



# First-Year Trial Practicum

## Program Overview

The First-Year Trial Practicum at Drake Law School is an experience unique in legal education. Dating back to 1998, every member of Drake Law's first-year class has observed a real jury trial on the Drake campus from jury selection through verdict.

This one-of-a-kind program adds an important practical dimension to your legal education. During the spring semester, first-year classes are adjourned for up to one week so that students can observe a trial at the Drake University Neal and Bea Smith Law Center. Students are present during every phase of the trial and participate in small group discussions led by an attorney or judge, in which the course of the litigation is discussed and analyzed.

The conclusion of the trial is accompanied by debriefing sessions in which students ask questions of the jury members, attorneys, and the presiding judge. It is a remarkable opportunity for first-year students—a chance to put their classroom studies into perspective.

## Trial Practicum Cases

Every year, the Trial Practicum involves a different case. A majority of these trials have involved criminal cases tried by 12-person juries. These trials have dealt with a range of charges including murder, child abuse, and vehicular homicide.

The Trial Practicum introduces the law to students in a way that no textbook or classroom can. Most importantly, the Trial Practicum models the values of civility, professionalism, and public service essential to the legal system.

## Skills Training

Drake Law School provides a different kind of legal education. Studying in the only law school in the capital city of Des Moines, our students have unique opportunities to gain experience in government, business, state and federal courts, the legal sector, and other professional settings.

Skills training is integrated into substantive coursework by faculty who have practiced law. These skills are reinforced through simulation classes, clinics and internships, and our unique Trial Practicum program. Other law schools are beginning to value practical training, but it's what we've offered—and how we've helped students succeed—for decades.



**“First-year students see the law come alive in a real courtroom, with real victims and real defendants. To witness an actual jury trial and have access to the judge, jury, and litigants is an invaluable learning experience.”**

—Steve Foritano, Director of the Trial Practicum Program

