A Winning Tradition: UB Law Excels in Trial Advocacy, Moot Court and Mediation Competitions

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Complementing coursework that leads to a concentration in litigation, UB Law offers students abundant clinical, externship, moot court and mock trial opportunities. Our students compete against other law schools nationwide in such areas as trial advocacy, tax, and international, environmental and criminal law. They learn the art of advocacy from interacting with faculty, lawyers and judges who have distinguished careers in trial law.

In 2003, UB Law School received major national and regional recognition. The following stories tell of some of our most recent successes:

**UB Law wins first place in the National Trial competition’s regional round, then places second in the national finals**

For UB Law School, this year’s National Trial competition was a mixture of great success and heartbreak. After winning first place in the regional competition in New York City against hometown favorite St. John’s, the UB Law team of Langston D. McFadden ’04, Julie A. Atti ’04 and Kristin St. Mary ’04 advanced to the prestigious nationals in Houston. There the UB Law team made it to the finals, only to come in second place to St. John’s. It was the first time in the history of the competition that two schools from Region II participated in the final championship round.

“We were disappointed, but our team made UB Law School proud with their extraordinary performance and professionalism,” said coach Thomas Franczyk, a Buffalo City Court judge who has spent innumerable hours coaching our trial team and teaches Trial Technique in the Law School. “They were gracious in victory and defeat, earned respect and made friends across the country.” Other trial team coaches who deserve our thanks and congratulations are James W. Ginbke ’96, Diane LaVallee ’83, Joseph J. Marusak ’81 and Jennifer Runfola.

**UB Law wins regional round in mediation advocacy competition, then takes fifth place in finals**

A team of two second-year UB Law students, Laurie A. Batterson ’04 and Heather A. Giambra ’04, beat teams from nine other law schools to win a regional mediation advocacy competition in Manhattan in February. Batterson and Giambra then took fifth place out of 10 teams at the national competition, held in mid-March in San Antonio, Texas.

According to coach Steven R. Sugarman, the competition measures the team’s skill in preparing for and participating in mediation. Each round pits two student attorney-client teams against each other in a new dispute scenario at the negotiation table with a mediator. The team that best uses interest-based negotiation techniques to promote a creative, win-win settlement while also demonstrating zealous attorney representation wins the round. Because UB won the regionals this year, it will host the regional competition next year.

**Mooters make their marks**

Several UB Law students advanced to elimination rounds and picked up individual oralist awards in both local and national moot court competitions. The season began in mid-February with the Jessup Moot Court Board’s intramural competition for first-year students. Over 50 students participated in the competition, which resulted in the selection of ten students to prepare for the annual First Year International Law Moot organized by the Toronto, Ontario-based firm Fasken Martineau DuMoulin, LLP. The Board’s Fasken Directors Keith L. Bernstein ’03 and Matthew J. Rich ’03 were pleased to report that one of their team members, Gordon W. Lyon ’05, received an oralist award at the Toronto competition on March 22.

Two weeks after the Jessup intramural, the Buffalo Moot Court Board hosted its Albert R. Muger National Tax Moot Court Competition. About 10 schools, including two teams from UB Law, participated in the competition, which was held at the Erie County Family Courthouse, 1
Lauree A. Batterson '04 argues in the Francis M. Letro Courtroom.

Niagara Plaza, for the first time. Professor Kenneth F. Joyce composed a competition problem that successfully enticed U.S. Tax Court Judge Renato Beghe to judge the final round in the O'Brian Hall Courtroom on February 22. Although UB Law's two teams advanced to separate semi-final rounds at the Mugel competition, the final round set one UB team against the ultimate competition champions from St. John's University.

In early March, UB Law's Jessup Team, composed of five second-year students, competed in the East Regional Competition, hosted by the University of Michigan Law School, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Although the team narrowly failed to advance to elimination rounds, team members Lisa Darnish '04 and Tatiana Vostok '04 received oralist awards, ranking third and ninth respectively out of 48 competitors.

The Jessup Board also sponsored a team of second-year students to attend the international trade-related Niagara Cup Competition in Toronto, Ontario, on March 14.

Law School hosts Wechsler National Criminal Moot Court Competition

Three recent Supreme Court decisions and their effect on the federal Death Penalty Act formed the backdrop for the fifth annual Wechsler National Criminal Moot Court Competition, March 29 in Erie County Hall in Buffalo. UB Law School's Criminal Law Society hosted the competition, which included 23 teams. UB Law's team - Kelley A. DeAngelus '03 and Robert G. Spampata '04 - represented the Law School well, and both members received several votes as best oralist. Local attorneys and judges, including 41 UB Law alumni, supported the competition by serving as judges. This year, the Hon. George Bundy Smith of the state Court of Appeals served as a judge during the final round of competition.

Judge Charles S. Desmond Moot Court Competition

Held in November, 2002, the Desmond competition dealt with the case of Grutter v. Bollinger. Decided by the United States Supreme Court last year, the famous case dealt with whether the University of Michigan Law School's affirmative action admissions policy violated the 14th amendment. Winners were Paul B. Shipper '04 and Adam J. Sutton '04. Runners-up were Lauree A. Batterson and Josephine S. Noble.

The final-round judges for the event, held in the Francis M. Letro Courtroom, in O'Brian Hall, were Federal Magistrate H. Kenneth Schroeder Jr. '61, State Supreme Court Justice Barbara Howe '80 and State Supreme Court Justice Kevin M. Dillon '76. Teams of second- and third-year law students participated.

Annette J. Irving '03, outgoing president of the Buffalo Moot Court Board, ran the Desmond competition. Teams wrote a brief of about 30 pages, and then had to present oral arguments either "on brief" or "off brief."

Says Shipper, "Arguing for five nights in front of real judges and lawyers as well as constitutional law professors was an amazing experience. Knowing that the side we chose actually won in the Supreme Court made it even more exciting."

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