

Guidance on Navigating the SEALS Program Proposal Process

Planning for the Southeastern Association of Law Schools (SEALS) 2015 program is under way. If you wish to submit a proposal for a panel or a discussion group, you can do so through a link on SEALS website at www.sealslawschools.org.

The hallmark of SEALS is that it strives to be a very "democratic" and participatory organization. As a result, you need not be a section chair (in fact, we don't have formal sections like the AALS sections) or a section member to make a suggestion, propose programming, or volunteer to take part in the annual meeting. The program is created and driven by suggestions from professors at SEALS' schools. So, if you wish to organize a panel or a discussion group, just do it! You can simply create the proposal and submit it through the SEALS website. If you wish to discuss your proposal before submission, in order to have a good sense of whether it is likely to be accepted, please consult with SEALS' Executive Director, Professor Russell Weaver at the University of Louisville (russ.weaver@louisville.edu). Specific requirements for panels and discussion groups are set forth below.

If you would like to organize your own panel or discussion group, but are not sure that you can find the requisite number of participants, or are not sure whether your proposal would have a good chance of acceptance, contact SEALS' Executive Director. He can provide you with advice regarding how to craft a suitable and appealing proposal. In addition, he can send an e-mail to SEALS' listserv and post a notice on the SEALS blog with a call for participants on your behalf. In addition, you may want to issue a call for participants more broadly with listservs you are on or through blogs with audiences you wish to solicit. One good resource is the Legal Scholarship Blog, <http://legalscholarshipblog.com/>.

In order to receive full consideration, it is best to submit your proposal by the end of October. Once you submit a proposal, it will be evaluated by SEALS' Executive Director who has the authority to accept the proposal. In an appropriate case, he may provide you with feedback, or make suggestions for change. If the Executive Director believes that a proposal should be rejected, or needs more work, he will refer it to the Program Advisory Committee (PAC) which will make a final decision regarding how to proceed. The PAC can recommend acceptance of a proposal, or (more commonly) work with the proposer to iron out any difficulties. SEALS plans to distribute a draft program in mid-November.

Listed below are the types of programs that SEALS offers, along with the rules applicable to each such program. Three particularly important rules are the inclusiveness rule (you must try to make the panel diverse along a number of metrics), the one-panel per person rule (a person may not serve as a panelist or moderator on more than one panel), and the panel composition rule (half the participants must be from institutional member schools).

Inclusiveness Policy

Every effort should be made to ensure diversity in SEALS programming. Diversity is defined broadly to include ideological diversity, diversity in schools represented, and diversity based on identity characteristics like race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity

Panels

Panels are the traditional presentations at most conferences. The time allotted is about an hour-and-a-half, and between 4 and 6 panelists do presentations around a central theme or subject. You should leave time for questions or discussion with the audience at the end of the presentations. There are some rules that govern panels.

- Panels must include at least four speakers.
- Panels must include both a title for the program, as well as a description of the program.
- If your proposal would fit into a workshop in a particular area (e.g., constitutional law, criminal procedure, business law, teaching), please indicate that fact in your proposal.
- Before you list someone as a speaker, please confirm with that person to make sure that he/she is willing and able to participate.
- The one-panel-per-person rule applies. No attendee may serve on more than one panel. This rule governs all kinds of panels and includes moderators and panelists. There are a couple of situations in which this rule will not apply: the Call for Papers presentations, discussion groups, mentors for new scholars, and programming in the other special workshops with attendance limited to special registrants (e.g., the workshops for new law teachers and prospective law teachers).
- Only one person per school can be on a panel unless the two people are co-authors. They are treated as one person for purposes of time.
- Over half the panelists (including the moderator) should be from Institutional Member schools.
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Discussion Groups

Discussion groups usually include eight to twelve "discussants" and are scheduled in either two hour or three hour blocks. The discussants often have written papers on a central theme or have prepared some thoughts around several questions connected to that theme. The discussants circulate their papers or thoughts in writing before the conference, spend 3-5 minutes summarizing their points, and then discuss the theme in more depth along with all attendees in the room. Wide audience participation and discussion are the focus of this kind of programming.

