

2024 CORPORATE COUNSEL TRAINING ACADEMY SPEAKERS

**Nicole M. Brunson**

Program Chair of the 2024 Corporate Counsel Training Academy

Arrival

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Nicole M. Brunson is Head of Litigation & Disputes with Arrival. In this global role, Nicole practices general litigation, product liability, and commercial litigation with a focus on risk mitigation. She also advises on various corporate matters. Before joining Arrival in 2021, Nicole served as Associate General Counsel with Trane Technologies and an associate at Swanson Martin & Bell, LLP, a boutique litigation firm in Chicago, Illinois.

Nicole serves the business in mitigation of risk, management of litigation matters and costs, and the provision of legal insight on business decisions. Nicole's varied background in physical science and sales and management provides a strong foundation for her role as a dispute resolutionist and business partner to her clients.

A big believer in "paying it forward," Nicole is active in the Association of Corporate Counsel Charlotte Chapter and served as President during 2020. Nicole was awarded the *Charlotte Business Journal's* Rising Star in 2014 and was named a 2019 nominee for Outstanding Corporate Counsel. She is a certified mentor with Mentor Collective and has earned the elite ACC In-House Counsel Certified (ICC) designation.

Nicole is a 2006 graduate of Indiana University School of Law - Bloomington (n/k/a/ Maurer School of Law) and 1998 graduate of Xavier University of Louisiana (BS Biochemistry). She obtained an MBA in Marketing and Management from Christian Brothers University in 2002. Nicole enjoys cooking, traveling, Peloton, and family time with her four children, a boxer named Stella, and her extraordinary husband, James.

**Michele Y. Smith**

IADC President

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Michele is a partner at MehaffyWeber in its Houston and Beaumont, Texas offices. She is Board Certified in Personal Injury Trial Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization and an Advocate member of the American Board of Trial Advocates. She has represented clients in complex litigation matters, spanning a wide variety of areas including products and premises liability, pharmaceutical, commercial litigation, and construction defect litigation. In addition, she has represented diverse businesses in sophisticated mass tort causes of action involving numerous chemical substances and exposure. She has also been involved in several high-stakes commercial arbitrations. She has served on her Firm's Management, Marketing, Recruiting, and Compensation Committees and currently chairs the firm's DEIB Committee. In addition to her inclusion in the *Best Lawyers® in America* lawyer referral publication for multiple years, Michele was recognized by *Best Lawyers* as "Lawyer of the Year" in Beaumont, Texas for Product Liability Litigation – Defendants (2015), Personal Injury Litigation – Defendants (2017), Insurance Law (2017,2023), and Mass Tort Litigation/Class Actions-Defendants (2019). She also has been included in the *Thomson Reuters Texas Super Lawyers* list annually for more than a decade (2005-2023). Michele is married to fellow IADC member, Mitch Smith. They have been active IADC members since Michele joined the IADC in 2005. Michele serves as the IADC's current President. From 2019-2022, she served on the Board of Directors and was liaison to the CLE, Trial Academy, and Construction Law and Litigation Committees. Previously, she served on the General Convention Committee, the Membership Committee, and the Nominating Committee, and was a Chair of the Civil Justice Response, CLE, and In House and Law Firm Management Committees. She is a proud IADC Trial Academy graduate (1997) and faculty member (2013). In addition to her work in the IADC, Michele is active in her community, having served on numerous charitable boards including the Lamar University Foundation, The Foundation for Southeast Texas, The Symphony of Southeast Texas, and the Shorkey Center which serves children with special needs. Previously, Michele served as president of the Texas Association of Defense Counsel, the Jefferson County Bar Association, and the Jefferson County Young Lawyers' Association. Michele is the recipient of the President's Award from the Texas Association of Defense Counsel (2010) and numerous honors from the Jefferson County Bar Association, including the Cris Quinn Award (2014) and the Kenneth Lewis Professionalism Award (2019). She also received the St. Thomas More Society Award in 2017 from the St. Thomas More Society of Southeast Texas.

