

(Last Revised August 14, 2024)

**BUSINESS LAW SECTION OF THE FLORIDA BAR  
MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE “PLAYBOOK”**

**MISSION**

The mission of the Florida Bar Business Law Section Membership Committee (“Membership Committee”) is to recruit new members, including students, attorneys and judges from business arenas, to retain current members of the Florida Bar Business Law Section (“BLS”), and to promote participation in pro bono work by all members of BLS.

In furtherance of its mission, the Membership Committee also seeks to (i) increase membership in the BLS in areas that are currently underrepresented, such as smaller Florida cities and in the Florida panhandle; and (ii) increase membership of lawyers in more transactional and non-traditional areas of business law such as in-house counsel; and (ii) to strengthen BLS’ branding and presence among law schools and law students by engaging them in BLS meetings and activities with a goal of recruiting a diverse class of future young lawyers.

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

The Section has created a Google Drive folder for the Membership Committee to store and maintain documents relevant to its mission, to facilitate accessibility of such documents, and to help ensure continuity of documents used for purposes of the Membership Committee’s efforts. The Committee’s Google Drive folder can be accessed through this link: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1uwwipFwbB0kCEzqERyOudJYb1SkuPoWl?usp=sharing>.

**MEETINGS**

The Membership Committee regularly meets in person three times during each fiscal year: (i) at or near the Florida Bar Annual Convention, typically held in June; (ii) at the BLS Labor Day Retreat, typically held on Labor Day weekend; and (iii) at the Florida Bar or BLS Winter Meeting, typically held in January. The leadership of the Membership Committee customarily changes during the Annual Convention meeting as a new fiscal year commences. The Membership Committee also periodically meets virtually.

Prior to each Meeting, the Committee Chair shall prepare and circulate to the rest of the Membership Committee leadership (the First Vice Chair, Second Vice Chair, and Judicial Chair) the Agenda for the Meeting. The Agenda shall be circulated early enough to provide enough time for review and input by the Committee’s leadership prior to the submission deadline imposed by the BLS. It is recommended that the Membership Committee Chair circulate the Agenda at least a week before the submission deadline imposed by the BLS.

The Committee Chair is responsible for presiding over each Committee meeting. The First Vice Chair or Second Vice Chair, as appropriate, is responsible for recording and preparing the Meeting minutes. The Committee Chair and/or First Vice Chair are responsible for preparing the Committee’s Report for submission to the BLS Executive Council. The First Vice Chair should

circulate a draft of the Committee's Meeting minutes to all Committee members no later than a week after the Meeting.

At the Executive Council Meeting, the Committee Chair should be responsible for providing the Committee's Report to the Executive Council. If the Committee's Chair is not available, the Committee's First Vice Chair should be responsible for providing the Report. If neither the Committee's Chair nor First Vice Chair are available, then the Committee's Second Vice Chair will be responsible for providing the Committee's Report to the Executive Council.

### **GENERAL FUNDING**

The Section's budget does not contain a line item for funds specific to the Membership Committee. Historically, the BLS budget contains a line item entitled "7011-Scholarship/Fellowship" which allocates a specified sum per year to the Inclusion/Mentorship/Fellowship ("IMF") Committee for use primarily for the Fellows Program (discussed below). The Membership Committee's understanding is that once it is adopted, the BLS's budget cannot be modified as it is prepared by the Florida Bar. As of FY 2025, any funds for use by the Membership Committee will derive from the IMF Committee's budget, other than additional funds that may be allocated by the BLS on a funds available and as-needed basis (see below).

If the Committee seeks funding in excess of whatever funding it may receive from the IMF Committee line item in the BLS budget, it must look to other sources. For fiscal years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, the Committee funded its primary activity, the Scholars Program, by successfully requesting funds from the BLS during the Executive Council Meeting. The BLS Executive Council has advised that it may no longer be feasible to request or obtain funding from the BLS for the Scholars Program or other Membership Committee projects annually through requests to the BLS Executive Council. The potential lack of funding has already jeopardized the Committee's projects, especially the Scholars Program.

Because of budget constraints, the Membership Committee is considering other sources of funding for its projects, including the Scholars Program. Additional funding sources may include sponsorship of lawyers and law firms, sponsorship of law schools, additional funds from the Florida Bar designed to increase bar membership, and fund-raising events such as luncheons or receptions. The Membership Committee may need to coordinate sponsorship efforts with other committees of the BLS or the Executive Council.

### **SCHOLARS PROGRAM**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose and goal of the Scholars Program is two-fold: (i) to recruit future young lawyers into BLS by providing an opportunity for them to learn from, and mingle and socialize with, more seasoned members of BLS; and (ii) to increase awareness of BLS among law schools, law students and young lawyers by having the Scholars share their positive experiences with others to encourage involvement with and membership in BLS.

Membership Committee selected fifteen (15) law students from various Florida law schools

for participation in the Scholars Program in 2022 and 2023.

