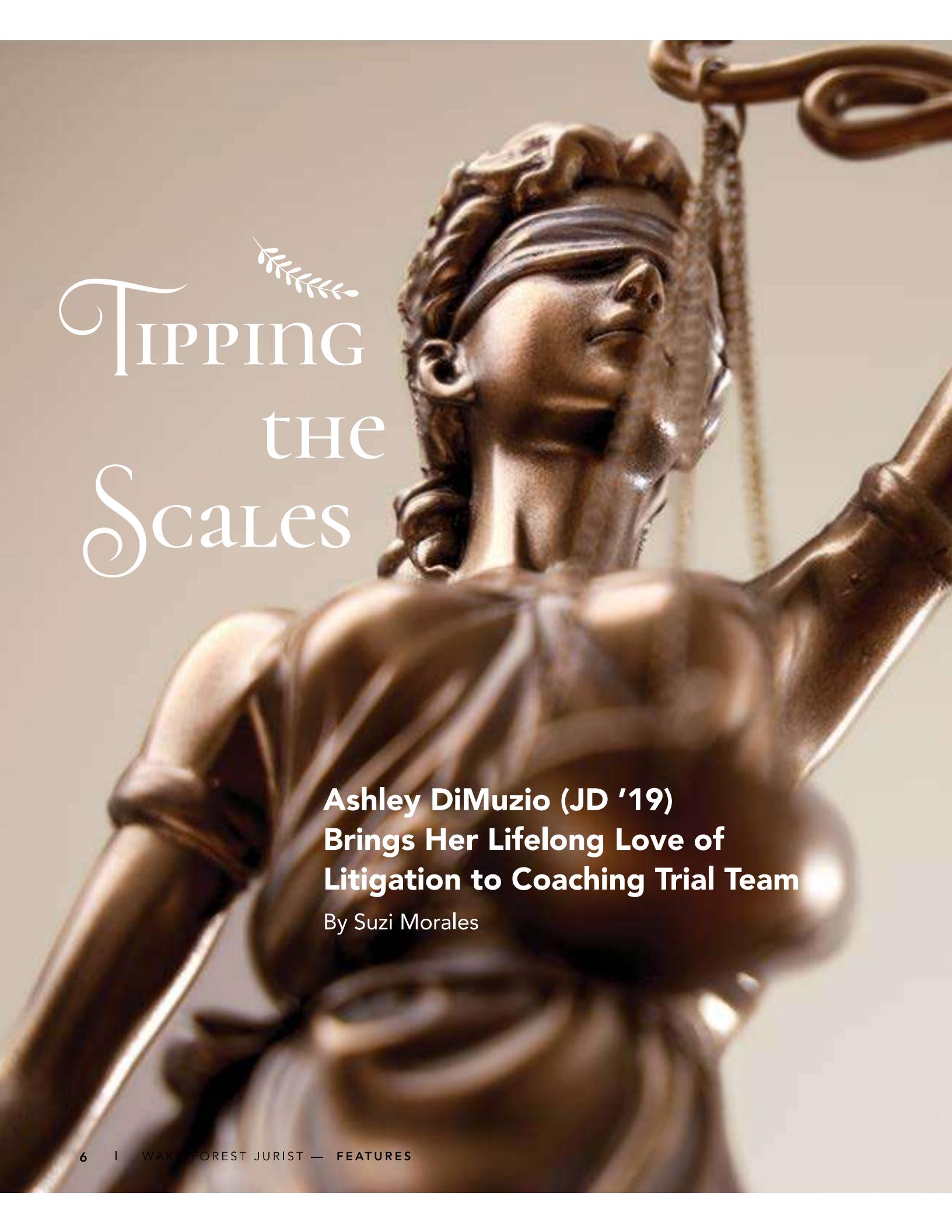


WAKE FOREST JURIST

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GUIDING LIGHTS





TIPPING the Scales

**Ashley DiMuzio (JD '19)
Brings Her Lifelong Love of
Litigation to Coaching Trial Team**

By Suzi Morales



Ashley DiMuzio (fifth from right) and Wake Forest Law Dean Andrew Klein (fourth from right) with trial team members preparing for the fall 2023 National Board of Trial Advocacy (NBTA) Tournament of Champions.

