

Texas Bar College Celebrates Four Decades of Excellence

Setting the standard of professionalism through education.

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December 14, 2021, marks the 40th anniversary of the date the Texas Supreme Court formally established the State Bar of Texas' first and only professional society of legal scholars—the Texas Bar College. In the four decades since, members of the college have been consistent champions of legal education committed to high ethical standards and improved training for all legal professionals.

During the late 1970s, none other than U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren E. Burger raised concerns regarding attorney competency throughout America. His public admonition led directly to the idea for the college's creation. But the college largely owes its existence to the monumental efforts of two men, both of whom led the State Bar as president. It was Jim Bowmer (1972-1973) who first conceived the college in response to the concerns raised by the chief justice. In turn, Franklin Jones Jr. (1980-1981) appointed Bowmer to chair a committee tasked with exploring whether Bowmer's vision could be brought to life.

Bowmer, who also served as the college's first chair, noted in the March 1982 issue of the *Texas Bar Journal* that although the "... College [is] without a campus, ... it has the finest student body in the world." Evidence of this fact are the stringent requirements to become a member:

- For their initial membership year, applicants must demonstrate that they have either:
- Accumulated at least *80 hours* of accredited CLE within the preceding three calendar-year period; or
- Accumulated at least *45 hours* of accredited CLE in the current calendar year—triple that required by the MCLE rules; and
- For each successive year of membership, members must demonstrate that they have accumulated at least *30 hours* of accredited CLE in the current calendar year—double that required by the MCLE rules.

As part of its educational mission, the college provides scholarships to legal aid program attorneys to attend live CLE

courses so that these attorneys are the first to learn of vital developments and changes in their practice areas.

To this end, the college established the Endowment Fund in 2005 to support educational projects that help improve the lives and practices of all Texas attorneys so that they may better serve their clients, including:

- Operating a CLE subsidy grant program to assist local and minority bar associations and pro bono organizations that have limited resources in bringing quality CLE activities to their area;
- Providing funding for the *Oyez, Oyez, Oh Yay!* education project maintained by the State Bar Law-Related Education Department to ensure Texas students and teachers have the resources they need to fully explore the important role of the judicial system in our country and state;
- Funding projects that provide direct support for substance use and mental health recovery needs of Texas lawyers through the Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program; and
- Donating to the Houston Volunteer Lawyers program and Lone Star Legal Aid in the literal wake of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey in 2017 to fund projects that provided direct legal services for low-income Texans coping with storm-related legal issues.

Since its founding, the college has set the standard of professionalism through education. Now more than 4,800 members strong, the college has established a proven track record as well as a solid foundation upon which to build its next four decades of excellence. Come celebrate our anniversary with us at texasbarcollege.com/40th/ **TBJ**



Texas Bar College
A Professional Society of Legal Scholars



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