

Program enhances trial lawyers' skills



Direct and cross-examination and closing arguments were among the topics taught at the recent Richard Scott Joye Trial College held at the Joseph F. Rice School of Law at the University of South Carolina. (Joseph F. Rice School of Law | Kayla Jeffers)

AT A GLANCE

- A select group of South Carolina criminal defense lawyers recently attended the inaugural Richard Scott Joye Trial College at the Joseph F. Rice School of Law.
- Structured as a boot camp-style program, participants received hands-on training and feedback on topics such as opening statements, cross-examinations and closing arguments.
- Selection to attend was competitive, with applicants required to submit a resume, character reference and letter of interest; 12 participants were chosen.

Criminal defense lawyers had the opportunity to sharpen their courtroom skills at the recently held inaugural Richard Scott Joye Trial College at the [Joseph F. Rice School of Law](#) at the University of South Carolina.

Inspired by the [National Criminal Defense College](#), the four-day program was modeled on the Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers Trial Advocacy Program and was structured along the lines of a boot camp, a news release from the school says.

“There are very few opportunities for this kind of hands-on training,” Dayne Phillips, one of the program’s coordinators and a criminal defense attorney with Price Benowitz, said in the release. “One of

our experienced lawyers told me that it was nerve-wracking to do an opening statement in front of lawyers they respect ... but he feels like being put in that position definitely made him a better lawyer.”



Participants and faculty at the inaugural Richard Scott Joye Trial College gather outside the Joseph F. Rice School of Law at the University of South Carolina for a group portrait. (Joseph F. Rice School of Law | Kayla Jeffers)

Also coordinating the program were Kitty Sutton, executive director of the S.C. Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and Gary Lemel, an attorney with McKinney Tucker & Lemel.

The program’s schedule included sessions on developing a theme in theory, direct examination, cross-examination, and closing arguments, the release says. Attorneys also received feedback on personal aspects of courtroom presentation such as body language, tone of voice and eye contact.

Students worked with a partner, Phillips said. After each lecture, the pairs would practice the daily topic with two to three faculty members and then be critiqued. Faculty members also offered demonstrations on each topic after the presentations.

Selection to attend the college was competitive. Applicants had to submit a resume, character reference and letter of interest. The 12 participants were selected by the board of directors of the [South Carolina Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers](#) Educational Foundation.

“When Kitty mentioned the Trial College, I immediately sought to apply,” Elizabeth Hedgecoe Neyle, a lawyer with the 12th Circuit Public Defender’s Office, said. “I’ve been a public defender for the last nine years, and I always strive to sharpen my trial practice. Here, we not only get to advocate in a courtroom atmosphere but also, we receive feedback from premier criminal defense attorneys in this state.”

The program’s namesake, the late Richard Scott Joye, “was a lauded criminal defense attorney who typified dedication to self-improvement, education and relationship building,” the release says.

Said Jim Huff, a longtime defense attorney and faculty member for the program: “[Joye] was an accomplished trial attorney that everyone liked. He had great integrity. He was a fighter in the courtroom. And we hope this college will help others do the same over the years.”

The students who participated in the program were:

- Derek Bush

- Andre Coaxum
- Erin Conroy
- Elaine Cook
- Will Dubose
- Josh Edgeworth
- Dana Fields
- Joe Good
- Chris Helms
- Daniel McDonald
- Demi Messer
- Elizabeth Neyle

The faculty members for the program were:

- Scott Bischoff
- Cameron Blazer
- Erin Bailey
- Bobby Bank
- Gill Bell
- Ally Benevento
- Jim Brown
- Drew Carroll
- Harry Dest
- Ron Hazzard
- Jim Huff
- Tim Kulp
- Shaun Kent
- Joe McCulloch
- Patrick McLaughlin
- Chelsea McNeil
- Bill Nettles

- Jean Poposwski
- Fielding Pringle
- Luke Shealey
- Jennifer Wells
- Boyd Young
- Aimee Zmroczek