

Spring Student Chapter 2019 Program Guide Call

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

3:00 pm ET/2:00 pm CT

The Spring 2019 Program Guide Call discusses ACS's [2019 Program Guide](#) on Progressive Federalism and how redefining federalism can help build a better democracy especially in the areas of voting rights, immigration and police accountability. We also discuss how student chapters can use the guide to plan powerful ACS events and structure their boards to strengthen the chapter.

Featuring:

[Christopher Wright Durocher](#), ACS Senior Director of Policy and Program

[Tom Wright](#), ACS Department of Policy and Program Law Fellow

[Gabriel Ferrante](#), ACS NYU Co-President and Lawyer Chapter Liaison

[Brianna Seid](#), ACS NYU Co-President and Lawyer Chapter Liaison

Moderated by:

[Michelle Herd](#), ACS Assistant Director of Chapters

Agenda

Michelle Herd: Introduction and welcome

- We will hear from the ACS national office in Washington, DC. The Policy and Program team has developed one of the best program guides we have seen, and they will discuss the issues within the guide and why progressives should be discussing federalism. This year's theme offers tremendous opportunity at the state and local level. We will also hear from our leaders at the New York University School of Law chapter of ACS who will share their perspectives on how student chapters can set themselves up for longevity and how to create quality programming based on theme of this year's program guide.
- We acknowledge the dedication and effort we see from all of the student leaders. We are so appreciative for the work you do on behalf of ACS, and we are here to support you and your chapters as you build a strong progressive presence in your community.
- Spring is a busy season for student leaders, yet a crucial period as you are coordinating elections and board transitions. Send your board updates (be sure to include the grad years and email addresses of all board members) and your completed historian documents to campus@acslaw.org. As you are applying for and accepting summer positions, please let us know so that we can stay connected with you over the summer.
- We hope to see you at the [2019 ACS National Convention](#) this June 6-8 in DC. Scholarships are now open. Make sure to apply soon!

Christopher Wright Durocher: Introduction to Progressive Federalism and the Program Guide

- “Progressive federalism” is useful shorthand to differentiate between what we’re talking about and the way that federalism has been used to restrict rights and cause harm in the past; however, the term seems to concede that Federalism is at its core conservative. This isn’t true, as the Program Guide points out. Federalism is more utilitarian than anything else, and it’s how you use it that determines its impact.
- Conservatives have been more effective at shaping and using federalism for their own purposes, (for example, through ALEC), which is why we make the association between conservatism & federalism so quickly.
- At the time the Programs Team was creating the program guide, the federal government was under complete conservative control, and there was a major progressive influx at the state level (flipping AGs, governors, etc) – at this point, we have more opportunities in states, the “laboratories of democracy,” to make progressive change than there are on the federal level.
- The Program Guide explores the application of progressive federalism to the local and state level in a way that can trickle up to the national – actions at the local and state level can eventually have a federal impact.
- The Guide highlights four areas in which states may resist the conservative destruction of norms and protections coming from the federal government:
 - Immigration
 - Voting Rights
 - Environmental Policy
 - Police Accountability
- The program guide is more than a manual for putting on events. Students should use the program guide as a jumping off point to engage with broader progressive possibilities for their own states and as a reminder to tune into what is going on at the local and state level.

Tom Wright: Digging deeper into the four issue areas

- One introductory theme of the guide is reclaiming federalism as a politically neutral term that can be used for progressive purposes.
- The guide provides a history of federalism and rundown of preemption before getting into the four topics noted above.
 - These topics are not exhaustive and are based on the expertise area of each of the four permanent programs staff at ACS national– do not feel constrained to programming/discussion on only these topics, as federalism can apply to many others. The guide offers the ability to be more broad.
- The guide also provides discussion questions that can prompt ideas for events along with a diverse list of experts throughout the country. The speakers list offers good contacts for students to bring in and spur more in depth conversation about progressive federalism. Students can contact the speakers directly or ask the ACS national office for support.
- Immigration

