

Summer Trial and Evidence Program (1st STEP)

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1st S.T.E.P. – Summer Trial Evidence Program: (11 units)

Objectives: Train as a litigator the summer after your first year of law school and master each phase of trial.

Description: 1st STEP is a ten-week, comprehensive summer program immersing students in the study of trial advocacy, presentation, motions drafting, and evidence. This innovative litigation program is designed to teach mastery of evidentiary rules and their effective application when solving practical trial problems. The program utilizes case study exercises, motions argument, and hands-on trial practice. Each component of the course enhances student learning by sharpening basic skills until they become second nature. 1st STEP features rigorous skills training tailored to hone students' courtroom technique and provide an early advantage in today's competitive job market. Following 1st STEP, students are prepared to spend the fall of their second year working in law firms, government internships, legal clinics, and other litigation settings as certified law students providing legal services under the supervision of an attorney.

Week 1: Immersion Trial Training Week

Students are immersed in an intense, full-time week of trial advocacy training. This demanding hands-on training course introduces all key aspects of conducting a full trial. Students expand and perfect their litigation competencies as they are guided through lectures, demonstrations, and skills workshops.

Instructors include GGU faculty, judges, mock trial coaches, and seasoned practitioners who lecture, demonstrate, and provide individual critique throughout the week. A unique aspect of Immersion Week includes assessment and feedback by a performance coach during daily workshop sessions. The extensive coverage of case analysis, opening statements, witness examination, closing arguments, use of exhibits, and over-all trial strategy boosts student skill and confidence in the courtroom. At the conclusion of the first week, every student conducts a full-length trial and enters the second portion of the program with increasing effectiveness.

Week 2-9: Evidence, Trial Advocacy, Motions Practice, and Evidence in the Courtroom

With a stronger foundation and understanding of the components of trial, students launch into the next seven weeks, focused on fine tuning their advocacy skills, and discovering new strategies and nuances in the courtroom. Students concentrate on mastering advanced evidentiary principles and rules, using their new knowledge to handle increasingly more difficult trial problems.

Weeks two through nine encompasses lectures and workshops, including highly specialized guest speakers sharing tips and tricks on various litigation topics. Students also have the opportunity to visit State and District Court hearing calendars. Trial lawyers collectively agree that they truly only learn evidence once they understand how it is utilized throughout trial preparation; student observation and skill practice cements this understanding. Our 1st STEP students complete the program by conducting their second full trial. Students graduate 1st STEP with the necessary skills to comfortably draft and argue motions, use exhibits and enter evidence, present effective jury addresses, and conduct witness examinations while integrating the Rules of Evidence seamlessly into practice.

Our litigation skills programs and innovative teaching techniques also prepare our students for success at local and national mock trial and moot court competitions. Participating students experience the opportunity to compete on a regional and national stage, providing them with first-hand experience arguing cutting-edge cases and championing the latest legal and procedural issues.

Litigation Center students enjoy access to performance coaching and mentoring from world-class litigators, promoting their development into effective and persuasive legal advocates.

Admission

1. Entering Students

Students may apply to 1st STEP as part of the regular JD application process by checking the box for Summer Trial and Evidence Program on their admissions application. If a student is pre-admitted to 1st STEP, they must maintain the required law school GPA during their first and second semesters. These rules are contained within the *Student Handbook*. As part of the pre-admission process and to assess interest and enthusiasm for trial advocacy training, students must submit the following: (1) an application, and (2) a statement of interest to the Litigation Center with attention to BaxterFellow@ggu.edu.

Pre-admitted students must re-apply in October of their first year to confirm their interest in attending the STEP Program and with any updates or changes.

1st STEP applications can be found on the Litigation Center website: <http://www.ggulitigation.com/events-programs/first-step/>. Statements of interest should address whether advocacy, litigation, or trial practice factored into the student's decision to attend law school. Statements should also include a description of an experience in which the student welcomed critique and feedback, incorporated the feedback, and turned the process into a positive result. Questions that students are encouraged to answer in their statements are the following: Understanding that advocacy, litigation, and trial training are available throughout your career at GGU Law, why is it important to you to gain this training in your first summer? How do you plan to use 1st STEP training during your 2L and 3L years of law school and beyond?

