

Mid-Year Meeting of the American Bar Association, Seattle, Washington, February 2003

By Peter MacFarlane^[*]

Brief description of the conference attended

This conference was the Mid-Year Meeting of the American Bar Association. It was held in Seattle, Washington State. This meeting brings together over 4000 lawyers, judges and academics in the area of law and legal practice. Apart from the annual meeting of the ABA the Mid-Year Meeting is one of the largest legal conferences. The conference also brings together all the organizational arms of the ABA such as their Continuing Legal Education, Professional Responsibility, and Law and Technology sections.

I also took the time to visit the Law School, University of Washington where staff/student exchange programmes and the development of ties between the USP Law School and the University of Washington Asian Law Centre were discussed.

A report on the main themes of the conference and my visit to Washington University

One of the reasons I was anxious to attend this conference was because of the strong history and tradition that the American Bar Association has with legal ethics and professional responsibility. This is one of my special areas of interest. A copy of my paper in relation to this matter is attached. Apart from this theme I was also interested in developments concerning technology and the law.

In relation to my visit to the University of Washington, I was interested in promoting the USP Master of Laws course, discussing the establishment of a closer relationship between the two law schools and meeting with colleagues who teach and research in my own areas of interest.

A report of my participation in the conference and at the University of Washington

I attended sessions in the areas of Professional Responsibility and Legal Ethics and Technology and Law. I addressed the opening meeting of the American Bar Counsel (about 400 members) and submitted a paper (attached) to the Council on Professional Responsibility. These two presentations led to the following positive outcomes:

In relation to my attendance at the American Bar Association Conference

- (i) An introduction to colleagues and the exchange of ideas
- (ii) A commitment by the American Bar Association to provide the University with resources and materials in the area of legal ethics so as to assist in the offering of a course in this area. I propose to make a submission to the Law School about this matter later in the semester.
- (iii) A commitment by the ABA to assist me in my work as a member of the Attorney-General's

committee in the re-drafting of the Legal Practitioner's Act (Vanuatu) by providing copies of the United States Model Rules of Conduct and a commitment to provide expertise in matters concerning the disciplining of lawyers.

- (iv) An opportunity to learn about some of the developments in the area of law and technology.
- (v) An opportunity to share my own research in the area of Professional Conduct.

In relation to my visit to the University of Washington

- (i) Meeting colleagues at the University of Washington who teach and research in my own area of expertise, namely Medical Law.
- (ii) Meeting with the Dean, Professor Jo Knight and a tour of the new Law School Building.
- (iii) An opportunity to discuss the USP Law School post-graduate program and to distribute posters about the course.
- (iv) Extensive discussions with the Director, Asian Law Centre to promote a closer relationship between that Centre and the Law School. In particular, an agreement to exchange Journals and to encourage contributions to each other's publications.
- (v) Discussions concerning the possibility of staff/student exchanges. These matters will be further pursued with Student Services and the Head of School.

Dissemination of information

I intend to advise colleagues of the materials that were distributed at the ABA conference. I also intend to liaise with Student Administration regarding possible student exchanges with the University of Washington and with the Head of School concerning possible staff exchanges. Other information will be distributed and disseminated to the Committee concerning the re-drafting of the Legal Practitioner's Act. I will liaise with the Law Librarian concerning the books and materials that would be useful in supporting a course on legal ethics. Some of these resource materials may be located at the USP Community Legal Centre.

I thank the Law School and the University for their support in allowing me to attend these meetings.

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