

TO: PROSPECTIVE TRIAL TEAM MEMBERS  
FROM: JULES EPSTEIN, DIRECTOR of ADVOCACY PROGRAMS  
SARA JACOBSON, DIRECTOR of TRIAL ADVOCACY PROGRAMS  
RE: NATIONAL TRIAL TEAM INFORMATION [2020-21]

### **WHAT IS THE TEMPLE TRIAL TEAM?**

We are a national championship trial team. We are a hard-working, competitive, and highly skilled group who consistently place among the best of law school trial teams. We have earned one of the best records in the country in major law school tournaments. US News & World Report has ranked our advocacy program among the top 3 in the US in the last eighteen years.

### **WHAT KINDS OF THINGS WILL I BE TAUGHT?**

You will learn how to try cases. You will develop and polish the skills that trial lawyers require. You will learn, for example, how to analyze and master a trial file, how to construct a case theory and how to organize, prepare and craft crisp examinations and dramatic speeches. You will learn how to be persuasive-- to deliver a compelling speech, [undermine a witness' credibility, control an uncooperative witness, help your witness recite a dramatic story, and make interesting points in ways that your listeners will retain as they are called to action. You will also learn how to handle difficult judges, make the law of evidence your ally, and take control of the courtroom. You will learn how to be a trial lawyer. You will also learn how to win--fairly and squarely -- while maintaining civility and professionalism.

### **HOW OFTEN AND WHEN DO WE COMPETE?**

In 2020-21, we intend to compete in tournaments in the Fall and in the Spring. In recent years our list of fall competitions included NBTA's Tournament of Champions (TOC), the Buffalo-Niagara Invitational, the Puerto Rico Trial Advocacy Invitational, the National Civil Trial Competition, the National Civil Rights Competition, the Syracuse National Invitational, and the ABA Labor and Employment Competition. In the Spring, we compete in the National Trial Competition (NTC) (Regionals in Feb.; Nationals in Mar.), the Association for American Justice (AAJ) (Regionals in Mar.; Nationals in Apr.), the John Marshal Criminal Justice Competition, the Capital City Challenge Competition in DC, and the 'invitation-only' Top Gun Tournament in June.

### **AGAINST WHOM DO WE COMPETE AND WHO JUDGES THE COMPETITIONS?**

We compete against talented student advocates in the country from other law school trial teams. In addition to Temple, the most successful schools during the past 3 years are: American, Baylor, Chicago-Kent, Georgetown, Harvard, Loyola LA, Loyola Chicago, Northwestern, Stetson, Syracuse, South Texas, Washington U, and Yale. In the NTC Regional, we'll meet Penn, Dickinson, Drexel, Duquesne, Pittsburgh, Rutgers-Newark, Seton Hall, Villanova, and Widener.

In competition trials, you'll be judged by a bench of at least three trial lawyers and/or judges from the respective tournament sites. In the NTC championship rounds in Texas, you'll be evaluated by a jury composed of Fellows from the American College of Trial Lawyers, the premier trial lawyers' organization in the country. For the other tournaments, you often see some of the most experienced criminal and civil lawyers in the United States.

### **HOW IS THE TEAM ORGANIZED?**

Our team is generally 16 students, divided into four teams in the Fall and four teams in the Spring. Most teams try one side of the case as advocates and the other as witnesses for their teammates. The RTC/NTC teams are further divided into two teams of two advocates as they try their case from both sides (i.e. in one round, one two-person team is the prosecution/plaintiff; in the next round, that team is the defense). During every trial, each team member must deliver one speech (either an opening or a

closing) and conduct one direct and one cross examination. Generally, each team tries a minimum of three trials during the preliminary rounds of the tournament before advancement to the medal rounds (quarters, semis, and finals).

### **WHAT IS THE PRACTICE SCHEDULE & WORKLOAD?**

The workload is heavy. The fall is a short two-month season (late Sept. to late Nov). The Spring schedule begins the week before classes resume in January and runs through March or early April (depending upon whether the team advances and when respective national competitions are scheduled). Individual teams are expected to practice at least 3-4 times per week: 1-2 evenings, an afternoon, and a weekend day. Several weeks before competition, we add additional practices. **Every trial team member must also complete an evidence/trial tactics course, which may involve evening lectures (live or online) in August and/or live classes in the Fall.** There is also work to be done at home in preparation for the practices. If you are selected for the team, we will work with you to accommodate your class schedule; but occasionally team membership and its commitments will require you to drop a course and replace it with another.

### **CAN I PARTICIPATE ON TRIAL TEAM, MOOT COURT AND A JOURNAL?**

**Absolutely**—assuming you are multi-task oriented, efficient and enjoy hard work. On more than one occasion, team members have had judicial clerkships, law review assignments, and/or Moot Court membership. If you want the enterprise badly enough, we will try and help you make it work. However, when there are practices for competitions, they must be treated as the priority.

### **WHAT DO WE WIN?**

Trophies, bowls, cups, plaques, medals, certificates, graduation prizes, books, sometimes a little bit of money, and recognition by national, regional and local trial lawyer organizations. You'll get your name and picture in the paper (Temple Esq., Legal Intelligencer, maybe the Inquirer). If you win the NTC or AAJ national championship, you'll be guests at a national trial lawyers' convention.

