



Administrative Office of the Courts

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New Mexico Judiciary develops interdisciplinary educational program for judges

SANTA FE – Judges can explore the law and its origins in more depth through a new judicial educational program that brings together three leading research and academic institutions.

The program, called “To the Roots,” was developed by New Mexico’s Court Education Institute and Chief Justice David K. Thomson.

“This is an advanced program for judges that blends scientific methods from Los Alamos National Laboratory, seminar-based studies at St. John’s College, and cross-disciplinary research at the Santa Fe Institute,” said Chief Justice Thomson. “We want judges to think more deeply about the law and its intersection with technological, societal and scientific changes occurring today.”

The Santa Fe Institute will conduct sessions for judges on legal issues involving artificial intelligence and fairness and transparency in algorithms in the justice system, such as risk assessment tools. St. John’s College will lead seminar-based studies of precedent-setting legal decisions and foundational documents of American government, such as the Federalist Papers.

The national lab will help prepare judges to evaluate scientific evidence they may encounter in courtrooms and understand methodologies of scientific research. The lab’s involvement builds on a separate week-long program it and the Judiciary launched more than a decade ago called the Judicial Science School.

The “To the Roots” program will debut during a training for judges later this year. Chief Justice Thomson hopes the program will expand in the future to longer seminars and workshops with St. John’s College and the Santa Fe Institute and possible mentorships or hands-on experiences at the national lab.

Chief Justice Thomson said the program was inspired by his experiences growing up in Santa Fe with the state’s rich cultural history, educational resources such as St. John’s College and the lab at Los Alamos, and his exposure to historical documents such as Federalist No. 78. In that essay, Alexander Hamilton explained the importance of having an independent judiciary. The Federalist Papers presented arguments in favor of ratification of the U.S. Constitution.

“We want our judges to step back and reflect on foundational principles in the law so they can emerge with sharper analytical skills and a greater understanding of our legal framework for resolving disputes,” said Chief Justice Thomson. “In exploring how the law, humanities and science intersect in New Mexico, the program also celebrates our state’s unique and diverse culture.”

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Chief Justice David K. Thomson speaking to employees of the Administrative Office of the Courts in 2025

(Photo courtesy of the AOC)