

The Supreme Court of Ohio

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy, Justices, and Administrative Director
Robert W. Horner, III

CC: Gina White Palmer, Deputy Administrative Director-Legal Services

FROM: Hon. Stephen L. McIntosh, Franklin County Common Pleas Court and
Chair, Judicial College Board of Trustees
M. Christy Tull, Director, Judicial College

DATE: January 31, 2025

SUBJECT: 2024 Annual Report on the Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College

In compliance with Rule V, Section 10 of the Supreme Court Rules for the Government of the Judiciary of Ohio (Gov.Jud.R. V), we are pleased to present our annual summary detailing the Judicial College and its Board of Trustees' 2024 activities and accomplishments.

Mission of Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial College

Created nearly 50 years ago, the Judicial College serves the public interest by providing education to help ensure the competent performance of the courts. The College provides education for Ohio judges, magistrates, court staff, guardians, and other court-related professionals, supporting the effective and efficient administration of justice for all Ohioans.

Role of the Judicial College Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees, consisting of judicial officers, advises the College on its activities and operations pursuant to Gov.Jud.R. V(2)(B). In 2024, the Board met on March 1st, May 30th, August 6th and 7th, and October 11th. The Executive Committee met as needed to review and make recommendations regarding judicial officers' requests for waivers or extensions for mandatory orientation requirements under Gov.Jud.R. IV, §3 & §4.

2024 Activities and Accomplishments

The Board's main priority in 2024 was the continued enhancement of the **New Judges Orientation (NJO)** and **New Magistrates Orientation (NMO)**. Judge Matthew Reger led a Curriculum Committee comprehensive revision process to improve these programs. Two primary focuses included (1) piloting changes to the plenary sessions to ensure that all new judicial officers receive the most relevant and practical education to foster excellence in the judiciary; and (2) recommending the best timing of the NJO to the Court, in part based on survey replies from new judges as well as faculty. Next year, continued and expanded analysis towards a redesign of the entire program will be launched to ensure the most relevant education is delivered to judges at the optimal time through flexible and convenient methods that support judges' individual needs.

Among the many activities of the Board of Trustees and Judicial College staff in 2024, some highlights include:

- **Expanded Course Offerings and Participation:** A record **374 courses** were delivered, a **61% increase since 2020**. These courses served **22,190 unique participants**, with a total of **51,556 course completions**—an increase of 12% from 2023.
- **Course Offerings Highlights:** Several new courses addressed pressing issues, including **BCI Reporting and Public Safety**, education on docket management and **reducing and preventing overage cases/backlog**, **Ohio's new cannabis laws**, and **Marsy's Law**. The **Crime and Punishment** seminar held at the Mansfield Correctional Institute was widely praised, with participants calling it one of the best educational experiences of their careers. The Board of Trustees recommended that the expansion of this kind of experiential or out-of-classroom learning opportunities be a priority for the Judicial College.
- **Enhancements to Online Learning:** Online self-study courses accounted for **45% of total courses**, increasing accessibility and flexibility for judicial officers and court staff.
- **Faculty Development:** Over **525 faculty members** contributed to the College's educational offerings. A **faculty development program** was relaunched, including a return to the comprehensive **two-day seminar** on instructional skills and presentation techniques. The Board recommended an expansion in faculty development offerings and more individualized coaching and feedback from program staff.
- **Improvements to Standard Operating Procedures and Policies:** The Board recommended modifications to the criteria and process by which the Judicial College decides on content and frequency of education. In addition, they provided input regarding a standard operating procedure used by staff to achieve education that is balanced and unbiased. The Board also provided input to memorialize the processes and procedures used when the Judicial College partners with judicial associations to deliver education, pursuant to Gov.Jud.R. V(B).
- **Strategic Priorities:** The Board engaged in a long-term planning process with the Judicial College staff to define strategic priorities through 2029, ensuring the College continues to innovate and respond to emerging judicial branch education needs.

- **Expanding the Pool of Faculty, Mentors, and Planners:** In the Fall of 2024, the Board of Trustees and staff drafted and sent a survey to all judges and magistrates to identify needed education and new faculty, mentors, and online course planners, pursuant to Gov.Jud.R. V(B)(2). In consultation with Chief Justice Kennedy, additional questions were also added to help understand the challenges and education needs specific to cases being appealed and implications for needed education.
- **Adult Guardianship Enhancements:** Multiple courses were updated to incorporate changes in government benefits and fundamental guardianship principles ensuring the highest quality education for those serving vulnerable populations.
- **National Leadership:** The College staff continued to serve as a national leader in judicial education maintaining a leadership role in the National Association of State Judicial Educators. Two Board members serving on national judicial education committees introduced resources to Ohio in the area of cannabis law and impaired driving.

Quality of Education. Participant feedback underscores the impact of the Judicial College’s programs. Judges gave Judicial College’s live 2024 courses an overall rating score of 4.63 out of 5.00 (excellent). One **judge** echoed others saying “exceptional” and “this information has allowed me to streamline my entries to be concise and accurate.” Another remarked, “with the exception of New Judges Orientation, this seminar was the best CLE I’ve ever attended.” At an association program, a **magistrate** commented “very impactful” citing the practical exercises that “left a lasting impression on me to consider in the future.” A **probation officer** stated, “I will likely use this almost every day when meeting with clients.” A **guardian ad litem** made an impactful statement of “I wasn’t sure that I wanted to be a GAL... After the course, I not only am convinced I want to do it, I feel like I am well equipped.” After taking several online courses, a participant stated, “the quality has been excellent for every **adult guardianship** course I have taken through the Judicial College.”

The Judicial College and its Board of Trustees remains committed to providing high-quality, relevant, and innovative judicial education. We are always evaluating the education we provide to quickly adjust to deliver timely, relevant education. We appreciate your continued support and welcome any feedback or suggestions as we strive to enhance the delivery of judicial branch education in Ohio.