- In order to propose a discussion group, you will need at least ten discussants.
- Discussion Group proposals must include a title, as well as a description of the discussion group.

- Before you list someone as a speaker, please confirm with that person to make sure that he/she is willing and able to participate.
- If your proposal would fit into a workshop in a particular area (e.g., constitutional law, criminal procedure, business law, teaching), please indicate that fact in your proposal.
- The one-panel-per-person rule does not apply.
- The one-person-per-school rule does not apply.
- Discussion group organizers must issue a call for participants

Topical Workshops

Sometimes several pieces of programming are pulled together to create a workshop focused on a particular subject, like criminal law, labor and employment law, or health law, for example, that lasts a day or several days. Those kinds of workshops can be organized by anyone from an Institutional or Affiliate member school, and attendance is open to everyone.

New Scholars Colloquia

Each member school is allowed to nominate a faculty member for the New Scholars program by sending the Executive Director and Chair of the New Scholars Committee the name of the faculty member and a title for the newer scholar's presentation. Those new scholars are organized into groups of four, and each one is assigned a mentor with expertise in the subject of their presentation. New scholar panels may be loosely grouped thematically, where possible, and scheduled near similar subjects in the regular program, where possible. Each new scholar is given thirty minutes for presentation and questions/discussion. New scholar panels are all scheduled from 8 to 10 am so as not to compete with any other programming. All of this is done to ensure that more senior scholars, and not just mentors, are able to identify which panels to attend to offer support for new scholars in their area. The focus of this type of programming is support and constructive feedback for the newer scholars.

Programming Sponsored by SEALS Committees

Some SEALS committees put on special programming. For example, the New Scholars Committee has traditionally sponsored programming on teaching, scholarship, service, and self promotion, likely to be of special interest to those newer to teaching. The International Committee and Latin America Workshop Committee has put on programming relating to specific international initiatives or issues. Additionally, the Distance Learning Committee has organized programming related to that subject.

Other Special Workshops with Attendance Limited to Special Registrants

The last few years has seen a number of workshops limited to special registrants. To date, they have included three.

Empirical Workshop: This workshop provides two days of training in empirical methods.

Prospective Law Teachers Workshop: This workshop, designed for those interested in becoming law teachers, provides mock interviews and job talks, in addition to panels devoted to helping participants navigate the legal hiring market.

Beginning and Newer Law Teachers Workshop: This workshop, designed for faculty in their first year or so of teaching, provides programming that affords participants an in-depth introduction and specific tools to help them develop their classroom skills, scholarship, and record of service.

The Mechanics of Submission

Submitting a Topic Proposal

To submit a proposal, first go to the SEALS website - <http://sealslawschools.org/index.php>.

Then click on the “Meeting Information” tab and select “Submissions” from the drop down menu.

Once on the Conference Submissions page, select the “Begin the submission process” hyperlink.

From there, there is a three-step process: The first step requires that you verify that you understand the rules governing Panels (which are set forth on that page and are also described immediately below). Then you must complete a form with your Panel or Discussion Group details as follows:

1. Select whether you are proposing a Panel or a discussion Group.
2. Enter the title of your proposed Panel or discussion Group (this can be no more than 15 words).
3. Include a formal Panel description that must be between 60 and 120 words. This description will appear in the official SEALS program.
4. Select the subject matter category of your Panel or Discussion Group.
5. Select the duration of your Panel or Discussion Group with options from 2 hours, 2.5 hours, or 3 hours. Generally, Discussion Groups are 3 hours as opposed to Panels, which tend to be 2 hours.
6. If your Panel or Discussion Group fits into a particular workshop being held during SEALS, you may also indicate that.
7. Finally, the last category of the form allows you to make any other comments or requests.
8. Once you have completed the form, click the button at the bottom of the form, which takes you to step 2 of the submission process.

Step 2 of the submission process requests information regarding the Panel or Discussion Group participants, including the names of the participants, their institutions, and e-mail addresses.

You will also have to explain how the panel composition seeks to satisfy the diversity goals for Panels and Discussion groups.

Step 3 of the submission process requires that you confirm your submission.