

DRAFT: 2/22/09

**SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF LAW SCHOOLS
GUIDELINES FOR MODERATORS OF PANELS**

Thank you very much for agreeing to serve as a moderator for a Panel at the Southeastern Association of Law Schools (SEALS) Annual Meeting this year. Please note that if you have agreed to moderate a New Scholars Panel, separate guidelines apply to your duties. These can be found on the SEALS website at [insert url].

CONFERENCE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION

Please remember to register for this year's Annual Meeting, pay the required registration fee, and reserve your hotel room as soon as you are able to finalize your travel plans. Please contact the hotel directly to make room reservations. Conference registration is available online at the SEALS website, <http://www.sealslawschools.org>.

PANEL GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS

Planning. Panels come in a variety of forms. The tentative schedule for the Annual Meeting should be published on the SEALS website no later than January, and the schedule will contain the names and school affiliations of each panelist. Two typical Panel formats are briefly described below. General guidelines follow.

For *Program Panels*, there are typically 4 panelists who will each be presenting a paper or giving a talk. Please check in with the panelists at least two months in advance of the meeting; you might want to set up a conference call to discuss the order of panelists and to see how topics fit together. We've included a sample email on p. 4. For a Program Panel, the moderator typically is responsible for keeping the panel running in a timely fashion and for ensuring that each participant gets the opportunity to present his or her paper or talk. When panelists are presenting papers, please make sure that you receive a copy several weeks in advance; if no papers are available, then please ask for a 1-paragraph description in advance of the meeting.

For *Roundtables*, moderators will generally have different responsibilities than Program Panel moderators. Roundtables may have varied numbers of participants and formats. Please check in with the panelists at least two months in advance of the meeting; you might want to set up a conference call to discuss the format and operation of the Roundtable. We've included a sample email on p. 4. For a Roundtable, the moderator typically is responsible for keeping the panel running in a timely fashion, for ensuring that all participants have an opportunity to discuss the issues, and for helping to move the discussion "forward" in a manner that permits coverage of the topic.

Introductions. Please begin the session by introducing each panelist briefly (or you may choose to introduce each panelist just before s/he begins to speak). You may want to provide a brief (no more than 1-2 minute) introduction to the themes of the panel.

Timing. The most critical tasks for Panel moderators are to keep the panel running in a timely fashion and to ensure that the question-and-answer period goes well. Panels may be of varying lengths. Please take every effort to help us maintain the confines of the program schedule. In that regard, each panelist should be afforded an appropriate time limit for his or her principal presentation as a part of the overall panel (e.g., no more than 15 or 20 minutes for a 90-minute Paper Panel) so that time is reserved for questions to all panelists at the end of the session. *Starting the session on time, and ensuring that each presenter takes no more than his or her allotted presentation time, is probably the most important task for panel moderators.* “Moot court” style time cards may be an effective, relatively unobtrusive way to keep presenters on track during their presentation periods.

Question-and-Answer Period. SEALS is a collegial group, and you are likely to find that questioners ask reasonably numerous, appropriately incisive questions of your panelists. Please try to ensure that all panelists have the opportunity to respond; please also try to make sure that the session ends on time. In fact, it may be necessary for you to step in and indicate that the question period has expired and to recommend that questioners remain after the session has ended to continue the discussion.

Should you find that questions are not forthcoming, please plan to ask a few questions yourself to begin the discussion. Please remember that your role as moderator is to facilitate the panel and showcase the panelists. Accordingly, moderators should not monopolize the question-and-answer period. Suitable questions for panelists may include the following:

- How did you become interested in your topic?
- Where could audience members learn more about your topic?
- Is this problem consistent across the country or around the world, or is it limited to one region?
- What developments are you expecting to see in this area in the next year and in the next decade?
- Is this an issue in which uniform state or national law would be preferable, or do local and national needs vary sufficiently that the law will vary as a matter of necessity from place to place?

In addition, in the relatively infrequent event in which one questioner dominates the discussion period, it would be appropriate for you to suggest that others be given the opportunity to address the panelists.

Technology Capabilities. You should let the panelists know that PowerPoint will be available. SEALS will provide the technology capabilities but the panelists are responsible for providing a laptop. If there are any other technology needs, then SEALS needs to know at least 30 days in advance of the Annual Meeting (and you can check in with Russ about his). Moreover, even the best technology sometimes fails: everyone should be encouraged to have a back-up plan in place, just in case the technology is not working well. A lectern and microphone will be available in each panel presentation room, as a matter of course.

Handouts. Some panelists may choose to bring drafts, PowerPoint slides, or other handouts for distribution during the panel presentation. SEALS has advised the panelists that they should come to the conference with any copies they need, rather than relying on any photocopying facilities that may or may not be available at the hotel to support these needs. If a panelist does bring handouts, then please assist the panelist in making these materials available to attendees.

Attire. While panelists and the moderator are sometimes dressed more formally (including, in rare cases, in business suits or coats and ties), attendees are likely to be in casual attire. As moderator, you may want to establish norms of dress with the panelists in advance of the meeting.

Cancellations: If a panelist cancels, then please make sure that the person contacts both Russ Weaver and the panel organizer. Moderators who have something come up very unexpectedly, such that moderating turns out to be impossible, should also contact Russ and the chair of the moderator committee (the moderator committee chair is listed on the SEALS website).

THANK YOU!

Two months in advance, you might send the following email to members of your panel:

Dear Panelists,

I'm delighted that I will be moderating our panel on [name], scheduled for [date/time]. I wanted to contact you in advance of the conference to check in about a few things. First, I'd like to confirm what you'll be talking about, so please send me a title and abstract. Second, I would appreciate a brief bio to help me introduce you. It would help me prepare for the conference if you could send these to me by ___ [one month before the conference]. If you would please send your title and abstract to the other speakers as well, then we will be able to work together to establish the correct order of presentations and be sure that we have no overlapping topics. I have included all the speakers on this e-mail so you need merely hit reply all.

Third, you will each have 20 minutes, and I promise that I will be a strict timekeeper. I would like to keep time for questions and answers because the SEALS audience is typically quite engaged with the panel topics.

And finally, I'd like to set up a conference call on ___ [2-3 weeks before the conference] to discuss this all further and to set up the order of presentations. Please let me know if you are available.

Please let me know if you have any other questions. Of course, the SEALS website [fill in address] has lots of useful information as well.