

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION:

The Kennedy Inn has an elaborate formal and informal New Member Orientation. We begin our indoctrination long before a member is admitted to the Inn. Whenever we solicit an attorney, student or judge, along with our solicitation of that person, we emphasize the expectations and duties of all members of the Inn. We explain our “three strikes and you’re out” rule of attendance and the critical importance of active participation. Many potential applicants are eliminated even before they apply because they are not willing to subject themselves to our rigorous standards of membership.

After our early summer intense selection process (see that section), the president of the Inn calls each prospective member with the news of the selection and offers each a final opportunity to withdraw his or her candidacy. Assuming the candidate says “yes” (as nearly all of them do), the president will give the member another encouragement talk and then invite them to the formal Orientation meeting during the summer.

However, one protocol that makes our orientation so effective is that, before that summer meeting, the full executive committee meets with returning members of the Inn for a “Tell us how it was” session. At that meeting we ask the returnees how they felt about their participation in the prior Inn year. We encourage the attendees to be frank and to emphasize constructive criticism and not simply to give us comments that, while welcome, would not tend to lead to the improvement of the Inn. This group is accustomed to speaking their minds in the session so we get some fabulous feedback.

Again before we meet with the new members, we will have a second summer meeting/catered lunch with all the judicial team leaders. At that time we share with the judges the comments of the returning members, invite the “criticisms” from the judges and discuss improvements we can make for the following year based upon the feedback. The executive committee also takes the time to reemphasize to the judges the core goals of the Inn movement generally and the specific culture of our Inn in particular.

Finally, we have a trove of valuable information to share with the members. So again we invite all new members to a mandatory catered lunch where we combine the great suggestions of the returnees and team leaders with the corporate wisdom of the executive committee to create a rich and informative orientation. At this meeting we will discuss team dynamics, program requirements, meeting requirements (three strikes), time commitments, member relations protocol (first names strongly encouraged especially for judges) and many other items including the dates and times of the year’s meetings.

The orientation continues at the first meeting where teams are requested to sit together at table with their other team members to allow an opportunity for the new members to ask questions and otherwise get comfortable with the culture of our Inn. The early teams, of course, will already have met numerous times before our first program meeting in September. The later teams will meet at least monthly before their program as a form of orientation, covering items not considered in the prior whole Inn meetings and beginning the work on that team’s program. Obviously, the months before the team’s program will include numerous meetings of script writing, “discussion” discussions, last minute choreography, etc.

The informal orientation continues throughout the year. Our masters and returning barristers are encouraged to sit with new members at the dinner hour to solicit their experiences and to offer advice and/or encouragement as appropriate.

By the end of the year, the new members (now experienced) are invited to the summertime returning members luncheon to offer their constructive criticism of their experience over the past year and the cycle begins anew.