



The Geoffrey Fieger Trial Practice Institute

THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The Geoffrey Fieger Trial Practice Institute at MSU College of Law began in fall 2001. The Institute features a two-year certification program that provides a select group of students with rigorous, comprehensive training in trial practice. Interested students interview for the program at the end of their first year of law school and selected students start the program at the beginning of their second year. The Institute's certification program includes 20 credits of focused coursework: 11 in pretrial and trial courses, 3 credits dealing with courtroom demeanor, forensic science, and technology in the courtroom, and 6 credits of traditional law courses in criminal procedure and administrative law. (See reverse for a more descriptive explanation of the curriculum.)

Classes are taught by seasoned litigators who bring a real-world perspective to the classroom. Students receive intensive training in drafting various pleadings and complete oral arguments and other trial simulations in front of judges and attorneys. Students also witness local, state, and federal court in session.

Training in the latest technology is a highlight of this program as students work through extensive sets of simulations in both the hands-on courtroom technology lab and their pretrial and trial classes.

One-on-one mentoring with practicing trial lawyers is an important component to the Institute program. In addition to the showing students the intricacies of trial practice, mentors offer career-building networking opportunities.

Practical, hands-on experience is an integral part of the program. Students develop a portfolio of legal, trial-related writing to show prospective employers, and they will practice every phase of preparing for and going to trial.

TPI CLASS OVERVIEW:

Pretrial I

Fall Semester of the program's first year (3 credits)

- Interviewing clients
- Negotiating fee arrangements
- Drafting retention letters
- Acquiring and recording essential facts and documents
- Drafting complaints, answers, and other responsive pleadings
- Managing preliminary matters in criminal cases
- Planning early discovery
- Making and responding to preliminary motions
- Practicing general motions, including oral arguments
- Handling discovery disputes
- Learning pretrial procedures in criminal cases
- Preparing and defending motions for summary disposition
- Appellate practice

Trial I - Criminal

Fall semester of the program's second year (3 credits)

- Planning and preparing trial exhibits and demonstratives
- Being sensitive to the judge and jury
- Handling jury selection – voir dire
- Drafting and presenting opening statements
- Calling the opposing party as an adverse witness in the case in chief
- Direct examining the client and witnesses
- Cross-examining lay witnesses
- Cross-examining the opposing party's expert
- Handling impeachment of witnesses
- Making objections
- Defending objections
- Making motions for directed verdict
- Preserving objections for appellate review

Theatrical Skills - Advocacy as a Performing Art

Fall semester of the program's second year (1 credit)

- Provides students with persuasive communications skills and effective uses of non-verbal communication

Courtroom Technology & Electronic Evidence Lab

Must be completed in program's first year (0 credits)

- Seven-week lab provides, practical hands-on training in the efficient and proper uses of electronic evidence
- Students receive TrialDirector 5.1 software for educational uses while in the TPI program

Pretrial II

Spring semester of the program's first year (2 credits)

- Preparing mediation statements and handling of mediation
- Considering ADR alternatives
- Handling status conferences with the court
- Practicing civility and professionalism to opposing counsel and the court
- Preparing joint pretrial statements, jury instructions, and trial briefs
- Considering interlocutory appeals
- Preparing and arguing motions *in limine*

Trial II - Civil

Spring semester of the program's second year (3 credits)

- Preparing and delivering closing arguments
- Learning mid-trial negotiation tactics, such as high/low agreements
- Making motions for judgment notwithstanding the verdict
- Making motions for additur and remittitur
- Entering judgment
- Making post-trial motions for mediation sanctions
- Examining expert witnesses

Forensic Science

Fall semester of the program's second year (2 credits)

- Exposes students to DNA evidence, accident reconstruction, statistics, and other related topics

Students also take traditional law classes in Administrative Law and Criminal Procedure.