



Carl Vinson
Institute of Government
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

The Superior Court Clerks' Certificate Program



Program Description

Superior Court Clerks presently in office or those who are newly elected are eligible to enroll in the Superior Court Clerks' Certificate Program.

To receive a certificate, participating clerks must complete the following **program requirements**:

- 10 required courses,
- two elective courses, and
- a project paper.

Each course in the program will be offered on a rotating basis in conjunction with regularly scheduled conferences or meetings. **All classes are six hours.**

The **project paper** that will be written at the conclusion of all coursework will profile three of the courses taken. The paper should be three-five pages in length and include the following:

- the titles and descriptions of the three courses profiled in the paper,
- a synopsis of what was learned in each of the three courses,
- a comprehensive explanation of how at least one component of each course could be used to improve the operation of a Superior Court Clerk's office,
- a plan for how the components described above could be implemented in a Superior Court Clerk's office. Plans do not have to be implemented in order to fulfill the requirements of the Certificate Program.

The paper will be reviewed by the director of the Certificate Program (Institute of Government Faculty). If a peer review is needed, a designated member of the Superior Court Clerks' Training Council will review deficient papers with the director to offer a recommended course of action.

When a clerk has completed the requirements of the program, a certificate will be awarded by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia. **To keep their certificates current, clerks participating in the program will be required to complete six hours of continuing education each year.**

This requirement will be met by participating clerks taking an Annual Update class (six hours), which will be offered twice each year. Once every three years, a participating clerk may choose to take an elective in lieu of the Annual Update class in order to meet the continuing education requirement for that particular year.

If a Superior Court Clerk participates in the certificate program, receives a certificate, and then allows it to lapse, **reinstatement will be allowed as follows**: the clerk will be required to take the Annual Update class in the year reinstatement is sought plus one elective course (not previously taken) from the Certificate Program curriculum for each year the certificate has lapsed.

Transcripts and records for the Superior Court Clerks' program are maintained by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia.

If you have questions regarding the Superior Court Clerks' Certificate Program or need other information please contact:

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Course Descriptions

REQUIRED COURSES

Professional Development (6 hours each)

Financial Management: The course will explore how to communicate effectively with the county commission in the budget process regarding expenditures needed for the Superior Court Clerk's function and the budgetary control elements and financial administration required by Georgia law. The course also will cover how to prepare a budget that closely relates to goals and objectives, the important concepts of banking relationships, the need for internal controls surrounding cash collection, and how to prepare for external county auditors. Essential components of the financial report required of constitutional officers, submitted to the Grand Jury, will be reviewed.

Leadership Development: The course will explore the topic of leadership and how leadership ability is developed. Participants will learn about different styles of leadership and common characteristics of effective leaders. In addition, participants will learn how to access their personal leadership styles and will identify strategies for improving their own leadership abilities.

Communication: In the course, students will explore the fundamentals of written (Part 1) and oral (Part 2) communication. Part 1 will focus on paragraph construction, document design, and writing effective documents, including a project paper. The emphasis of Part 2 will be identifying barriers to effective oral communication and ways of reducing or eliminating such barriers. Part 2 also will explore styles of interpersonal communication and coaching. Both parts of the course will emphasize communicating in a clear, positive, and effective manner.

Managing Human Resources: The course will examine the need for setting mutual performance expectations with employees. Documenting personnel files and providing legally defensible performance updates also will be covered. Other topics will include how to conduct performance appraisals, strategies for addressing disciplinary and performance issues using performance evaluations, and interoffice disciplinary procedures.

Legal Research: In the course, participants will learn basic research techniques that will allow Superior Court Clerks to research Georgia statutory and case law. Research techniques using print materials will be emphasized. Research techniques using CD-ROM and Lexis/West-law will be introduced. Basic research techniques of how to use the Clerks "Manual" will be taught. How to navigate the Georgia General Assembly web site will be covered.

