

2009 Annual Report

THE COMMITTEE OF BAR EXAMINERS OF THE STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA

■ The names of 6,766 applicants were placed on motions to the Supreme Court of California certifying their eligibility for admission to practice law in California. In 2008, 7,216 applicants were certified.

■ The California Bar Examination was administered to 13,441 law students and out-of-state attorneys (4,445 in February and 8,996 in July), which were fewer than the 13,901 that were tested in 2008. The total number of applications filed in 2009 for the examination, however, was greater as 15,184 law school graduates and attorneys filed applications in 2009 compared to 14,859 in 2008. Over 70 percent of the applicants, 9,872, took the examination on their laptop computers, which had special security software installed prior to administration of the examination. Seven hundred and twenty-six (726) petitions for testing accommodations submitted by applicants with disabilities were granted; 621 applicants with disabilities actually took the examinations at testing accommodations test centers. In February, 34.5 percent of the applicants passed the examination, a slightly lower pass rate than in February 2008 when 39.6 percent passed. In July, the pass rate was 55.5 percent, a lower pass rate than in July 2008 when 61.0 percent passed.

■ The First-Year Law Students' Examination was administered to 1,400 law students (729 in June, 671 in October). Thirty-eight fewer law students took the examination in 2009 compared to 2008. One thousand, six hundred and sixty-two (1,662) law students filed applications in 2009, compared to 1,693 who filed in 2008. Out of the total number of law students taking the examination, 19 law students with disabilities took the examination in June 2009 and 29 took the examination in October 2009 at testing accommodations test centers. In June 2009, 21.5 percent of the law students passed, compared to 25.9 percent who passed in 2008. In October 2009, 19.1 percent passed, compared to 14.7 percent who passed in 2008.

■ Eight thousand, eight hundred and ninety-eight (8,898) moral character determination and extension applications were received from applicants seeking admission to practice law in California in 2009. This number is less than the number received in 2008, which was 9,222. One hundred and twenty-eight (128) moral character determination applications were submitted by attorneys seeking to register under the Multi-Jurisdictional Practice rules, which is fewer than the 180 applications received in 2008. The number of investigation reports reviewed by the Committee of Bar Examiners increased in 2009, growing to 302 from the 243 reviewed in 2008. During 2009, 119 informal conferences were held with moral character determination applicants, compared to 97 that were held in 2008. The number of applicants receiving adverse moral character determinations also increased, from 38 in 2008 to 48 in 2009.

- Revised bulletins titled: *Statement on Moral Character Requirement for Admission to Practice Law in California* and *Factors that May Be Taken into Consideration When Evaluating the Rehabilitation of an Applicant Seeking a Moral Character Determination* were approved.
- Adjustments to the admissions fees were adopted by the Committee and approved by the Board of Governors, effective January 1, 2010, January 1, 2011 and January 1, 2012. In addition, a new Administrative Fee schedule was approved, which specify certain fees for copies of documents and services provided by the State Bar's Office of Admissions.
- Administrative changes to the *Admissions* Rules were drafted, circulated for public comment, adopted by the Committee and approved by the Board of Governors in 2009.
- Revised rules for accredited law schools, which converted the old law school accreditation rules to the State Bar's plain English standards, that were adopted by the Committee and approved by the Board of Governors during 2008, were implemented January 1, 2009. After two years of consideration and multiple meetings with those impacted by the new guidelines, new guidelines for the interpretation of the *Accredited Law School Rules* were adopted, with an effective date of January 1, 2010 and the entering classes of 2010.
- Visitations to 8 unaccredited law schools (6 fixed-facility, 1 distance learning and 1 correspondence), and 1 accredited law school were conducted.
- Forty-four (44) law school reports were considered by the Committee. These included reports on visitations to the law schools in connection with their continued registration or accreditation by the Committee of Bar Examiners, major change requests submitted by the law schools and proposed notices of noncompliance.
- Fourteen (14) visits were made by Office of Admissions staff to California Law Schools to discuss admission requirements.