

NEWS RELEASE

Arizona Supreme Court
Administrative Office of the Courts



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Supreme Court Partners with Pima Community College for Interpreters

PHOENIX – The Supreme Court’s Administrative Office of the Courts is partnering with Pima Community College to include interpreter credentialing exams into existing coursework for interpretation studies. Participating students’ credentialing exam fees will be included in their tuition and they will sit for credentialing tests as part of their coursework. The Court and Pima Community College anticipate that this partnership will lead to qualified interpreters for Arizona’s courts.

The [Arizona Court Interpreter Credentialing Program](#) (ACICP) was created by an Administrative Order and has been operated by the Administrative Office of the Courts since January 2016. Bilingual court staff can provide basic direction and information to court users but interpreting in the courtroom and in other priority situations requires specific knowledge of court and legal terminology. Interpreters can be credentialed at five tiers of increasing levels of competency: 1/A, 2, 3, and 4.

Tiers 1 and A include foundational information on the court system and the interpreter code of conduct, as well as tests of language proficiency in English and the foreign language. Tiers 2 through 4 are based on performance on a bilingual interpreting skills exam. The Supreme Court requires its courts to have their staff interpreters credentialed at the Tier 3 level by certain dates. The requirements were part of former Chief Justice Scott Bales’ strategic agenda and continue under Chief Justice Robert Brutinel’s strategic agenda. More than 250 interpreters have been credentialed since the program took effect in 2016.

Pima Community College’s Translation and Interpretation Studies certificate program includes coursework on Legal Interpretation for Spanish/English interpreters and is led by Dr. Jeffrey W. Gabbitas. Professor Gabbitas stated, “Pima Community College's Translation and Interpretation Program is excited to offer courses that are aligned with the ACICP Exams. These

exams give us clear direction in how we have designed our courses so that the students can take and pass them at a Tier 3 level.”

Students taking the introductory classes will complete the requirements for the Tier 1 proficiency credential. Students enrolling in the Simultaneous Interpreting course will complete the bilingual interpreting skills exam required to earn one of the higher tier credentials, dependent on their exam scores.

Qualifying classes will begin in October 2019 at the Pima Community College downtown Tucson campus, with advanced courses beginning in the Spring of 2020. Courses are expected to be available in an online format beginning in the Fall of 2020. Students who complete the program will earn a professional credential in addition to their academic degree or certificate. The Supreme Court anticipates that the formal instruction in translation and interpretation for legal settings will lead to a continuing pool of interpreter candidates ready to start their careers interpreting in Arizona’s courts around the state.

Susan Pesci is currently enrolled in the program and stated, “I am excited to take the ACICP exams this semester as part of my course work at Pima Community College in Translation and Interpretation. The courses here are rigorous and challenging, but I am confident that I can become certified in one year.”

More information on the Arizona Judiciary’s language access and interpreter resources is available online at <https://www.azcourts.gov/interpreter/>. Information on Pima Community College’s Translation and Interpretation Studies Certificate Program is available at <https://www.pima.edu/translation-cert>.

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