

GENERAL MEMORANDUM RE NATIONAL TRIAL TEAM TRYOUTS

David C. Schott, Director – The Center For Advocacy (CFA)

First... congratulations on having the courage to try out. Having such courage is a big step in developing your critical thinking, professional writing, application of evidence and advocacy knowledge, and much more. The rewards of being on the *National Trial Team* are exponential. You will learn a great deal and be as prepared in the world of trial practice as many practicing attorneys. If you successfully commit yourself, at the end of your experience you will be ready to embark on a very effective trial practice and litigation career. **You do not need to have taken Evidence or Trial Practice I to try out.** We know that you have likely not taken these courses yet.

What is The National Trial Team? We typically accept 16 to 20 students each year onto the National Trial Team. Usually half of those students are returning 3L veterans. Once on the team, students will receive intense professional instruction from practicing attorneys and active members of the profession to compete in national tournaments, as well as participate in The Summit Cup, The Hoffman Cup and The Advocates Cup. NTT Students work extremely hard, but it is one of the most beneficial experiences of law school. The Center for Advocacy (CFA) is dedicated to helping students obtain jobs and excel in those jobs. The National Trial Team is one facet of the CFA's services to the students. Being a member of the team, NTT students:

- Repeatedly engage in applied substantive case analysis in a variety of legal areas;
- Become versed in, and apply in professional simulations, both the rules and rationale of the FRE;
- Learn substantive law at an in-depth level in both the civil and criminal arenas;
- Learn the rules of criminal and civil procedure at an applied professional level;
- Become proficient in drafting and executing logical direct and cross examinations – the heart of critical thinking;
- Sharpen their professional writing abilities;
- Learn how to properly organize and prepare case files for trial presentation;
- Learn how to effectively and ethically prepare witnesses for trial;
- Learn the value of working with others when preparing cases for trial;
- Make professional connections that will benefit them for their entire legal career.

The NTT course is three (3) graded credits each semester. With approval from the CFA Director, students can be on The National Trial Team for multiple semesters up to 2 years, in both their 2L and 3L years. **Important:** Being on the team one year is not a guarantee that you will be invited onto the team the next year.

What is required of a member of the National Trial Team? Being on the team will require more work than the average law school course. It will require very rigorous classes and practices. Classes meet on Thursdays from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. Class times are mandatory. Additionally, practices for the team are usually held on Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the weeks (5-6 weeks/semester) leading up to each semester's tournament, whether the tournament is a national tournament or one of SCOL's in-house tournaments (Summit Cup, Hoffman Cup; Advocates Cup). Students should be prepared to work a minimum of 10 to 15 hours a week in class, practice, and case preparation. Students are also expected to be meeting with each other outside of class.

When are the tryouts? Tryouts are open to all current 1L and 2L students, and 3L students (i.e. anyone not graduating this spring). Sign-up slots will be posted outside of Professor Schott's office, Suite 390. We have expanded the tryout process so all students can maximize their opportunities to put their best foot forward.

What is involved in the tryouts? There are Parts I & II of the tryouts. The dates for each part can be found on this site. In **Part I** each student will present an Opening Statement or a Closing Argument (student's choice) to the NTT coaches. In an effort to reduce the amount of time required to prepare for the tryouts – particularly as Finals approach — Openings and Closings can be based on the factual scenario used in The Advocates Cup (which can be found on the CFA website), or whatever case a student desires. Openings/Closings should not be longer than 5 minutes. Additional in **Part I** students will present an impromptu Cross Examination. Students do not need to prepare in advance for this

second part. Students will be given a witness statement upon arrival and given 15 minutes to draft a short Cross Examination of the witness per the provided statement.

What happens next? Within a week after the tryouts, students will receive an email letting them know whether they continue to be considered for the team. Students who continue to be under consideration, and who have not taken Trial Practice I, are strongly encouraged to enroll in *Trial Practice I – Intensive*.

What is *Trial Practice I – Intensive*? *TP1-Intensive* is the same course as *Trial Practice I – Basic Courtroom Skills*. So students who enroll in *TP1-Intensive* and who complete the course will receive three (3) graded credits. *TP1-I* will be offered over the course during the first 10 days of the Summer Session. (If you are taking Evidence in the evenings this summer, we will work around your conflicts.) *TP1-I* will be taught by Profs Schott and other National Trial Team adjuncts, and there will be current team members available during the course to serve in a “Senior Associate” capacity (i.e. T.A.) to assist the *TP1-I* students develop their advocacy skills. Once *TP1-I* concludes, students who are selected for the team will be invited to enroll in the team’s summer course which meets on Thursday evenings in the summer from 6 to 10:30 p.m. during the summer session. **Important. A student’s inability to attend the TP1-I course (e.g. due to a summer internship, etc.) does not automatically exclude them from being on the National Trial Team.**

Will there be magic or sorcery involved in the tryouts? No. Magic and sorcery were removed from the program after the unfortunate “three-headed dog incident” a few years back.

Are there any forms that I need to complete for the tryout? Yes. There are two forms that each student must complete to be able to tryout. First, when you sign-up for a time slot, **you must email a completed [Candidate Information Sheet \(CIS\)](#) to Prof Schott (DSchott@law.du.edu)**. The blank CIS form is available on The Center for Advocacy webpage as a [PDF](#) or as a [Word Document](#). (Your sign-up time slot will not be honored until you complete and submit this informational form.) Secondly, also on the webpage is a [Letter-Agreement](#). You will need to also read this form and submit it with your CIS. Please read it carefully before signing it. This assures that you are aware of the commitment required for the National Trial Team.

What should I wear to my tryout? Courtroom attire is recommended. (Suit and tie, etc.)

Should I use visual aids in my tryout? If you elect to use a visual aid, do not spend a lot of money on it. You are not being judged on your visual aids. Rather, we are looking at things such as the structure of your Opening/Closing, your efficiency of words, the clarity of your presentation, etc. But if such an aid helps you, then you can certainly use one.

Can I be involved in other student organizations or on a law review and also be on The National Trial Team? You bet. We have a strong history of students being members of The National Trial Team while also being on a law review, or an officer of The Moot Court Board, or the Student Bar Association, and more. In fact, we have had National Trial Team members who were simultaneously on a law review AND enrolled in a clinic all in the same semester/year.

Can I be on another mock trial or moot court team in addition to being on The National Trial Team? Unfortunately, no, because of the potential travel conflicts.

What are some other courses offered through The Center for Advocacy that will help develop my advocacy skills? Trial Practice III- The Mentors Practicum; Day 1 – The Civil Practice Lab; Day 1 – The Criminal Practice Lab; Trial Practice II - Depositions; Trial Practice II - Advanced Trial Practice; Trial Practice II – Litigation Technology; Trial Practice II – Voir Dire; Evidence Practicum, and; Motions Practice.

What other trial advocacy activities are there at SCOL? Any student not invited onto the team is always invited to serve as a witness in The Summit Cup (October), compete in [The Hoffman Cup](#) in November and [The Advocates Cup](#) in the spring (March)

We look forward to seeing you at the tryouts. Most of all, good luck! **Professor Schott, Director, CFA**