

ITAP

Celebrates
20th Anniversary



WHAT PROGRAM IS REMEMBERED fondly by thousands of Cardozo graduates, strikes fear in the heart of current students, and means a January visit to New York for lawyers and judges from across the United States? The answer? ITAP.

To an outsider, the two-week program that takes place each year between semesters might seem a curiosity, and when the acronym is spoken, “ITAP,” it may be mistaken for a dance or rap song. Even its full name, Intensive Trial Advocacy Program, conjures a medical procedure or a war tactic. Therefore, when *New York Law Journal* writer Tom Adcock became an “embedded” journalist for a couple of days during ITAP’s 20th anniversary year, he left shocked and awed. In Adcock’s almost 1,500-word story “At Cardozo, Winter Break Means Learning Trial Tactics” in the January 16, 2004 issue of the *NYLJ*, he called the program “a cross between boot camp and a master class.” He even quoted

Prof. Ellen Yaroshefsky, ITAP codirector, as encouraging a student with, “Yeah—you go get her! Kill her!”

When asked about ITAP, Dean Rudenstine called it a “transformative experience” and according to Adcock said, “You take even the shyest of our students ... and suddenly they’re given license to go for the jugular.”

The student newspaper, *Cardozo Insider*, also reported on ITAP using words that might be equated with combat. Its headline read, “ITAP: Cardozo’s ‘Top Gun.’” The curious part is why, given the arduous and scary drills, would about 150 students each year “enlist” for this program rather than have two more weeks of winter break? A draft has never been deemed necessary.

The story in the *Insider* may lend some clues. The reporters Matt Maron and Natalie Rosenberg, both ITAP participants, wrote, “Unlike many theory classes ... ITAP is hands-on training. Each day, students honed their advocacy skills. ... Although the experience of going up in front of a room of people can be horrifying



at the beginning, the faculty and other team members are very encouraging, making the atmosphere collegial.”

Maron and Rosenberg ended, “For some of us, ITAP helped us decide to become litigators. For others, the friendships we formed in ITAP remain unmatched, but for most of us, the experience of ITAP was transformational.”

Perhaps that’s the real secret. Along with support, critique, and demonstrations of trial tactics from some of the finest litigators and judges in the country, students work shoulder to shoulder with classmates as they learn trial pacing, witness examination tactics, body and voice control, and the finer points of voir dire. Advice and examples are amply given. According to Adcock, the dozens of lawyers and judges who convene at Cardozo “impart hard-won wisdom, ranging from cagey courtroom tactics to the litigious discipline of thinking inside-out.”

Joel Blumenfeld, acting justice of the Queens Supreme Court, who has participated in the program since 1984 when Barry

Scheck and Larry Vogelman founded it, offered the following advice to the students, “When you ask to approach the bench and your mind is blank—well, just take your time, walk slowly. Only the judge will know.”

Judge David Mason of the 22nd Judicial Circuit Court in St. Louis, MO stated, according to Adcock, “Your tone lets the jury know that you’re in control. ... On redirect, it’s always a good thing to come forward without notes... .” And so it goes. Day in, day out for two weeks until the students prepare and argue a bench and jury trial.

According to Professor Yaroshefsky, who also organized the 20th anniversary celebration, “This year ITAP was particularly gratifying. We brought together ITAP alumni and current students along with our fabulous faculty. The energy was great, and to see alumni who participated in different decades sharing war stories was truly exhilarating.”