### **Funding**

Historically the highlight of the Scholars Program has been the opportunity for law students to attend the BLS Labor Day Retreat at no charge, other than paying for their lodging and travel. Unfortunately, this is no longer an option for the Membership Committee's Scholars Program. The BLS Executive Council reports that the cost to BLS for hosting Scholars at the Labor Day Retreat was significant: estimated at over \$25,000. Because of recent budgetary issues, BLS is no longer willing to front the costs for Scholars to attend the Labor Day Retreat. Further, there are likely not sufficient funds in the BLS budget line item allocated to IMF to cover any expenses of the Scholars Program.<sup>1</sup> As an alternative for the Scholars Program, the Membership Committee has suggested, and the BLS Executive Council is receptive to, inviting Scholars to attend BLS meetings and events held in conjunction with the Florida Bar annual or mid-year meeting.

### **Modified Format and Requirements**

During the past year, BLS, the Membership Committee and the BLS Scholars and Fellows Retention Task Force have become focused on the fact that many BLS Scholars have not continued participation in or engagement with BLS after the Labor Day Retreat. Given that, and current budgetary constraints, the Membership Committee has discussed and formulated a new format for the Scholars Program:

1. The Section will select ten Scholars per year.
2. Scholars will be required to:
  - a. Attend the June and January BLS Meetings for the fiscal year for which they are selected.
  - b. At each BLS Meeting, Scholars will be required to:
    - i. attend at least two (2) substantive committee meetings;
    - ii. Attend the joint Membership and IMF Committee meetings. If the meetings for these committees are not held jointly, Scholars will be required to attend both committee meetings; and
    - iii. Attend the signature dinner and luncheon hosted by BLS at the June and January meetings. The Committee will comp the cost of the Scholars' attendance at these signature events, which is currently estimated at \$250 per Scholar.
3. Each Scholar will be assigned a BLS Fellow as a Mentor; the mentorship assignments

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<sup>1</sup> The cost of the Scholars Program in its prior format has been a topic of debate among members of the Committee, the Executive Council and the Scholars and Fellows Retention Task Force.

will be conducted with the assistance of the IMF Committee.

4. After each Meeting, Scholars must provide feedback pertaining to their experience by way of an anonymized survey or questionnaire.
5. The Scholars will be responsible for the costs of their transportation and lodging to attend the BLS Meetings. The Committee will encourage all Florida law schools whose student(s) selected to be a Scholar to provide academic and financial support for the Scholar's attendance at the Meetings.

### **Timeline**

Given the above modified format for the Scholars Program, it is recommended that the Membership Committee's leadership follow the following timeline for the promotion and implementation of the Scholars Program

- By February 28 of each year, beginning in February of 2025 the Committee should:
  - a. Identify a BLS liaison at each accredited Florida law school and update the Membership Committee's law school contact list accordingly. This should be the responsibility of the First Vice Chair.
  - b. Identify each Florida law schools' business law student organizations, clubs or societies to promote the Scholars Program. This should be the responsibility of the Second Vice Chair. The Committee should maintain a list of each school's business law organization(s), including faculty contacts.
  - c. Prepare and circulate to all Florida law schools a flyer advertising the Scholars' Program and containing an Application to be a Scholar.
  - d. Reach out to the Florida law schools to promote the Scholars Program and secure their support for any of their students selected for the Program. The Committee may use the template letter in the Committee's Google Drive folder.
  - e. The Committee is strongly encouraged to enlist assistance with law school outreach from BLS members who are graduates of each law school.
  - f. Concurrently with the Committee's outreach to the Florida law schools, the Committee should reach out to the law schools' business law student organizations, clubs or societies to promote the Scholars Program. This should be the responsibility of the Second Vice Chair. The Committee may use the template letter in the Committee's Google Drive folder.
  - g. The template letters, updated law school contact list, updated list of law school business law organizations and copies of the most recent letters sent

to law schools by the Committee should be saved in the Committee's Google Drive.

- h. It is the responsibility of the Chair to prepare the law school letters, circulate the letters for approval from the Vice Chairs and Judicial Chair, and finalize the letters to send to the law schools and student organizations.
- The application period for the Scholars' Program should begin by April 1 and close by May 15 of each year.
- By May 25 of each year, the Committee should have selected Scholars and sent acceptance letters to the selected Scholars. The template for the acceptance letters should be located in the Committee's Google Drive.
- No later than two (2) weeks before the June Meeting of the BLS, the Committee should ensure that:
  - a. Each Scholar has been paired with a BLS Fellow as a Mentor and has been given that Fellow's contact information.
  - b. Arrangements have been made with BLS and the Section's photographer to take headshots of each Scholar and a group picture of all Scholars at the June Meeting.
  - c. Each Scholar has been given a full and complete explanation of what is expected of them as a Scholar, including the requirement for them to contact and speak with their BLS Fellow Mentor prior to the June BLS Meeting, and what BLS Meetings and events they are required and invited to attend.