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Stanley Ball

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Stan Ball serves as the Vice President and Head of Legal, Trade and Government Affairs, Transformation, and Execution at Intel. In his role, he leads the organization in making the operational and strategic shifts to better support Intel's internal foundry systems model, which includes global legal operations and employee engagement and development. Stan joined Intel from Eaton Corporation, where he served as the Vice President & Chief Litigation Counsel, responsible for leading global litigation and risk management strategy. Prior to his role at Eaton, Stan was in private practice with large law firms based in Cleveland and Chicago. Stan has an extensive track record of community engagement. Through the Business Roundtable in Washington, DC, Stan implemented the strategy for creating and growing the Second Chance Business Coalition, an organization composed of 49 of America's largest employers designed to reduce barriers for justice-involved individuals seeking employment. He also serves on the Board of Directors for University Hospitals East Market District, the Great Lakes Science Center, and his alma mater, Baldwin-Wallace University. Stan earned his Bachelor of Arts in Business, *magna cum laude*, from Baldwin-Wallace University and his Juris Doctor, *magna cum laude*, from Cleveland State University College of Law.




Christine S. Egner


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Chris S. Egner is a corporate attorney at Continental Tire the Americas, LLC in Fort Mill, South Carolina. Her global responsibilities include risk assessment and case evaluation for complex product liability, asbestos, toxic tort, and automotive systems matters. She is a legal advisor to Human Relations, including responding to claims of discrimination, harassment, wrongful termination, and conduct compliance training. She manages external counsel during all phases of litigation. Ms. Egner also provides general legal advice, contract drafting/negotiation, and NPM Purchasing support. She serves as the Chairman of the Information Governance Committee responsible for the management and evolution of Continental's U.S. legal hold data retention systems to ensure ongoing compliance with applicable U.S. legal standards.

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	<p>She is a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Advisory Board Member and Founder of the Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Network at Continental.</p> <p>Ms. Egner is a Board Member of the Association of Corporate Counsel (Charlotte, North Carolina Chapter) and is an active member and Chair of the Corporate Counsel Committee of the International Association of Defense Counsel. Ms. Egner serves as a Board Member of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Greater Charlotte. In 2016, she co-published, "Simplifying through Storytelling: Use of Animations and Graphics in Complex Product Liability Claims."</p> <p>She earned her J.D. from Nova Southeastern University. She is admitted to the Florida Bar, Southern District of Florida, Middle District of Florida, and Northern District of Florida.</p>
	<p>Sherylle Francis <i>Universal Property and Casualty Ins. Co.</i> <i>Fort Lauderdale, FL USA</i> sf0404@universalproperty.com</p> <p>Sherylle Francis is a Senior Managing Associate General Counsel at Universal Property & Casualty Insurance Company. Sherylle previously founded and managed her own law practice where she represented local and international companies in a variety of civil matters. She is a seasoned trial lawyer with more than 20 years experience defending major corporations, including insurers, pharmaceutical, pharmaceutical compounding, automotive, and heavy-duty equipment manufacturers, in commercial, product, and unfair trade practice litigation, including multi-party mass tort litigation in state and federal courts nationwide and in the United States Virgin Islands.</p> <p>Sherylle has spent her career assessing risk for major corporations, negotiating on their behalf and collaborating with their business and legal units to analyze and develop solutions-driven business practices. She has leveraged this experience to provide guidance and leadership to the boards she has had the privilege to serve as both a member and chair. She previously served as Secretary, Vice-Chair, and Chair of Broward Legal Aid and Coast to Coast Legal Aid, and as a board member of the Women's Council of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce and the Lynne Mitchell Foundation.</p>

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	<p>Sherylle is certified by the Florida Supreme Court as a circuit civil mediator and served as the Co-Chair of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (“ADR”) section of the Broward County Bar Association. Sherylle served as a court-appointed mediator in a variety of civil matters in Florida state courts. She also serves as a Vice Chair on the IADC's Alternative Dispute Resolution; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging; Cyber Security, Data Privacy, and Technology; and Drug, Device and Biotechnology Committees.</p>
	<p>Heidi B. Friedman <i>Thompson Hine LLP</i> <i>Cleveland, OH USA</i> Heidi.Friedman@Thompsonhine.com</p> <p>Heidi B. (Goldstein) Friedman is a partner in Thompson Hine’s Environmental and Product Liability Litigation practice groups and co-chair of the firm’s ESG Collaborative. She focuses her practice on environmental, health, and safety counseling in business; regulatory and legislative matters; environmental and toxic tort litigation; environmental enforcement actions; site remediation; product stewardship; and compliance with environmental regulations. Friedman serves as national environmental counsel for many large corporations, including Fortune 500 companies, often providing legal support utilizing flexible staffing and value-based pricing.</p> <p>Friedman is co-chair of the ESG Collaborative, Thompson Hine’s multidisciplinary team that was created to assist clients as ESG factors have become increasingly important priorities for their investors, customers, employees, and other stakeholders. In this role, she partners with clients to meet their evolving ESG needs and objectives and provides guidance on developing or expanding sustainability, diversity, and social stewardship strategies. Friedman believes that counsel can play a valuable role in serving as strategic, trusted advisors who holistically evaluate the risks and opportunities presented by all categories of the “E,” “S,” and “G.” Friedman has been interviewed by and published in multiple outlets on ESG topics, including <i>Law360</i>, <i>Bloomberg Law</i>, <i>Of Counsel</i>, <i>Corporate Counsel</i>, and <i>The AmLaw Litigation Daily</i>.</p>