When she was about eight years old, Ashley DiMuzio (JD '19) went to court for the first time. DiMuzio's father, a surgeon, was a witness in a case and brought his daughter along to the courthouse.

"It was fascinating to me watching everything. I got to watch a moving violation bench trial while I was waiting for the case that my dad was involved in," DiMuzio recalls. "That memory is so burned into my mind. And I remember finding the entire thing so fascinating as a little kid that I learned as much as I could about it." After that day, when her classmates said they wanted to become astronauts or princesses, she began saying that she wanted to be a trial lawyer.

Today, DiMuzio is a criminal defense attorney in the Winston-Salem office of Bell, Davis & Pitt. She is also an adjunct professor at Wake Forest Law and coaches the school's national trial team.

"I love being a lawyer, but if you ask me what is the most fulfilling thing that I do, what is my favorite thing that I do, it's teach these students," says DiMuzio.



Dedicated to Advocacy

From left, trial team members Mark Parent (JD '19), Tracea Rice (JD '19), Virginia Stanton (JD '19) and Ashley DiMuzio (JD '19) pose with their coach Mark Boynton (JD '97) in celebration of their win at the Tournament of Champions (TOC) in October 2018.



In high school, DiMuzio learned about mock trial and joined her school's team, which was coached by a practicing criminal defense lawyer. The experience solidified her interest in becoming a litigator, particularly in criminal defense. She continued to compete in mock trial as she earned her undergraduate degree from American University in Washington, DC, where she studied communications, law, economics, and government.

Law school was a foregone conclusion, and DiMuzio was drawn to the strong community atmosphere at Wake Forest Law. From the moment she stepped onto campus her first year, she began what she laughingly calls an "aggressive" campaign to make the trial team. "My 1L year, I competed in all three competitions that they had available to 1Ls," she says. "I volunteered every opportunity I could to witness for the trial team or to show up when they asked for volunteers. I went to all the trial bar student-run events. I did everything I could to make sure that the people in charge of making those decisions knew my name long before I put my name on that signup list."

Not only did DiMuzio make the trial team, she was part of a team that won four national championships. But she says her coaches, Mark Boynton (JD '97) and Matt Breeding (JD '06), emphasized becoming ethical attorneys, not simply winning competitions, an approach DiMuzio herself takes now that she is a trial team coach.

"I love trial team. I love our students, but I tell them often—especially when I see them getting frustrated or upset at the competition aspect of it—we put so much time and love and sweat and tears into this but at the end of the day, it is a fake case with fake people in front of fake judges for plastic shiny things," she says. "And while that means something, the most important thing—and what really describes winning in our program—is coming out on the other side feeling like you are a confident, ethical advocate."

"You've got to show the bad with the good... because we, as lawyers, especially trial lawyers, we absorb secondary trauma every day."

—Ashely DiMuzio (JD '19)





Left: Ashley discusses rules of evidence with trial team members.

Below: Ashley with some of the newest trial team members preparing for the fall 2024 Premiere Trial Competition.



A Trusted Mentor



Since her graduation in 2019, DiMuzio has been a criminal defense lawyer, first for the Forsyth County Public Defender Office and now in private practice. She's worked on cases from speeding tickets to first-degree murder. She says that Wake Forest Law gave her a strong sense that everyone deserves to be helped.

But her work isn't easy, a fact DiMuzio never hides from the students she mentors. "You've got to show the bad with the good because if you throw someone who only knows the good half of things into a world, they're going to be beaten and broken down so quickly because they haven't built up the defenses to deal with the bad," she says. "Because we, as lawyers, especially trial advocates who are in the courtroom, we absorb secondary trauma every day."

During those difficult times as an attorney, DiMuzio's students keep her energized, and she hopes to do the same for them. "There's something for me about just helping build the future and knowing that [I] as one person can only do so much work with the time that I have," she says. "But every student that I have is another lifetime of positive impact in a world that so desperately needs it."