



**“The Trial Academy achieved its dual intended purpose of bringing new faces to the Annual Meeting which made the weekend that much better for everyone.”**

# Young Lawyers

BY RYAN J. WORKS, Young Lawyers Chair

## THE 2010 TRIAL ACADEMY – HOSTED BY THE YOUNG LAWYERS SECTION

Last year, the Young Lawyers Section began its work to host its inaugural Trial Academy at the State Bar of Nevada Annual Meeting, held this year in Monterey, California. The Trial Academy took place June 24-26, 2010 and the verdict is in.

The program opened on Thursday afternoon with 36 Trial Academy participants in attendance and a voir dire presentation by Judge Adams from the Second Judicial District Court, Washoe County. From there, the program progressed from lectures on opening statements, direct and cross examination and closing arguments. Small breakout sessions were held each day, with the faculty serving to critique each participant’s performance in the relative trial stages. Finally, the Trial Academy concluded Saturday afternoon (while competing with USA World Cup Soccer) with a workshop on jury instructions/verdict forms and evidentiary issues.

*“It was fun and super informative because we got a lot of feedback from judges and well-experienced/prestigious lawyers. It was very practical.”*  
—Trial Academy Participant

To say the least, our faculty presenting the Trial Academy was phenomenal. Participants overwhelmingly praised the talent of our faculty, the excellent presentations and the feedback received in intimate small-group settings. Leading the instruction for the weekend was Federal Public Defender Franny Forsman along with Business Court and Presiding Civil Judge Elizabeth Gonzalez. The faculty also included Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Johnnie Rawlinson, Rob Dotson of Laxalt Nomura, Mark Gunderson of Gunderson Law Offices, Chief Deputy District Attorney Bruce Hahn, Dominic Gentile of Gordon & Silver and Clark County Public Defender Scott Coffee. On the final day we [Judge Gonzalez] even pulled in Justice

Hardesty and Eighth Judicial District Court Judge Susan Johnson to participate in critiquing the closing arguments.

The open access we had to a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals judge, a Supreme Court justice and our sitting state court judges was unprecedented and their advice was invaluable, especially because many of us will now go back to work in front of these judges.

*“The homework and preparation was challenging with other conference activities, but worth it.”*

—Trial Academy Participant

The Trial Academy students were also given an intense three-day work schedule, which required preparation prior to arriving in Monterey, and each night, to get ready for opening statements, direct and cross examinations of witnesses, and closing statements. The preparation was tough considering the setting at the Monterey Plaza Hotel, the surrounding activities and the wonderful social events hosted each night by the state bar. The participants are to be commended for their hard work and dedication to becoming better trial attorneys, especially considering their surroundings.

After reviewing the surveys, the verdict is that the Trial Academy was a success. And, the Trial Academy also achieved its dual intended purpose of bringing new faces to the Annual Meeting which made the weekend that much better for everyone. As we have already been asked to host the “Second Annual” Trial Academy, I would encourage all beginning trial lawyers to consider our program.

In addition to thanking all of our faculty and participants, I must also thank our YLS board – specifically our outgoing chair Laura Granier, who was the architect of the Trial Academy. ■