



CEI IN BRIEF

A NEWSLETTER OF



NEW MEXICO COURT
EDUCATION INSTITUTE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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The image above shows Keynote speaker Hod Lipson speaking on AI at the 2025 Judicial Conclave.

JUDICIAL CONCLAVE 2025

A variety of speakers addressed this year's Judicial Conclave, most notably keynote speakers Professor Hod Lipson and the Honorable Victoria Pratt. Lipson, a robotics/AI professor at Columbia University, spoke about the future of AI and robotics. Judge Pratt is best known for her commitment to reforming the criminal justice system. She spoke about her transformative approach of using dignity and respect in the courtroom. Other notable speakers included New Mexico Supreme Court Justices Michael Vigil, Julie Vargas, Briana Zamoro, Shannon Bacon, and Chief Justice David K. Thomson. The justices addressed appellate case elements, criminal competency legislative updates, and best practices in jury management.

The 2025 Judicial Conclave also celebrated the accomplishments of three distinguished award recipients. The inaugural Rozier E. Sanchez CEI Faculty Award for Excellence in Judicial Education was given to Professor Barbara Bergman for her significant, lasting contributions to judicial education; she taught at the UNM School of Law, authored cornerstone legal texts and shaped trial practice programs across the Southwest. The first year of the Artie Pepin Award resulted in a tie and was presented to Sharon Payne and Cynthia Pacheco for exemplifying the spirit and mission of the New Mexico Judiciary. Highlights of their service include Payne's extensive travel and assistance to courts outside her own community; Pacheco established a customer service call center and created operational units for the warrant enforcement program.

THE ROZIER E. SANCHEZ CEI FACULTY AWARD

The Rozier E. Sanchez CEI Faculty Award honors people who've made a big impact on judicial education in New Mexico. The first winner, Professor Barbara Bergman, was recognized for her many years of teaching, mentoring, and helping improve the legal system.



Barbara Bergman is shown receiving the Rozier E Sanchez CEI Faculty Award next to CEI employees, Paula Couselo, Sonya Duke-Noel, Margarita Terrel, Sarah Pepin, Diana Bennet, Arlene Baca, Vanessa Baca, and Laurie Moreau



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MEET THE JUDICIAL EDUCATION TEAM

The Court Education Institute is comprised of four teams. In this issue of CEI in Brief, we would like to introduce you to the Judicial Education Team.

The Judicial Education Team is responsible for putting together in-person, hybrid, and virtual training events for the judiciary, creating manuals and toolkits for use by the judiciary, and ensuring that judges get their requisite Continuing Judicial Education credits through the trainings provided.

The Judicial Education Team is made up of four attorneys and an event planner. Sonya Duke-Noel (she/her) is the Attorney Supervisor for this team. Sarah Pepin (she/her) and Michael Stewart (he/him) are Attorneys Senior. Aspen J. Harris-Grigg (they/them) is an Attorney Associate. Laurie Moreau (she/her) is the team's Event Planner.

To learn more about the members of the Judicial Education Team, visit CEI's website at: <https://courteducation.nmcourts.gov/about/our-team/>

Judicial Education Team



Sonya Duke-Noel
Attorney Supervisor



Sarah Pepin
Attorney Senior



Michael Stewart
Attorney Senior



Aspen J. Harris-Grigg
Attorney Associate



Laurie Moreau
Event Planner

FOSTERING EMPATHY THROUGH JUSTICE

written by Seven Little

CEI's Engagement in Tierra Encantada's Empathy Event

The May 8th Empathy Event at Tierra Encantada Charter School was unlike any I had attended. Rather than an education on career fields and job functions, the event centered around leadership with the theme of "Empathy: Change Through Action." The event had a wonderful line of speakers and interactive booths, each presenting a different perspective on empathy. Among the guests in attendance was the Court Education Institute (CEI), which I am proud to be a part of. I've had the opportunity to intern with CEI for the summer. The event offered a deeper understanding of empathy that was not only shared with the students but also with the courts.

