

Asian Attorneys Committee
2010-2011 Year-End Report
Submitted by: Audrey Kwak

As with 2009-2010, our committee focused its efforts on restructuring the Committee into three subcommittees (membership; law & education; programming) but struggled with attendance at meetings. As a result, much of the committee's efforts throughout the year were devoted to determining how best to reinvigorate interest in the Committee and encourage attendance at monthly meetings. These are described below. In addition to this focus on membership, as a byproduct of the faithful attendance of Wes Yang (law and education subcommittee chair), we further strengthened our connection with Pitt Law School's Asian Student Association (a priority of the law and education subcommittee).

A brief overview of the three subcommittees and the developments related to each follows.

■ Law and Education:

- In light of previous success with mentoring program, with the critical help of Wesley Yang, our committee continued with the "speed dating" method of matching mentors with law students. Encouraged law students previously involved to stay connected with 2009-2010 mentors, but matched new students and continuing law students with new mentors. This year we focused only on involvement with Pitt Law School, which has a critical mass of Asian students, as it seems Duquesne's efforts to form an Asian law student association have been unsuccessful given the low numbers of Asian students.
- This year we added an end of the year meeting / happy hour with law students and mentors (in addition to the initial meeting) at Bossa Nova that was well-received and well-attended. That happy hour was augmented by representatives from the annual Silk Screen Festival, who distributed materials relating to the upcoming festival.

■ Membership:

- Co-sponsored and/or participated in happy hours with other bar association committees, including the various diverse / special interest committees in the ACBA (including the Hispanic attorneys committee and Young Lawyers Division), as well as the NAAAP (National Association of Asian American Professionals – Pittsburgh chapter) were attempted.
- In an effort to understand what was precluding members from involvement and/or attending meetings, I wrote a letter to committee members and held a lunch session in lieu of a monthly meeting in March 2011, providing the option of calling in on a conference call line. The agenda of the meeting was to assess priorities and reevaluate what the committee could do to be of use to its members.
- At the meeting, received feedback from, among others, founding members and members who had not attended in some months, including members of judiciary.
- Recommendations included having speakers from the more general local legal community (as opposed to Asian practitioners / businesspeople) who could both provide networking opportunities and speak to issues of current concern, such as the job market, networking, and other means of legal community involvement (such as the ADR program and other programs offered through the federal bar).

■ Programming:

- Held a number of panel discussions on various topics, including a discussion in December 2010 at ReedSmith's offices regarding the use and availability of translation services in the courtrooms, featuring Judge Ida Chen from the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas and various senior administrative personnel with the Allegheny Court of Common Pleas.
- At monthly meetings, featured speakers including Chris Cronin of Special Counsel, who offered his services and/or to co-sponsor future events with our committee. Plans to have Mila Yochum of NAAAP speak to our committee fell through on a number of occasions; it is expected that she will come and speak next year.
- Following the March meeting regarding attendance, began speaker series for months of April – June featuring variety of speakers on various topics of interest, including Mark Tamburri (in house litigation counsel at UPMC), Michael Palus (Chief Deputy Clerk at the U.S. Dist. Ct. for the W. Dist. of Pa.), David Hickton (U.S. Attorney, W. Dist. of PA). Found that the combination of the provision of lunch and featured speakers was a relatively good draw, and attendance increased noticeably.

In sum, while 2010-2011 proved to be a challenging year, it was also a rewarding one for our still relatively young committee. We also have a growing pool of members in the region, as our Bossa Nova happy hour revealed. It is hoped and expected that our incoming Chair, Rich Ting will be able to take advantage of this and reinvigorate this Committee in the year to come.