

Twenty-five participants and fourteen faculty members gathered in Tampa for the Florida Bar ADR Section's inaugural Mentoring Academy which was a resounding success! The Academy is the brainchild of Christina Magee, immediate past Chair of the ADR Section for the 2018-19 year, and John W. Salmon, Esq., of Salmon & Dulberg, a recognized expert in dispute resolution. Chris envisioned a program where certified mediators with less experience would have an opportunity to mediate with, and receive immediate feedback from, recognized experts from Florida's mediation ranks. Because mediators work alone typically, she also wanted to lay a foundation for mediators to create a network for sharing information and support as they tackle the ethical and substantive challenges that mediators face. Last but far from least, she wants mediators to have a place to get information on business and marketing practices that are unique to mediators, especially attorney-mediators who may be transitioning their practices from client representation to a fully neutral practice. John was also thinking about how to convey knowledge and build expertise in the generation of upcoming mediators. A brainstorming discussion took place, and voila! The Mentoring Academy was born. With the help of the many contributions from the Mentoring Committee of the ADR Section, the Academy began to take shape and become a reality.

Unique to the Mentoring Academy's program is its highly interactive approach. All participants are expected to mediate and caucus, while receiving feedback on techniques and approaches from the faculty. The faculty and participants take turns mediating a live "hypothetical" case, using role players and addressing hidden twists and turns that typically arise in certain types of cases. Participants were also treated to top-tier panels addressing opening statements and impasse-breaking techniques and practical and ethical issues associated with transitioning from a direct representation practice to a neutral practice.

The reaction of participants has been overwhelmingly positive. Faculty also reported that they picked up insights and approaches from fellow faculty and participants to add to their repertoire. Networking opportunities to allow the participants and faculty members to share experiences and get to know each other more informally were also a part of the two-day workshop and were also well-received.

Chris says "On to the next decade – we can only get better!" Stay tuned for the Second Annual Mentoring Academy.