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UB Team Wins First Place in National Environmental Moot Contest

At UB Law, it's no moot point: Our team beat out 68 law schools from across the country, winning top honors in the largest moot court gathering in the nation.

Elizabeth Beiring and Daniel Spitzer cleaned up, so to speak, at the fifth annual Environmental Moot Court Competition. The contest, sponsored by Texaco, was held the weekend of Feb. 20 at Pace University Law School, located in White Plains, N.Y.

Among the finalists were The University of Vermont School of Law and the University of Tennessee School of Law.

Beiring had never participated in moot court before. But that didn't faze her or her more experienced partner, Daniel Spitzer, who also won four out of five rounds as Best Oralist.

"It was wonderful. Very exciting. Amazing," Beiring said.

The students argued a theoretical case concerning hazardous waste disposal in the mythical state of New Union. Like many environmental issues, this case had three parties — the state regulators and two competing economic interests. Throughout the competition — with the final three teams arguing the case for the sixth time — the students at different times took the side of all the litigants.

Beiring, then a third year law student, is also a Ph.D. candidate in Ecology in the Department of Biological Sciences. She was editor of the Law School's new Environmental Law Journal, and last year was president of the Environmental Law Society.

Spitzer, also a third year, served as editor-in-chief of the Buffalo Law Review. A Certified Public Accountant, he plans to work at Hodgson, Russ, Andrews, Woods & Goodyear after graduation. Before coming to UB Law, he was finance director of Bullhead City, Ariz. Both students credit law school courses with helping them win: Beiring said, "The moot court problem is similar to a real case we're working on in the Environmental Clinic. Preparation in the Clinic allowed me to do well." Spitzer said that a Constitutional Law course given by Prof. Alan Freeman had helped him.

Lawyers who were specialists in environmental law served as judges for the preliminary rounds, but in the finals, real judges were seated on the bench. They included Westchester County Court Judge John Carey, who oversaw the Carolyn Warmus murder trial; U.S. Circuit Judge Levin H. Campbell, of the First Circuit Court of Appeals; and Judge Jane A. Restani, of the U.S. Court of International Trade.

The law students brought home a prize: a large watercolor, "Dawn — Storm King," painted by John Hulsey, that will hang in the dean's suite until next year's competition. The Law School also will receive a lithograph of the painting to keep.

Said Beiring: "The best part was meeting people from all over the country and competing with them.

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