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PreLaw Magazine Gives Cardozo an A+ for Trial Advocacy



Cardozo's trial advocacy program received an A+ ranking in PreLaw Magazine's winter 2022 issue. Cardozo's trial advocacy programs include ITAP (Intensive Trial Advocacy Program) and the Benedict Morelli Trial Team. The combined opportunities are considered integral to students' preparation for trial experience during their law school journey.

ITAP takes place during the January intersession between semesters and is one of the only programs of its kind in the country. The pioneering simulation course allows students to gain real casework and courtroom experience under the supervision of top practitioners.

Students who participate in ITAP gain hands-on experience and learn cutting-edge strategies for courtroom litigation under the instruction of leading jurists and lawyers from across the country. In structured days of trial lawyering, leaders in the legal field share their expertise over the course of the two-week immersion. Students practice direct and cross-examinations, interviewing and preparing witnesses, selecting juries, dealing with evidentiary issues and preparing for and presenting bench and jury trials. The course ends with students conducting a full jury trial. At every step, students are critiqued by judges and lawyers, including individual reviews of student performances on video.

“For many students, ITAP is one of the most memorable experiences of their legal education,” said Jane-Roberte Sampeur, Coordinator and Staff Attorney of the Women’s Pretrial Release Initiative at the Legal Aid Society and ITAP’s new director.

The Benedict Morelli Trial Team, formerly The Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law Trial Program, was established in 2016 through a \$1 million gift from Arlene and Benedict Morelli, the former president of the New York State Trial Lawyers Association and founding partner of the firm bearing his name. Students competing on the Morelli Trial Team prepare a full trial, including opening and closing statements and cross examinations, and compete against other schools nationwide.

Nikki Blumberg ’98, participated on the team while she was a student at Cardozo and has been the Trial Team’s Director since 2002. Blumberg said, “In recent years, Cardozo’s Trial Team has advanced at national and local trial competitions. Students have earned individual awards from the Trial Lawyers Section of the New York State Bar Association and from national trial competitions. In the last two years, our students have received recognition for the best opening statement, best direct examination, and best cross-examination. These were incredible accomplishments since the students were scored by judges and trial attorneys and selected from a very competitive field of law students throughout the country.” Following graduation, Blumberg noted, students who were members of the trial team regularly obtain employment as trial attorneys at some of NYC’s most competitive agencies, including District Attorney’s Offices, The Legal Aid Society and other public defender agencies, and the NYC Law Department.

Cardozo Professor Burton Lipshie, a Professor of Practice and Director of Advocacy Skills Training, is the Faculty Advisor to the Trial Team, and assists Blumberg in coaching teams in advance of competitions, and in selection of team members.

PreLaw also gave Cardozo an A+ ranking in international law and an A in public policy.