Vocational Development (6 hours each)

Case Management: The course will explore the crucial issues affecting the flow of cases. Discussion will include the role of the Superior Court Clerk in case flow management and in providing case information to judges, other courts, sheriffs, probation/parole officers, and other state agencies. The course will cover electronic docketing including discussion of civil, criminal, quasi-civil and criminal, and miscellaneous dockets, appeals, and adoptions. Civil and criminal example cases will be reviewed from beginning to end. Terminology that is used in these processes will be covered.

Real and Personal Property: The course will explore what constitutes a recordable real estate or personal property document and the role of the Superior Court Clerk in accepting or rejecting documents offered for recording. It also will provide an overview of the filing, recording, and maintaining real estate and personal property records along with a review of indexing standards. Plats and liens will be covered as well as the collection and disbursement of transfer and intangible recording tax.

Jury Management: In the course, participants will learn what constitutes a legally balanced jury box and why the box must be balanced. The course also will explore the role of the clerk in restructuring the jury box and in managing jurors for Traverse and Grand Jury. Juror compensation, the permanent storage of jury records, jury questionnaires, the jury selection process, the clerk's handling of deferrals/excusals, and defending the jury box will be discussed.

Course Descriptions (continued)

County Government and the Superior Court Clerk: The course will examine the interaction between the Superior Court Clerk and county government officials. The key issues relating to the operation of county government about which Superior Court Clerks should be informed will be discussed. In addition, the basic administrative responsibilities of the Superior Court Clerk such as submitting a budget, bonds, purchasing, and contracts will be explored. The class will include a discussion of the governmental framework that exists among Superior Court Clerks, county commissioners, and other county officials including constitutional officers. Issues relating to personal liability and immunity as public officials will be covered.

Fines, Fees, and Forfeitures: The course will include an overview of the collection and distribution of fines and forfeitures. The course will cover the collection and disbursement of civil and miscellaneous fees and disbursement and reporting of fines, fees, and forfeitures to the county commissioners and various agencies. Additional topics concerning interest bearing accounts and unclaimed property will be discussed.

ELECTIVES (6 hours each)

Working with the Superior Court Clerks' Associations, Councils, Boards, and Authorities: The course will explore the interrelation between the Office of the Clerk of Superior Court and Superior Court Clerks' Association, Council, Retirement Board, Training Council, and Cooperative Authority. The transfer of documents, reports, and funds from the Superior Court Clerks' offices to these organizations will be discussed. A glossary of the various organizations and their functions will be included.

Professionalism and Ethics in Public Service: The course will address a variety of issues related to governmental ethics in terms of styles, moral reasoning, decision-making, and legal consideration. The effects of ethical decisions on the personal reputation of individuals and on the image of their organizations will be highlighted. Public service values and professionalism will be emphasized. Dilemmas likely to be encountered by Superior Court Clerks and their staff members in their public and personal lives will be discussed. Internet etiquette standards will be explored.

Change Management: In the course, normal and predictable reactions to change and the reasons for them will be discussed. The change cycle will be reviewed. The realities of a rapidly changing work environment and the appropriate responses to change will be considered. Special emphasis will be given to developing implementation plans as well as the importance of effective communication during time of change.

Conflict Resolution: The course will explore conflict from its inception through its resolution. Participants will identify their preferred mode of conflict management. Other modes of conflict management will be discussed, and the advantages and disadvantages of each mode will be explored. Participants will have the opportunity to analyze various workplace situations and select appropriate resolution strategies. Mediation, consensus, and negotiation will be introduced.

Open Meetings, Open Records, and Records Management: The course will examine the legal requirements and definitions of open records and open meetings relative to Superior Court Clerks. The class will cover case management, internal language and operations, archival storage of off-site records, records auditing, electronic record retrieval, and record retention schedules. Disaster preparedness will be discussed as it refers to records.

ANNUAL UPDATE (6 hours each)

New Technology/New Legislation: The update course will provide an annual legislative/case law update as well as updates on new technologies.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Classes are limited to 60 participants each.
- Occasionally, it may be necessary to change or amend the content of required or elective courses. This determination will be made by the Institute of Government in consultation with the Superior Court Clerks' Training Council. Credit will be awarded for all classes taken even if course descriptions are later changed or amended.