

Bloemfontein School for Legal Practice celebratory breakfast

The School for Legal Practice: Free State marked the year end with a celebratory breakfast at the end of 2015. In addition to the school's instructors, the function was attended by members of the Board of Control, as well as the Chief Executive Officer of the Free State Law Society.

In past years the director, Willem Spangenberg, used the year-end function to reflect over the achievements of the year; express his appreciation of the work done by the staff; and invite suggestions about how the service of the law school could be improved.

2015 being the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the School for Legal Practice, the director used the opportunity to reflect over the institution and growth of the School for Legal Practice. An informative video mentioned that the first School for Legal Practice was established in Pretoria in 1990 with 51 candidate attorneys in response to two closely related needs –

- law graduates from universities were found generally to be inadequately prepared for the practical requirements of law firms; and
- more specifically this deficiency was still greater and more encumbering for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

To accommodate candidates who were working during the day, night courses started after hours. The video further detailed its beginnings, the growth of the School for Legal Practice – the number of schools, number of courses offered and the number of students enrolled. Schools now exist in ten locations around South Africa and 25 different courses are offered with more to be introduced soon; and 1 400 students are presently enrolled. Since 1990, 23 000 students have graduated. The intention that the schools serve a practical and social need was emphasised; and several past students commented appreciatively on the benefit they had gained.

Key figures received particular attention. Mr Spangenberg was warmly congratulated by Jan Maree, a founder of the Bloemfontein School for Legal Practice, for having initiated and headed the Bloemfontein branch for the full duration of its existence, a task requiring considerable organising skill, a strong idealism, and the ability to motivate and enthuse others. In turn, Mr Spangenberg thanked the instructors and members of the Board of Control for their work and awarded six members for long and exceptional service (as attested to also by students' assessments) to the Free State School.

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