

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ADVANCED JUDICIAL ACADEMY UNDERWAY FOR ILLINOIS JUDGES

The inaugural session of an advanced academy for Illinois judges unfolds this week with an intensive five-day conference on breakthrough developments in science and how they intersect with law.

About 70 Illinois judges will gather in Champaign at the University of Illinois College of Law for classes taught by a noted faculty in multidisciplines from around the nation. The classes include subjects on DNA, the Human Genome Project, cloning and the challenges these emerging sciences pose for social, legal and public policymakers.

“This makes *real* a vision born more than three years ago,” said Chief Justice Moses W. Harrison II of the Illinois Supreme Court, which approved establishment of the Illinois Advanced Judicial Academy in adopting a Comprehensive Judicial Education Plan for Illinois judges in 1998.

“If the judiciary fails to keep up with the changing demands of our society and economy, we will become an impediment to justice rather than its protector,” Chief Justice Harrison said.

“Continuing education is critical to ensuring that we have the best trained and the most informed jurists, and the founding sessions of this new Academy takes our judicial education efforts in Illinois to a new and another laudatory level.”

The conference gets underway Monday afternoon, June 4, with welcoming remarks from Thomas M. Mengler, dean of the University of Illinois College of Law, and Appeals Court Judge Susan F. Hutchinson, who is chair of the Illinois Judicial Conference Committee on Education.

The conference is co-sponsored by the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts and the University of Illinois College of Law. The Comprehensive Judicial Education Plan and the concept of the Illinois Advanced Judicial Academy were developed by the Committee on Education.

“Back in 1998, we began to think about the concept of a summer program for more experienced judges to energize them and impart new information in a retreat type of setting,” said Justice Rita B. Garman, who had been a member of the Education Committee since 1990 and committee chairperson until she was appointed to the Supreme Court in February. “We wanted a program where judges would be away from the daily demands of the courtroom and give them a chance to be in a learning and educational environment where they could study an emerging field in depth,”

The title of the week-long conference is “Law and Science and the Highly Effective Judge.”

“The concept is that judges will be exposed to the cutting edge of scientific issues that are being developed now and are on the horizon. We brought together a group of experts who are renowned in their fields in science and in law to present these topics to Illinois judges,” said Justice Garman who will present the keynote address at a reception and dinner Monday evening

The newly formed Academy is one prong of an ambitious judicial education program in Illinois. The program includes an Education Conference held over two, 2 ½-day sessions every two years for every judge in the state; an orientation program for new judges; a mentoring program for new judges; regional, two-and-three day seminars; and mini-seminars.

These programs are operated under the auspices of the constitutionally mandated Illinois Judicial Conference and are approved by the Illinois Supreme Court. In addition, judges may attend non-Judicial Conference, out-of-state programs that are approved by the Supreme Court.

“When we attend other, in-depth programs—which are all very valuable to us—we are often learning the federal system of laws or the law of other states,” said Judge Hutchinson. “The Academy is an opportunity to get speakers here in Illinois comparable to the speakers you would find at other national programs and apply the law to the law we have to work with on a day-to-day basis.”

Chief Justice Harrison anticipates that the Illinois Advanced Judicial Academy will grow into a judicial college in Illinois that will rival the National Judicial College in Reno, Nev.