### **HOW WELL HAS THE TEAM DONE IN COMPETITION?**

Our record speaks for itself. Since 1995, we have won 5 national (3 NTC, 2 AAJ) and 21 national invitational championships. In the NTC, the super bowl of tournaments, we have won our regional 31 of the last 34 years and, "made the cut" to the national quarterfinal round 17 times since 1995, finishing first in 1999, 1998 and 1995; and second in 2007, 1993 and 1992. We were the first school to win the Top Gun tournament when it was created in 2010 and the only school to win it twice.

### **IN HOW MANY COMPETITIONS WILL I PARTICIPATE?**

We expect that all trial team members will try in at least two and possibly three competitions. The number of tournaments and actual trials depends on several factors.

### **WILL THIS EXPERIENCE HELP ME GET A JOB AND MORE?**

Well it can't hurt. Not only that, it invariably helps--big time. Philadelphia regional and national law firms and district attorney and public defender organizations know about and directly recruit from our ranks. You'll get lots of resume points, have your own "war stories" to tell, develop a sense of accomplishment and confidence that will serve you well and own a wealth of experience that you will not otherwise get--regardless of where you end up or how much money you make. Networking opportunities also abound. Our coaches, all seasoned trial lawyers, enjoy connections to the regional legal community, as do the attorneys and judges who score competition rounds. You never know when someone might offer you their business card that could solidify your career path. For the practitioner or law firm looking to hire a potential litigator/trial lawyer, trial team is often a big chit.

**DO TEAM MEMBERS GET ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR TRIAL TEAM WORK?**

Yes. Team members may earn up to 4 credits in their first year of participation; 3 credits in their second year.

**HOW SERIOUSLY DO TEAM MEMBERS TAKE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES?**

If you have to ask, maybe you should consider auditioning for the marching band.

**HOW MUCH OF A COMMITMENT WILL I BE EXPECTED TO MAKE?**

As much as it takes to win a national championship. We expect your best effort.

**WHAT ARE THE GOALS?**

There are two goals: (1) to teach you to be as effective and professional a trial lawyer as you can be; (2) to win competitions, especially the National Championship.

**WHAT KIND OF STUDENTS ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?**

If you have read up to here, that's a good sign. If you think you have courtroom talent, speak well and persuasively, are quick, smart, and responsive, have both a sense of humor and of the dramatic, hate to lose and love to win, work well in a collaborative/team environment, take constructive criticism and direction well, and are prepared to commit the time, we want you. If you're not sure you have what it takes, come out and audition. You can decide to join us later--assuming we both like each other.

**HOW AVAILABLE ARE THE COACHES?**

Very available. We have offices in the law school, as do others who are part of the faculty who also coach. The adjuncts are a short subway ride away. There is email!

**IS ALL THE WORK WORTH IT?**

It depends upon your agenda. If you are interested in trial work and want to learn, develop and hone the kinds of skills that trial lawyers have, it is more than worth it. It is a learning and skill developing experience that is not available to you anywhere else. It will put you light years ahead of your colleagues. It will also tell you a lot about who you are and about what you are made. But don't take my word for it. Ask any past member of Temple's trial teams – any one of the approximate 250. **Most will tell you it was the best -- the most intensive, fulfilling, and rewarding learning experience they had in this institution.**

**WHERE ELSE CAN I GET INFORMATION ABOUT THE TEAM?**

From Sara Jacobson (Room K614), Jules Epstein (Room K612), Marian Braccia (Room K615) or Asst. Dean Jennifer Bretschneider (Room B103D). Perhaps and most important of all, talk to former trial team members -- names and numbers available upon request.

**HOW DO I MAKE THE TEAM?**

You will be assessed based on your tryout and, if invited to bootcamp, on your bootcamp performance as well.

**WHAT DO THE AUDITIONS INVOLVE?**

For the spring (April '20) audition, you will give an opening statement from a file or case you are currently preparing for LRW or ITA/ITAP and from either side.

**For students (1Ls) enrolled in LRW**, please prepare an opening statement from the "assignment" on which your oral argument is based;

**For students currently enrolled in ITA or ITAP**, please prepare an opening statement in the case assigned for your final trial – ITAP: *Salley*; ITA: *Tyler*.

You will have approximately 5 minutes for your statement, although you need/should not attempt to complete the entire presentation in the allotted time. You may be interrupted and asked to address a particular part of the case and how it bears on your case. You may also be asked to speak extemporaneously about a topic of our choosing. Finally, you may be interviewed about your background, schedule and commitment.

At the end of the Spring auditions, students will be given a constructive critique and informed privately as to whether they have been invited to our special end-of-summer week-long trial advocacy boot camp.

The final selection of 2020-2021 trial team members will occur at the end of Summer break or promptly at the beginning of the Fall semester.

**WHEN ARE THE AUDITIONS AND WHERE DO I SIGN UP?**

**Auditions** will be held on **WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8th, 9am-4pm** and, **if needed, Thursday, April 9th, 9am-4pm**. **INFORMATION SESSIONS** will be held on **MONDAY, MARCH 30th, at 12pm & 6pm**; and **THURSDAY, APRIL 2nd, at 12pm**. All information sessions will be held in **Room K6B**.

**Spring audition sign up** will begin at **1:00pm** on **Thursday, April 2nd**. Auditions are scheduled in 10 minute increments. Contact Mary Beth Wilson at [mwilson6@temple.edu](mailto:mwilson6@temple.edu) to sign up for an audition time