2. Spring Admission & Application Deadline (October of 1L year)

Fulltime 1L students and transfer students may apply for rolling admission into the summer program in October of their first year. Fall semester grades will determine if an applicant meets the GPA requirement to enroll in the pre-STEP elective, which takes place in the following spring semester. After spring grades are released, those students still expressing interest in attending STEP will be re-evaluated for acceptance into the Program.

Details regarding the application process will be posted throughout the fall and spring semesters on the Litigation Center Website (www.ggulitigation.com), in *The Exhibit* newsletter, and in *Law School News*. Students interested in applying are encouraged to meet with the Baxter Fellow in Litigation to inquire about the course and application process. The STEP Committee evaluates several factors, including the applicant's fall semester grades, applications, any references, and statement of interest. The number of post-fall admittees to the program will depend upon the number of students already enrolled and the quality of applications. All eligible students are encouraged to apply.

3. Part-Time Students – Application Deadline (October of 2L year)

Part-time students are eligible for enrollment in 1st STEP during the summer after their 2L year. Part-Time students can submit their application during their first year of law school, but must indicate on their application that they are applying for the summer of the following year. Part-time students must follow-up with a new application the following year indicating any updates or changes in the student's interest and activities.

Admission Criteria

Criteria considered for admission to the program include demonstrated success in law school, interest in and enthusiasm for a career in litigation, participation in GGU litigation activities, desire for advanced advocacy training, and the ability to perform successfully in a professional setting. 1st STEP is limited to 24 students each summer. Admission to this innovative 10-week summer program is selective, but all eligible students are encouraged to apply. All students must maintain the required GPA to participate in 1st STEP.

Withdrawal

Students who decide to withdraw from 1st STEP must meet with the Baxter Fellow and the Director of the Litigation Program and complete a *Petition for Change of JD Academic Program* form which requires the signatures of the STEP Director and either the Associate Dean or Director of Student Affairs, Law School.

Registration and Required Courses

First-year STEP students must sign and submit a summer program commitment form after being accepted into the program. Once committed, the STEP Director will inform the registrar, who will then manually place each student in required STEP courses. STEP students are subject to the same rules as non-HLP JD students, including those regarding tuition, tuition credit, refunds, and withdrawals.

While it may become necessary to adjust the specified curriculum of 1st STEP for pedagogical or administrative reasons, the following outline represents the basic structure of the summer litigation program curriculum and required pre-STEP elective:

Fall Semester – 1st STEP students must choose “LAW - 706Z Lawyering: Introduction to Litigation - 1st STEP” as their elective for the spring semester.

Spring Semester – Applicants must complete “LAW - 706Z Lawyering: Introduction to Litigation - 1st STEP” as their 1L elective.

Summer Semester – 1st STEP students take 11 units during their first summer:

- a. Immersion Week (40 hours)
- b. LAW 804T Trial Evidence and Advocacy (5 units)
- c. LAW 804M Effective Brief Writing & Motion Advocacy (2 units)
- d. LAW 804 Evidence (4 units)

The summer session usually begins in late May and ends in late July. Classes are generally held Monday through Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. Final class schedules will be published as soon as they are determined. Because of the intense course schedule, STEP students are well-advised not to make any plans which would interfere with daily attendance. STEP students are prohibited from being employed during the summer curriculum.

Grading

All STEP courses must be taken for a letter grade. Separate letter grades will be assigned for LAW 804, LAW 804M, and LAW 804T. All courses in STEP follow the Standard Large Elective Curve, except for Evidence, which follows the Upper Division Curve requirement.

Litigation Certificate Specialization

STEP students may earn a Litigation Specialization Certificate after meeting certain course requirements. These requirements can be found in the "Certificates of Specialization" section of this *Handbook*. Students should contact the certificate advisor and the Dean or Director for Student Affairs for assistance in planning their academic schedules.

Financial Aid

The Financial Aid Office works closely with STEP students. STEP students pay the same tuition and are entitled to the same scholarship opportunities as non-STEP JD students. STEP staff and faculty do not have access to a student's financial aid records or control over the release of financial aid funding. For any questions regarding financial aid, please contact the Financial Aid Office directly.

Graduation

STEP students receive a notation in the School of Law commencement program indicating that they are graduates of the Summer Litigation Program. Each year, the STEP Committee selects an outstanding student(s) from among the graduating STEP graduates, with an award(s) acknowledged in the School of Law commencement program.