- Has been a large public topic recently– child separation, DACA, citizenship, draconian immigration enforcement in the Trump admin, etc. The program guide provides several policy case studies.
- Voting
 - Two aspects of voting rights are highlighted: 1) expanding and 2) protecting the right to vote.
 - Ex. lowering voting age, making it easier to vote (automatic/same day voter registration).
- Environment
 - Focuses on a case study: the Clean Air Act in CA and subsequent lawsuits as an example of a progressive state taking on climate change.
- Criminal Justice
 - Consent decrees, police reform – trying to work with cities to make police better, while popular during the Obama administration, have also been rolled back by the Trump administration.
- Speakers list: it can be hard to get speakers to talk about these things, so these are suggestions - find your geographic location and then go by speciality to find a speaker
 - Again, not an exhaustive list
 - Reach out to ACS national for help
- The program guide is a departure point to host events on one of the four above topics, the concept of progressive federalism in general, or any issue area you think is especially relevant or important in your state, city, county, etc.

Gabriel Ferrante: How to use ACS national contacts and the Program Guide

- NYU law has been really excited about progressive federalism because Adam Cox is the Faculty Advisor and focuses on it in his work, esp. with regards to immigration law
- The chapter approached the program guide looking for issue areas that they hadn't been considered from a progressive federalism angle – for example, progressive federalism as an umbrella as opposed to specific issues. NYU hosted conversations about how states handle legislation on certain topics, but the program guide inspired them to host a conversation about whether progressive federalism is useful at all.
 - One (sort of) counterargument: The progressive community doesn't work in quite the same way as the conservative community does, and relies more on the public paying attention, which can be harder to encourage when your focus is on day-to-day legislative events in states instead of in the federal govt – a question that arises from this is whether we should only focus on areas where progressive federalism can lead to see change at the national level.
- Use ACS contacts as a nucleus to bring your law school's unique perspective to an event. Invite speakers who can speak to or build off of subject matter experience more generally AND how it translates into action at the law school level (ex. an affirmative action event that provides broader context on events and also leads to a conversation about diversity and inclusion at NYU). Combining national resources with what you already have available can make an event even more powerful. Seeing a familiar name can also draw better crowds.

Brianna Seid: The NYU board and how it's structured, making sure you have a cohesive board that allows for creating events

- Board structure is very large and consists of: co-presidents, events chair (handles payment, catering, etc.), membership & media chair (social media, advertising, etc.), litigation advocacy and policy & elections chair (handle more action based items like election involvement, etc.), advisors (3Ls who have previously served on the board and can oversee cohesion).
 - 2Ls are the main leadership, 3Ls oversee as mentors, and 1L reps who come on to learn the ropes before they take over as 2Ls – this is a good strategy in terms of preparing people for transition, as well as getting people involved in ACS during all three years of law school.
- Annual events that add to programming at the law school: a couple of dinner events every year focused on issues in the progressive movement that are contentious among progressives (ex. the Adam Cox event on prog. Federalism, criminal justice reform & sexual assault reform reconciliation, private education). Students enjoy the smaller events that allow for more engagement and discussion.
- Look for diversity in terms of identity and also interests (issue areas, career path) to make sure that there's programming available for everyone in the progressive community.

Questions:

- Michelle: Do you start with a theme and build out from there or do you start with a speaker first?
 - Brianna: it depends – sometimes someone will identify a topic that they care about and then are asked to find a speaker, sometimes a speaker will sign on and they work with them – be open to both.
 - If you're not reaching a speaker through a connection, it might be better to approach them having already thought through it a bit, have a rough outline.
 - Gabriel: use the program guide it to help draw connection/create nuance between topics to allow for approaching it from various angles. For example, immigration law is generally discussed with regards to the federal level, but that doesn't mean we should leave out the state perspective.
- Molly: Many of our students are interested in pursuing careers outside of the courtroom: what are some careers beyond litigation that are important in the context of progressive federalism?
 - Christopher: public policy makers, academics, nonprofit advocates – all careers that some speakers in the guide have. Hosting them at events can be doubly effective because you get the expertise and also a view of what a non-litigatory law path may look like.
 - Bring in people who aren't as high profile but can speak to the specifics of getting involved in public policy at the state and local level.

Thank you for participating in the call!