentee is devoting his or her total attention to receiving the advice and guidance offered by the Mentor. The mentoring term will last for one year, beginning with the Annual Meeting in October, and ending at the Annual Meeting in October the following year. The mentoring term is renewable indefinitely.

Discussion

Mentees should discuss with their Mentors their expectations of the mentoring relationship and of the program in general. If the Mentor and Mentee cannot agree on a set of mutual expectations, an alternate pairing can be arranged.

mentee responsibilities

Primary Responsibility

Receive in good spirit the advice and guidance offered by the Mentor. The Mentee's overall responsibility in the mentoring process is to learn from the Mentor in a manner that tends to advance the Mentee's career in the IP field and within AIPLA. In other words, it is the Mentee's primary responsibility to learn new practice skills that can be applied to the Mentee's current career situation, and to reinforce successful skills that the Mentee has already learned.

Metrics

At the conclusion of each one-year term, the Mentee is asked to provide the Mentoring Committee with a written evaluation of the mentoring program.

Measures of success of the Mentor's efforts will be to have the Mentee:

- (a) advance in position and responsibility at work and/or
- (b) increase the Mentee's involvement in AIPLA, such as through committee work, leadership, and the successful mentoring of new AIPLA members.

Confidentiality

The entire mentoring process should be conducted with the utmost confidentiality, and the substance of the Mentor-Mentee discussions should not be included in the Mentee's program evaluation.

.. professional responsibility

Professional Conduct

All Mentor/Mentee interaction is to be conducted on a professional basis reflecting the highest ethical and behavioral standards.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment, or harassment of any kind, toward either a Mentor or Mentee, including same gender sexual harassment, is totally unacceptable, strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Client & Corporate Responsibility

Neither the Mentor, nor the Mentee shall, under any circumstances, disclose attorney-client information, client proprietary information, or any other client confidence to the other.

.....suggested reading.....

1. Abbot, Ida.
The Lawyers Guide to Mentoring.
National Association for Law Placement, 2000.

2. Adcock, Thomas.
“Learning the Ropes Through Mentoring: A Young Lawyer’s Professional Future can Depend on It.”
The New York Law Journal.
November 15, 2002

3. Bell, Chip R.
Managers As Mentors.
Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. 1996