

Value of the AIC Designation

By Donna J. Popow, JD, CPCU, AIC



American Institute for CPCU

Value of the AIC Designation

Popow

Just as you can't build a house without a solid foundation, you can't build a career in claims without learning the fundamentals of claims handling. Whether you are going to be a multiline adjuster or specialize in property, liability, workers compensation, marine, aviation, heavy equipment, contractors equipment, boiler and machinery, errors and omissions, or subrogation, the basics remain the same and are the focus of the Associate in Claims (AIC) program.

The AIC program provides the fundamentals of the most important aspects of adjusting— investigation, evaluation, negotiation, and litigation, along with the administrative aspect of adjusting. Once these fundamentals are mastered, this knowledge can be put to use no matter what type of claims are assigned.

In addition to helping you be a better adjuster, earning the AIC designation shows commitment to claims as a career. In a recent survey conducted by the American Institute for CPCU/Insurance Institute of America (the Institutes), 60 percent of the companies surveyed did not require employee development plans. Of those that did, only 1 in 10 felt strongly that the organization effectively aligned employee development plans with company goals. In general, you cannot rely on your employer to establish a career path for you. It is up to you to be the architect of your career. Construct a personal business plan for yourself by mapping out a career path that will take you from where you are today to where you want to be in the future. Earning the AIC designation will not only allow you to learn the fundamentals of your career, but it will also distinguish you among your peers.

Having the AIC designation can provide access to professional associations and employment opportunities. The Society of Registered Professional Adjusters lists the AIC designation among its membership criteria. It can tip the scales in your favor when applying for a job or a promotion. According to Elise Farnham, of Illumine Consulting, the AIC designation "is one more tool that puts the credentialed claims professional ahead of others in the competition for the next great job."

Completing the AIC program can also provide a leg up on other designations, such as the Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU). Because there are multiple ways to complete the AIC designation, you can take CPCU courses that will count toward both the AIC and CPCU designations. Additionally, the courses in the AIC program are qualified for continuing education (CE) credit by all the states with CE requirements for adjusters, except Idaho, Iowa and Massachusetts.

The AIC program provides an understanding as to why an activity must be done in addition to how the activity is performed. This will become very important in the event you are asked to give a deposition on a claim you are handling. The AIC course materials are often used by both plaintiff and defense bars as the standard for claims handling practices.

If you are the manager or supervisor of recent college graduates, the AIC curriculum will benefit you and those who report to you. Education has come to be seen as a core benefit of employment and it is more common now, and perhaps even expected, for professional development to be part of a position description. They want to develop the skills needed for professional success through internal resources and reimbursed external resources. While on the job training is good, it implements a longer learning curve as compared to first learning the

Value of the AIC Designation

Popow

fundamentals and then putting them into practice while adjusting claims. Offering staff new to the industry the opportunity to develop their skills and increase their knowledge base will satisfy their educational needs while providing insureds with better claim service.

Kevin Quinley, CPCU, ARM, AIC, AIM, ARe, vice president of Risk Services at Berkley Life Sciences LLC, offers these tips on motivating adjusters to seek education:

- Make CE one component of annual performance appraisals
- Publicly recognize and praise those who pursue and complete CE
- Enact/support corporate monetary rewards/incentives for CE program completion
- Provide a reasonable amount of time and reimbursement support for CE pursuit within the office
- Offer CE classes or briefing sessions in-house, on company time
- Lead by example—be involved in CE as a manager and make sure your reports know you value the activity

Good claim handlers are in demand. While technology continues to improve the way claims are adjusted, it is a function that still requires human interaction. As long as there are accidents and disasters occurring, there will be a need for knowledgeable claims people. Whether you are a student or a manager, the AIC designation will meet your needs for the development of useful claim handling skills.

Value Statements for the AIC Program

Survey completed by 731 respondents in August 2008.

Why Earn the Associate in Claims (AIC) Designation?

- **80% of completers** said the program was relevant to their industry.
- **70% of completers** said the program provided them with practical knowledge, while **more than 75%** said the program was valuable and applicable to their career.
- **91% of completers** believe that earning the designation added to the value of their role at their company.
- **85% of completers** attributed increased professional opportunities to earning the designation.
- **78% of completers** believe they gained greater job security during times of organizational consolidation and transition because they earned the designation.
- **More than 70% of completers** said earning the designation helped fast-track their career progression.

Value of the AIC Designation

Popow

- **70% of completers** felt earning the designation was important to gaining increased networking opportunities within their company, while **more than 60%** said it increased networking opportunities outside of their company.
- **93% of completers** believe earning the designation was important to demonstrating their professional competency.
- **Almost 90% of completers** credit earning the designation with gaining them professional recognition. In fact, **87% of completers** said it helped them gain recognition from management.
- **93% of completers** attribute the program with providing them with technical property and casualty insurance knowledge.
- **72% of completers** believe earning the designation was integral to gaining a promotion, while **69%** said it was key to gaining a salary increase.
- **72% of completers** said earning the designation increased their opportunities within the same functional area, while **more than 66%** felt it increased their mobility into other functional areas.
- **More than 20% of completers** were promoted within six months of earning the AIC.
- **More than 70% of completers** were promoted within two years of earning the AIC.
- **84% of completers** attribute a portion of their salary increase directly to earning the AIC designation.
- **73% of completers** believe the program prepared them for their current job responsibilities, while **more than 75%** said it has prepared them for their long-term career goals.
- **More than 90% of all completers** said they would recommend the Institutes' courses to a colleague.

Donna J. Popow, J.D., CPCU, AIC, is senior director of knowledge resources and ethics counsel for the American Institute for CPCU (the Institutes) in Malvern, Pennsylvania. The Institutes are the leader in delivering proven knowledge solutions that drive powerful business results for the risk management and property-casualty insurance industry. Ms. Popow has responsibility for all aspects of claims education including the Associate in Claims designation program and the Introduction to Claims certificate program. She can be reached at popow@cpcuiia.org.