

# PRESIDENT'S PAGE

by Erica Moeser

**N**o matter how long I work in the field of bar admissions, I continue to learn new things. Often the learning occurs at NCBE programs. My experience at our Annual Bar Admissions Conference held in Savannah in late April proved to be no exception.

Evidently our attendees—numbering over 300 strong from over 50 jurisdictions—felt the same way. In reviewing the evaluation forms that were submitted on-site, I see that the average ratings for the sessions, based on selection of the categories of “very satisfied” or “satisfied,” yielded the following figures: 94% of responders were happy with the program content; 93% of responders were happy with the quality of the presentations; and 98% of responders were happy with the knowledge of the speakers. I would also be willing to bet that just about 100% of our group was happy with the choice of Savannah, a lovely and interesting venue for any conference.

If anything about the Savannah program surprised me, it was the intensity of interest in character and fitness issues. The enrollments in the breakout sessions that treated subjects relevant to evaluating this aspect of bar applications were over the top. In short, our audience was ravenous for the topic, and the speakers who contributed to this and other portions of the program were first-rate.

There was also considerable interest in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), in the



issues that are influencing law school admission, and in the impact of global initiatives that are touching many licensing boards and affecting the profession. Combined, these are forces for change that are, inevitably, reaching bar admissions. Of course, because testing is a critical element in licensing, and the need to educate lawyers to be the best bar examiners they can be never goes away, sessions about measurement and testing techniques

drew strong numbers, too.

As the ink dries on each year's evaluations, we are already at work constructing the next year's program. We use the information we glean from our attendees to formulate the schedule, and we rely on the comments to guide the direction of the programming.

Of course, credit for the success of the Savannah program belongs to NCBE's Education Committee, chaired by Missy Gavagni of Florida, and supported so splendidly by Deb Martin and Laurie Lutz of the NCBE staff. These remarkable people have my thanks for making the difficult look easy. As any of you who have herded cats can attest, it is a challenge. I think the numbers above show that there were a lot of happy cats in Georgia this April.

Our next invitational Annual Bar Admissions Conference will be held in Boston on April 18–20, 2013. And Laurie and Deb are already at work on the planning for the 2014 event in . . . to be announced!

Here at the NCBE office, we have a number of irons in the fire. As many readers know, we have taken all aspects of the MBE, MEE, and MPT in-house. The MBE was the last to arrive, with its first “solo flight” in February 2011. In this, the second year of handling all aspects of MBE administration, I can declare the move to be a complete success. The feedback we have received from our user jurisdictions has been uniformly positive. Forms, manuals, and procedures have all been improved and streamlined. Our staff has been responsive and capable.

Of course, other initiatives lie ahead. The launch of the NCBE Number is rolling out nicely. A growing number of jurisdictions are implementing the use of this identifier on applications and answer sheets. This number will contribute to achieving greater certainty in identifying applicants (a problem for those few jurisdictions that have been unwilling to require names and/or Social Security numbers on their MBE answer sheets) and will permit the tracking of applicants across tests and across jurisdictions.

Of even greater importance is the potential for the NCBE Number to become the portal through which applicants will be able to access their MPRE scores, seek MBE transfers (where permitted), and order UBE transcripts, among other things.

We are also looking ahead to what the still-to-be-unveiled results of our Content Validity Study may reveal. The study, which I have described in earlier columns, is not expected to shake up bar admissions as one would a snow globe, but it should direct us to prudent and gradual adjustments of our test instruments, and perhaps to the development of new instruments to test other knowledge or skills brought to light by the study and found to be feasible to

measure effectively and efficiently. We have already started developing multiple-choice questions on the topic of Federal Civil Procedure, and the process of adding that content area to the MBE is well under way.

Interest in the Uniform Bar Examination continues to bubble. I commend the jurisdictions that have been willing to explore what adoption of the UBE might mean to them. Several of us have become “road warriors,” visiting jurisdictions that have assembled key players from bench, board, bar, and law schools. It has been rewarding to conduct candid conversations with all interested constituencies represented in the room. My track shoes are not quite worn through yet, and I am ready to lace them on if other jurisdictions are ready to undertake their own investigations of what is meant by the UBE and what the UBE portends for them.

This summer the Annual Meeting for both NCBE and the Council of Bar Admission Administrators (CBAA) will be held in Burlington, Vermont, in mid-August. At that time we will thank Rebecca Thiem of North Dakota for a productive year as NCBE Chair. If in the past anyone ever expressed to her the wish “may you live in interesting times,” this was the year that wish came true! She has handled a myriad of matters ably. Franklin Harrison of Florida will chair NCBE next year, and I look forward to working with him—and perhaps to *less* interesting times!

John McAlary, who has chaired the CBAA this year, has been a wonderful leader of that group—capable, congenial, and well informed. He will yield the gavel to Lee Ann Ward of Ohio in August. I look forward to working with her throughout next year. 