



Ross T. Roberts Trial Academy

Named in memory of one of Kansas City's most distinguished federal judges, the Ross T. Roberts Trial Academy (formerly Inn of Court) runs from September through April of each year and is designed to teach new lawyers trial advocacy skills and to foster professionalism, ethics and collegiality. Participation gives attorneys the opportunity to practice trial techniques and to receive training and guidance from more experienced litigators and judges.

The annual program is comprised of three components: (1) a CLE luncheon series; (2) training sessions; and (3) performance sessions. The CLE luncheons are held monthly at the Whittaker Courthouse and focus on practical skills such as depositions, pretrial motion practice, jury instructions and ethics. United States Magistrate Judge Robert E. Larsen leads the training sessions and covers the six major components of a trial:

- ▶ Voir Dire
- ▶ Opening Statements
- ▶ Direct & Cross Examination
- ▶ Evidentiary Foundations
- ▶ Expert Witnesses
- ▶ Closing Arguments

The week following each training session, participants practice what they have learned in a mock trial setting. State and federal judges, along with a select group of experienced litigators, are present during the sessions to critique the lawyers and provide one-on-one instruction. Attorneys also receive videotapes of their work to assist in understanding areas for improvement. The program concludes each year with a mock trial competition in which the lawyers try a case from beginning to end before a local judge.

With fewer and fewer courtroom opportunities, lawyers face the challenge of how to hone and maintain their trial skills. The Trial Academy addresses this need with educational and practical opportunities for recent law graduates as well as attorneys just embarking on a litigation practice or trying to refresh their skills.

The cost for participation is \$625 which includes all CLE luncheons, all training sessions, a trial notebook, handout materials, the mock trial competition and a year-end dinner. Further details and scheduling information for this year's program are included on the application form which can be found at www.kcmba.org.

The United States District Court is offering ten scholarships for those in need of financial aid. Scholarship applications are due August 18, 2021. Questions about the application should be directed to Rebecca Suroff at 816-512-5763 or Rebecca_Suroff@mow.uscourts.gov.