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MCLE Board looks ahead after 15 years

Program now serves more than 97,000 licensed attorneys and 1,800 providers

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When the Illinois Supreme Court created the Minimum Continuing Legal Education Board in 2005, the state was one of the last in the nation to implement such a program. As the organization commemorated its 15-year anniversary, it's on the forefront of technology in the field, with no plans to stop pushing forward.

"We haven't been able to do much to celebrate during the pandemic, but all of us at the board are very excited about marking our anniversary," said Board Chair Michele Jochner, a partner at Schiller DuCanto & Fleck LLP. "It's a great opportunity to reflect on the past, assess the present, and look forward to the future."

The MCLE Board has marked a year of anniversaries since late 2020.

"The Supreme Court first announced the creation of the program in September 2005," said MCLE Board Director Karen Litscher Johnson. "The board met for the first time that December and then in April 2006 they hired their first staff member, which was me. We officially moved into our office in June, so that's the

anniversary we're closest to now."

Jack L. Brooks, a retired Rock Island attorney who was appointed the board's first chair in 2005, said when the program was first created it was challenging given there was not much guidance other than the court's direction on what it should be.

"We didn't even have an office until June, and we were fully functional by that fall. It was quite a challenge," he said.

Brooks attributes much of the program's early success both to the "fantastic" staff and board, and their early commitment to technology.

"We understood right away that we could not do everything manually," Brooks said. "Almost every other state in the union had some sort of MCLE program in place before we did, but only two or three had their systems online, and they were a great help. We looked at what they were doing, especially in Tennessee, and we were lucky enough to develop software that could accommodate our Supreme Court's rules and get everything up and running on a limited budget."

When it initially launched, Brooks said the board provided service to about 80,000 licensed attorneys and 1,000 course providers throughout the state. Today it serves more than 97,000 attorneys and 1,800 providers.



Michele M. Jochner



Jack L. Brooks

"In a lot of ways, it feels like those years have gone by very quickly," Johnson said. "We've always been looking to the future to see how we can better serve attorneys and providers while staying true to those rules."

In that spirit, Johnson was excited for the rollout of the MCLE's latest technological advancement, individualized course lists for attorneys to track their CLE credits.

"Up to now we've been operating under a system where everyone would have to self-report and keep track of the courses they've taken," Johnson said. "With this new system, lawyers can now look at their course list online, so they have a complete record of their credits."

The new system has been in development with providers since 2019 and became available on April 30 for use by attorneys in the upcoming reporting period.

Johnson said the new system has received "a lot of

positive feedback from providers" and, so far, has been met with enthusiasm from attorneys.

"I'm totally impressed with what subsequent boards have done with the program," said Brooks, who served as board chair until 2013 and left the board the following year. "Illinois is basically leading the nation on what MCLE can do with technology. It's mind boggling."

As the course list program completes its rollout, Jochner says the board is already looking forward to its next technological advancement, the development of a mobile app.

"We are very proud of the system we have put in place," Jochner said. "Illinois is a leader in the nation for MCLE and we aspire to keep that position. We are always looking forward to what's yet to come and we believe that, for the MCLE Board, the past, present, and future are very bright."