

Graduate Program Committee Judicial Conference of Indiana

Committee Meeting Minutes

March 6, 2025

Zoom Meeting, noon to 1:00 p.m.

The Graduate Program Committee met on March 6, 2025, from noon to 1:00 p.m. via Zoom. Senior Judge Margret Robb chaired the meeting.

Members Present/Not Present

The following members of the committee were present at the virtual meeting: Senior Judge Margret Robb; Judge Heather Barajas; Senior Judge Darrin Dolehanty; and Judge AmyMarie Travis.

Judge Marc Rothenberg could not attend.

Staff/Guests Present

Vicki Davis, IOCS, attended the meeting.

Welcome & Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m. Judge Robb welcomed new committee members, Judge Heather Barajas and Judge AmyMarie Travis. The Committee proceeded to discuss agenda items.

Meeting Agenda Items

Agenda Item One: Welcome & Review of Graduate Program Changes

Judge Robb reviewed structural programmatic changes post-COVID for the new members.

1. Students must commit to un-plugging from court obligations and queues and obtain senior judge coverage.

2. The three primary classes Monday through Thursday are 90-minutes instead of 75-minutes to accommodate removing the one-hour classes on Friday morning.
3. The Friday exams were moved from the afternoon to morning time slot allowing the program to adjourn at noon with traveler grab-and-go box lunches.
4. The Friday evening dinner and class skit were eliminated.
5. Dinner events are held on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday.
6. The Thursday evening event in year 1 includes a class engagement activity. The year one engagement activity involved students sending in a childhood photo of themselves along with a story. Students were asked to guess who the photo portrayed or whose story it was. Low dollar prizes (candy or gift cards) were awarded for correct guesses.
7. Year Two dinner events.
 - a. The Thursday evening event in year 2 includes a guest speaker.
 - b. The committee discussed adding an engagement activity one of the year 2 dinner events.
 - i. Action Item: The Committee added a low dollar “white elephant” gift exchange as an engagement activity in year two.

Agenda Item Two: Role of Trial Judge Committee Members

Judge Robb and Judge Dolehanty discussed committee member roles and responsibilities with the new members.

1. Committee member terms are in a state of flux. Chief Justice Rush will advise in June.
2. Committee members are encouraged to participate in the dinner engagement activities and other after hour activities with the class members as much as they are comfortable doing, because committee members should also have fun during the program.
3. Ensure people observe program expectations like not working on court business during the education program, cellphones off and in student’s pocket, discourage spouse/significant others from attending, and ensure students get the most from graduate experience, are networking with one another rather than with other lawyers who might be onsite attending another sponsor event.
4. Facilitate engagement activities at dinner events on Tuesday or Thursday
5. Facilitate group dinners on free evenings.

6. Provide lunch speaker recommendations for consideration to Judge Robb and Judge Dolehanty for review and approval. Once the speaker has been approved, the committee member is to reach out and confirm interest and availability and report back with contact information for final arrangements/communication by Vicki Davis/Jenny Kidwell.
7. Organize well-being activities-run/walks in the morning.
8. Determine applicants selected for the 2-year class based on applications submitted.

Agenda Item Three: Discussion and Review of the June 8-13, 2025, program

1. Vicki Davis reported that the Networking Connection Suite, Terrace Suite is not available. Arrangements have been made to use one of the larger suites, Room 1424, as the networking connection suite.
2. The Committee discussed the mechanics of the new White-elephant Activity.
 - a. Action Items:
 - i. Schedule the activity during the Tuesday dinner to lighten up after the Genocide experiential activity.
 - ii. Students will be asked to bring a gift that represents their city or county.
 - iii. Students will be given numbers for the order of gift selection.
 - iv. The next person can either steal the previous gift or select a new gift.
 - v. Once a gift has been selected, it can be stolen twice.
 - vi. Committee members are encouraged to participate in the engagement activities and student activities.
3. Discussion of lunch speaker recommendations.
 - a. Chief Justice Thomson, New Mexico, has been invited to attend since he is interested in replicating the program in his state; ultimately, he hasn't let us know.
 - b. Judge Robb asked the committee to email speaker recommendations within the next week.
 - c. Judge Barajas recommended Mike McCarty from Crawfordsville who is a former police officer who wrote a book about the Hollandsburg Murders, and is involved in security, particularly building security. McCarty is interested if the committee ultimately agrees.
 - d. Judge Travis noted she sent recommendations to Judge Dolehanty.

- e. The committee members will trade emails to resolve the lunch speaker recommendations.
4. Registration and Other Logistical Items. Registration for the June program will be sent out March 6 or 7. Jenny Kidwell has made committee member reservations. Jenny will provide confirmation numbers and confirm reservations dates closer to the event. Sunday dinner will take place in the lower garden patio level with hot/bad weather alternative location in one section of the Clifton Ballroom. The Grande Colonnade breakfast buffet will be available to students and planning committee members.
5. Exams on Friday. Vicki Davis suggested the committee encourage students to submit digital/Word document answers to the exam short answer questions because of reported “poor penmanship.” She noted the set-up could include more electrical access to the classroom tables. People may want to bring noise cancelling headphones for the exams if the noise from keyboarding is distracting.
6. Advance Emails to the Class. Judge Dolehanty advised a teaser email was sent to the students. Students are aware the networking room will be slightly different at the June program this year. Several students noted the networking will just be more “organic and unstructured” this year.

Agenda Item Four: 2026/2027 Graduate Program Class

Dates have been secured for the next 2-year class at French Lick Springs Hotel, June 14-19, 2026, and June 13-18, 2027. Notice of the application will be distributed mid-September with a 30-day application period deadline (mid-October). The Committee will meet in November to review applications and select 30 students and four alternates. Successful applicants will be notified in December 2025. The committee looks first alternates from the last class, judges who applied but not selected for the prior class and then the first time applicants. The committee is looking for a diverse group of students from across the state. Alternates should at the very least submit an email of interest if they are not required to submit a new application.

Agenda Item Five: Program Faculty.

Judge Robb reported on the progress towards securing faculty for the next two-year class, 2026/27. Professor Geyh may or may not continue the program. Judge Robb will check with him. If Geyh declines, Judge Robb advised she will look for alternative faculty in the neuroscience/thinking arena. Judge Robb will talk with Professor Cate in June about the 2026/27 program. Judge Robb has not started compiling topics and speaker recommendations apart from Professors Geyh and Cate for the 2026/27 program.

Vicki Davis advised that a 5-minutes PSA announcement will be included in one of the plenary sessions at the September Annual Meeting about the Graduate Program to encourage applicants to apply. This will likely be a committee member or one of the students from a prior class. Judge Robb asked if something special could be put on name badges if the person was a graduate program student. This might spark interest and discussion about the program.

Wrap-Up/Closing

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Vicki Davis, Education Division Director
Indiana Office of Court Services