CEI's role at the event was to not only teach students about the justice system. We wanted to show them how empathy is a fundamental part of it. Students came to our booth and engaged in an interactive game called "Lawyer or Liar," where they decided whether far-fetched court cases were real or imaginary. The game was engaging and allowed for the discussion of fairness, judgment, and humanity in the law.

We had a series of guest speakers, and each provided their own comments about empathy in their fields. Chief Judge Bryan Biedscheid was our first keynote speaker. He discussed how empathy helps judges see other people's perspectives and circumstances, so they can make just, thoughtful, and humane decisions. First District Court Judge Denise M. Thomas talked about why empathy is what makes us human using Margaret Mead's famous quote: "A healed femur is a sign that a wounded person must have received help from others." It was eye-opening to hear about the importance of empathy in the administration of justice and how empathy makes us who we are as humans. A standout moment in the evening was a moving and heartfelt speech by Paula Couselo Findikoğlu, Director of Court Education. She not only spoke of empathy but the worth of women in the workforce, and this resonated deeply with many of the students. Speakers were followed by a women's panel with school and community representatives, where Margarita Terrell, CEI's eLearning Manager, shared her experience growing up as a daughter of immigrant parents, who later pursued her master's degree.

The student reaction was overwhelmingly positive. Feedback received included:

"The booth was useful and the game was enjoyable,"

"It made me learn empathy in a new way,"

"They taught us the correct application of empathy,"

"How she herself behaved was so inspiring,"

and

"It presented a face of empathy I'd not encountered before."

I was honored to be part of such a powerful event, representing my school and CEI. It provided an opportunity to connect with New Mexico students and share the liberating message that empathy is not an emotion, but an intentional practice that can transform systems, communities, and lives. On behalf of CEI, we would like to thank Tierra Encantada Charter School for inviting us, and the students and staff who made it possible. It was eye opening, and we're thankful to be able to inspire the next generation.



Judicial Insights

*A monthly CEI Webinar Series with
Judicial Insight into legal topics.*

Please join us:

- September 12, 2025 | 12:00–1:00 PM

Topic: The Lethal Link: Strangulation and Intimate Partner Violence

Understand the high-risk indicators and legal implications of strangulation in domestic violence cases.

Registration:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84461212693>

- October 3, 2025 | 11:30–1:00 PM

Topic: The Indian Family Protection Act

Registration:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/9678123456?pwd=QkFkdjZlYmR0cUJpdzNlcDZMcE9KLT09>



2025 Catalyst Award

This year the New Mexico Court Education Institute (CEI) won the 2025 Catalyst Award for Leading Change from Anthology. This award recognizes institutions which have used Anthology solutions to implement transformational initiatives that help innovate educational processes. CEI was honored with this award for transforming statewide court education by integrating Anthology programs resulting in the automation of high volumes of manual administrative processes and unified training for judges and new leadership.

CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP

Clear and frequent communication is vital to sustain New Mexico's unified court system with its 13 Judicial Districts and more than 2,400 employees. To that end, the Court Education Institute (CEI) will launch the prestigious Legacy Leadership and Management Programs this fall. The programs are for court staff at all levels and include expert-led courses, hands on projects, mentorship, and role based learning for everyone from emerging leaders to executives. Graduates will receive certification and statewide recognition. More details will be available in the fall.

Furthermore, CEI created the 2024 Leadership Summit in collaboration with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) with a goal of developing leadership skills, improving both internal and external communication, for Chief Judges and Court Executive Officers (CEOs).

The summit centered around productive pairs, strengthening partnerships between judges and court administration to emphasize the importance of strong, unified, and consistent leadership, strengthening expertise, talents, professionalism, and improving public trust in the New Mexico courts. By reinforcing concepts such as unified leadership, judges and CEOs developed skills that enhance transparency through both internal and external communication. In 2025 CEI will partner again with NCSC to continue the Leadership Summit – further supporting the growth and effectiveness of our state’s judicial leadership.

The NCSC will offer coaching workshops at the next summit. Coaching is a process in which a trained coach works with a team/individuals to assist them with achieving professional and personal growth. Organizations that embrace a coaching culture have experienced increased engagement, productivity and effectiveness. This workshop fosters a supportive environment that allows attendees to learn what's needed to effectively build an environment of trust, accountability and productivity.