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The Winners

UB Moot Court Teams Ride High in Jessup

Two moot court teams from UB Law School took high honors in separate intercollegiate competitions this spring.

The awards were the school's biggest victories thus far in the Jessup moot court competitions, amid a burgeoning interest among UB Law students in this intensive mock-trial exercise.

In March, UB's First Year Jessup Moot Court Team astonished its competitors in Toronto by taking every award, including Best School, Best Team (Lisa Dobosiewicz '93 and Henry Nowak '93), Second-Best Team (Tom Cannavo '93 and David Jones '93) and Best Oralist (Daniel Spitzer '93).

Besides the host University of Toronto, UB also competed against teams from Syracuse University and Queens College. 1991 is only the third year that UB has sent a team to the competition, called the Fasken Campbell Godfrey First Year International Law Moot.

The experience was electric for these eight gung-ho first-year students. Team member Tom Cannavo describes the scene:

"All the teams were sitting around in the lobby, waiting for them to announce the best two teams. UB was kind of sitting in the corner. We hadn't won a single award in this competition before and they announced that both the winning (two-person) teams were from UB. After that it was just a matter of seeing which two teams it was. It was

like a football game — we just went wild. We were high-fiving and hugging ... it was great."

The case at hand was a trade issue involving the fictitious countries of Nicchia and Mercuria. It dealt with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, a body of laws in which the students had had no course work.

"We have to give 100 percent of the credit to the Jessup board (of second- and third-year UB Law students) that trained us," Cannavo said. "None of us had even seen the GATT until two weeks before the competition. But by the time we got to the competition, we really believed there was no question we couldn't

answer."

The intense preparation and camaraderie brought personal benefits as well. "A lot of us on the first-year team hadn't met before," Cannavo said. "But people were really open and communicative, and we just kind of clicked into a friendship at the start."

UB will host the first-year competition in 1992. Funding is being provided by the Ford Foundation.

In February, UB's four-member Jessup International Moot Court team, composed of second- and third-year students, flew to



Moot Court winners, left to right: Henry Nowak '93, David Jones '93, Lisa Dobosiewicz '93, Tom Cannavo '93 and Daniel Spitzer '93.

Milwaukee to compete in the Jessup International Moot Court Regional Competition.

Competing against host Marquette University and a baker's dozen other schools, the UB team distinguished itself by winning two of the five Best Oralists awards (Sean Galliher '92 and Gay Kang '92). In addition, the judges singled out team members David Geurtsen '92 and Daniel Vira '92 for their oral excellence.

The teams were arguing the same question that the first-year students were coping with in Toronto. In 45-minute presentations, they faced tough inquiry from a panel of judges.

"Usually what happens is, the judges will let you speak for about one minute and then start grilling you with questions," Vira said. "They want to see how well you react, how well you field questions."

"Sometimes they're friendly questions, but sometimes they really try to throw you off track. Your job is to see if you can get back on track. It's like weaving in and out. You're doing a little dance."

The exercise is designed to replicate the conditions the students would face as lawyers pleading before the World Court or a state appellate court.

The UB team was chosen in the fall, with an intramural competition that involved writing a brief and delivering an oral argument. The school competition was judged by local practitioners and UB Law faculty. The judges also coached the team intensively for two weeks before the Milwaukee competition.

Vira said interest in the Jessup competitions has grown dramatically at UB, despite a liability: Some law schools award academic credit for participating, while UB's mooters do it solely for the experience. ■

New Environmental Clinic Launched

Polluters will find it harder to disappear behind a black cloud of legal smoke now that the Law School has launched its new Environmental Policy Clinic. It's a new clinical course in which law students will represent Western New York clients on issues that relate primarily to hazardous waste disposal. According to Professor R. Nils Olsen, director of the Law School's clinical education program, the new offering will focus on three major areas: community empowerment, legislative advocacy and the representation of community-based environmental groups.

"Community empowerment is a significant problem," says Olsen. "Communities that are directly impacted by hazardous waste disposal issues discover that decisions are made without their input. Now some groups may have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the process."

Legislative advocacy will be a second important component of the program. Policy issues will be addressed by means of legislative proposals, which will then be hammered out in conjunction with local legislators. The clinic will also represent environmental groups in administrative and court proceedings on related matters.

Although 40 students have expressed an interest in participating, Olsen said approximately 12 second- and third-year students will be admitted in the first semester. He will be supervising them.

"There's a tremendous interest among our law students in public environmental law and environmental policy issues," says Olsen.

"The Law School has always had a significant curriculum addressing these issues developed by Professors Barry B. Boyer and Errol E. Meidinger. Now we can offer our students a clinical component, in which they can put their enhanced understanding of these matters to practical use by representing the Western New York community. Not only is it a logical development in our curriculum, but it is also a very appropriate area in which to train our students."

"It's difficult to find qualified technical support for community-based groups that must grapple with these environmental issues and, ideally, that's what this program will do. There is a significant need for qualified and knowledgeable community representation in the area of environmental issues, particularly hazardous and toxic waste, remediation and disposal, which are pervasive problems in the community."

Additional clinical offerings include: the Low Income Housing Development Clinic, the Education Law Clinic, the Community Economic Development Clinic, Legal Services for the Elderly Clinic and the Refugee Clinic. ■

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