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**Bryant Hall**

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Bryant Hall is Senior Counsel, Global Litigation and Regulatory at Pinterest, Inc., a leading visual discovery engine for finding ideas and inspiration. Mr. Hall joins a team of legal professionals who support Pinterest's litigation and regulatory activities globally. As a general litigator, Mr. Hall's responsibilities cover a broad range of intellectual property, commercial, and regulatory matters.

Mr. Hall has spoken on topics relating to negotiation and litigation strategies and navigating career paths for diverse attorneys at seminars and events organized by law firms and the Minority Corporate Counsel Association (MCCA). While in private practice at Williams & Connolly LLP, Mr. Hall founded the Diverse Associates Network, an organization supporting diverse attorneys in their pursuit of career advancement. Mr. Hall is a graduate of Yale Law School and Yale University.

**Gary Howard**

Walmart, Inc.

Bentonville, AR USA

Gary is Senior Counsel Tort Litigation at Walmart in Bentonville, AR.

**Melissa Lin**

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Melisa Lin is a partner at Righi Fitch Law Group in Phoenix, Arizona and has earned the AV Preeminent Rating. Her practice includes insurance coverage and the representation of individuals, businesses, contractors, and municipalities in tort and contract litigation, primarily in the areas of general liability, personal injury, employment, cyber liability, privacy and data security, construction defect, and product liability litigation. She was peer selected as a *Best Lawyer in America* in Construction Law for 2021-2024, in Insurance Law

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for 2023-2024, Personal Injury Litigation - Defendants for 2023-2024, and Litigation - Construction for 2024. She was honored as a 2012-2019 Southwest *Super Lawyers* Rising Star. In 2018, the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) recognized her as one of the 19 Best Under Forty attorneys in the country for her prominence and distinction in the practice of law and her demonstrated commitment to Asian Pacific American civic or community affairs. In 2013, she was named to *Lawyers of Color's* Inaugural Hot List for the Western Region, and as one of the top valley attorneys in Phoenix by *North Valley* magazine. She has spoken and been published both locally and nationally on legal writing, diversity, and construction law. Melissa is the daughter of Taiwanese immigrants. She grew up in Tucson, Arizona where her parents owned and operated a small business for more than 37 years.





Taylor Poncz
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Taylor Poncz is a partner in Chartwell Law's Atlanta office. She is an accomplished litigator who focuses exclusively on defense of workers' compensation claims. Taylor represents employers, insurers, and self-insured businesses throughout Georgia. She defends clients across many industries, with extensive experience in the construction, manufacturing, retail, healthcare, education, and transportation fields. Taylor's philosophy is, and has always been, about communication, collaboration with clients, and closing cases efficiently and expeditiously. In addition to her defense work, Taylor is also a trained mediator, assisting injured workers and employer/insurers in resolving Georgia workers' compensation claims.

In 2023, Taylor was selected for membership in the IADC. For many years, she has also been an active member of DRI, where she has served in various leadership positions for the Women in the Law and the Workers' Compensation Committees. Taylor is also a 2022 recipient of the On the Rise Professional Excellence Award from the *Daily Report's* Georgia Legal Awards.

Taylor is a co-host of the podcast *The Mother Board*, which focuses on hot topics in law and in life from the lens of 3 lawyer moms and explores challenges and issues many people face when taking an active role in their families while taking charge of their careers. Additionally, Taylor has been an active speaker

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	<p>at CLEs, conferences, and on podcasts on the topic of attorney mental health and wellness.</p> <p>Taylor lives in Atlanta with her husband and 3 sons (including a set of twins!), but she is a Carolina Tarheel born and bred.</p>
	<p>Charles Price <i>Eaton</i> <i>Cleveland, OH USA</i> charlieprice@eaton.com</p> <p>Charlie Price serves as litigation counsel for Eaton Corporation, a global technology leader in power management solutions. He oversees the company's toxic tort and environmental litigation. In 2017, he partnered with University of Akron School of Law to develop and teach <i>Winning Before Trial</i>, a course that integrates principles from law, statistics, communications, psychology, economics, and other fields to help students improve their litigation judgment and decision making. He's also a visiting instructor for the Kessler-Eidson Program for Trial Techniques at Emory University School of Law.</p> <p>Since joining Eaton in 2016, Charlie has taken an active role in nurturing and developing the next generation of legal professionals. Among other efforts, he has partnered with CWRU School of Law as a member of the Dean's Diversity Cabinet to address the historical lack of diversity in the legal profession. He also works closely with the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association's Council on Conscious Inclusion workgroups and committees to help empower legal entities with practical tools to improve the recruitment, retention, and advancement of diverse legal professionals.</p> <p>Charlie is an avid writer and speaker on litigation and DEI topics and is the author of the <i>Winning Before Trial</i> litigation blog. Finally, he is an award-winning board game designer.</p>
	<p>Niki Schaefer <i>ReliabilityFirst</i> <i>Cleveland, OH USA</i> niki.schaefer@rfirst.org</p> <p>As Vice President and General Counsel for ReliabilityFirst, Niki Schaefer leads the Legal, Enforcement, and Compliance Monitoring (auditing) teams.</p>

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ReliabilityFirst is one of six companies across the country that have statutory authority delegated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to regulate the reliability of electricity.

Niki returned to ReliabilityFirst from Eaton Corporation where she served as legal counsel to senior leadership teams across multiple business units within Eaton’s Electrical Sector. Prior to Eaton, Niki was the Managing Enforcement Counsel at ReliabilityFirst and directed the teams responsible for carrying out enforcement of electric reliability regulations. Before working in the electric industry, Niki was a trial lawyer at Benesch Friedlander. She was also an adjunct professor at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) School of Law.

Niki is active in the Cleveland community through volunteer work for University Hospitals and the American Heart Association. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of The Gathering Place, a non-profit that provides free therapeutic services to people with cancer and their loved ones.

Niki received her B.A. with honors in American Studies from Cornell University and graduated *cum laude* from CWRU School of Law where she received an academic scholarship. She lives in Chagrin Falls, Ohio with her husband, son, daughter, and their two dogs. In her free time, Niki is an avid runner and snowboarder, loves to cook and entertain, and is a close follower of politics and fashion.



Schuyler A. Smith

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Schuyler A. Smith is a partner in Hamilton Miller & Birthisel's Miami, Florida office. Ms. Smith concentrates her practice on commercial litigation matters, as well as defending significant personal injury, premises liability, and products liability lawsuits. She represents major hotels and resort chains, retailers, Fortune 500 companies, insurers, cruise lines, governmental entities, and transportation companies in state and federal courts throughout Florida and the United States Virgin Islands.

Ms. Smith has been consistently recognized as a Florida *Super Lawyers* “Rising Star” since 2014 and has been recognized as a Best Lawyer by *The Best Lawyers in America* in 2022.

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Amy M. Stewart

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Amy M. Stewart leads the only minority and woman-owned law firm in Dallas that focuses on areas of general civil litigation, labor and employment, contracts, product liability, arbitrations, personal injury, and insurance defense. She frequently speaks on several subjects at local, state, and national legal and non-legal conferences.

Amy has been honored with numerous industry awards, including the *Dallas Business Journal's* 2023 Women in Business; 2024 and the 2023 *U.S. News Best Lawyers®* "Best Law Firms," 2023 and the 2022 *D CEO Dallas* 500 Most Powerful and Influential Leaders in Dallas-Fort Worth, 2022 *The Best Lawyers in America*, 2022 Women, Influence & Power in Law Best Mentor Law Firm, 2022 *D Best Lawyers* in Dallas, 2021 *Best Lawyers in America*, 2021 *Super Lawyers* 50 Top Women Lawyers in Texas, 2023, 2022, and the 2021 *Lawdragon* 500 Leading U.S. Corporate Employment Lawyers, 2020 *Texas Minority Counsel* Program Trailblazer of the Year, 2020 America's Top 100 Personal Injury Attorneys, 2020 National Black Lawyers Top 100, 2020 and 2019 Dallas Bar Association's Presidential Citation, the 2019 *Dallas Business Journal* Minority Business Owner Award, 2019 American Bar Association 100 Women Who Inspire Us Award, and is a six-time *Super Lawyers* honoree.

Furthermore, Amy serves in leadership roles as a Council member of the American Bar Association Litigation Section, a Board Member of the Dallas Bar Association, a member of the DBA's Coronavirus Task Force, on the Dallas Steering Committee for the Diverse Attorney Pipeline Program, and a member of the DBA's Equality Taskforce.



Ashley C. Webber



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Ashley C. Webber is a partner in Atlanta-based firm Swift Currie's civil litigation section. Ashley has a diverse practice that includes products liability, premises liability, professional malpractice, environmental liability, automobile/trucking litigation, and mass tort defense. She has significant experience in litigating

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	<p>catastrophic injury and wrongful death cases in both state and federal courts and has handled several matters at the appellate level. Ashley defends some of the world's largest heavy equipment manufacturers, lift truck manufacturers, automobile manufacturers, automotive parts suppliers, and power management companies. She also defends one of the nation's largest pharmaceutical companies in a wide variety of matters. In addition to practicing in Georgia, Ashley has litigated and resolved cases in Alabama, Massachusetts, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.</p> <p>Ashley is a member of the Product Liability Advisory Council (PLAC) and the International Association of Defense Counsel (IADC). She is also a member of several additional industry organizations including the Network of Trial Law Firms, Georgia Defense Lawyers Association (GDLA), and Defense Research Institute (DRI).</p>
	<p>Jaclyn Bryk Welch <i>The J.M. Smucker Company</i> <i>Orrville, OH USA</i> jackie.welch@jmsmucker.com</p> <p>Jackie Bryk Welch serves as Vice President - Litigation at The J.M. Smucker Company based in Orrville, Ohio. Before joining Smucker, Jackie was an associate at Flaherty Sensabaugh Bonasso PLLC in Charleston, West Virginia, followed by Tucker Ellis LLP in Cleveland, Ohio. Her practice entails overseeing Smucker's corporate litigation portfolio and claims. Jackie resides in Cleveland, Ohio.</p>
	<p>Johner T. Wilson <i>Epstein Becker & Green, P.C.</i> <i>Chicago, IL USA</i> JWilson@ebglaw.com</p> <p>J.T. is an experienced lead trial attorney, valued practical advisor, and trusted business partner, effectively counseling clients on sensitive compliance issues and creative methods of implementing complex business initiatives. J.T. also helps clients manage costs and minimize financial exposure in single and multi-plaintiff employment litigation, including Illinois Biometric Information Act (BIPA), federal and state whistleblower cases, wage and hour class and collective actions, and Federal Employers' Liability Act cases at trial in federal and state courts. He further advances his clients' interests in matters pending</p>

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before various federal, state, and local administrative agencies, including OSHA.

J.T. has served as a distinguished Faculty Member of the 2019-2023 ABA Labor and Employment Law Trial Institute, 2018 IADC Trial Academy and as the Vice Chair of Publications of the IADC Employment Law Committee (2017-2018), a member of the IADC Membership Committee and Website Task Force, and is actively engaged with the National Employment Law Council (NELC), frequently presenting on timely issues impacting the interests of industry partners and affecting the legal community.



John Wozniak

Arrival
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John Wozniak is the Interim CEO/Chief Financial Officer for Arrival. Mr. Wozniak brings more than 25 years of experience in financial operations and public accounting, including extensive leadership experience from his 18-year tenure at Motorola Solutions. At Motorola, Mr. Wozniak most recently served as Corporate Vice President, Finance Operations and served for eight years as its Chief Accounting Officer. Through his tenure, he played a key role in Motorola's transition from the legacy \$40+ billion revenue company with seven divisions to the more profitable and agile \$8 billion Motorola Solutions business of today that serves 100,000 customers in 100+ countries. Prior to Motorola Solutions, Mr. Wozniak worked in both the Audit Practice and National Office of Arthur Andersen.