

4-1-2011

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UB Law Forum

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### Recommended Citation

UB Law Forum (2011) "Moot Court: 'The Most Valuable Experience I Had in Law School,' Students Say," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 23: No. 2, Article 12.

Available at: [https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub\\_law\\_forum/vol23/iss2/12](https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol23/iss2/12)

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# Moot Court: 'The most valuable experience I had in law school,' students say

**T**he cases are fictional, but when UB Law School students pour heart and soul into moot court competitions, the emotions are all too real. Students uniformly call their experiences in moot court, whether at home or on the road, "the most valuable experience I had in law school."

"Legal knowledge is good. But what purpose does it serve if you're not advancing it for the benefit of a client or in front of a judge or a jury?" says Erie County Court Judge Thomas P. Franczyk, who with attorney Christopher O'Brien oversees the Law School's trial advocacy programs. "It teaches you critical skills, analytical skills, the ability to think on your feet, to argue a case. Even if you never set foot in a courtroom as a lawyer, it's invaluable training."

Under the direction of Professor George Kannar, director of moot courts, UB Law students' participation in these exercises is both intramural and external. The Law School runs one moot court competition only for UB Law students: the Charles S. Desmond Moot Court Competition. It also sponsors two competitions that are open to law students from across the nation: the Albert R. Mugel Tax Law Competition (the first-ever tax competition) and the Wechsler Criminal Law Moot Court (the only competition in the nation devoted solely to substantive criminal law).

In addition, UB Law students travel to compete in a full range of nationwide trial competitions, including events sponsored by the American Bar Association, the Federal Bar Association and the American Association for Justice. Professor Lucinda M. Finley coaches two of these teams. Other nationwide events in which UB Law teams participate include competitions dealing with



Audrey Herman '11 and Christopher Moran '11 won the Albert R. Mugel Tax Moot Court Competition.

international law and legal ethics. The crown jewel of the program is the Buffalo-Niagara Tournament, held in the fall, one of the largest such competitions in the nation.

Local judges and attorneys – some UB Law alumni, some not – volunteer their time as judges for the competitions held in Western New York.

**S**ome highlights from the spring season:

- At the Phillip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition in February, the UB Law team's strong showing included winning sixth-best brief and receiving two awards for oral argument. Melissa Overbeck was recognized as the fourth-best oralist in the region and Angelyn Delgado was recognized as the region's ninth-best oralist. Kevin

Espinosa '09 and Michael Hecker '09 coached the team.

- At the Niagara Cup International Moot Court Competition, in Toronto, which focuses on international legal disputes between Canada and the United States, UB Law's team not only advanced to the competition's quarterfinals, but placed second overall after the preliminary rounds. It also brought home multiple awards for written and oral advocacy. Kenneth Graham and Jacob McNamara, together with Rebecca Guerra, won runner-up Best Applicant Memorial (brief). Jason Urbaniak won second-place Oral Advocate, and Kaitlyn Faucett won third-place Oral Advocate. Christine P. Bartholomew of the UB Law faculty served as coach.

- A UB Law team consisting of third-year students Christopher Moran and Audrey Herman won the Albert R. Mugel Tax Moot Court Competition, besting a team from John Marshall Law School. Herman was also named the 2011 competition's third-best oral advocate, and the winning UB team received an honorable mention for its brief. Associate Professor Stuart G. Lazar drafted the problem for the competition.

- The 13th annual Herbert Wechsler National Criminal Law Moot Court Competition, held in early April in the downtown Buffalo City Courthouse, included teams from 23 law schools across the nation, including two teams from UB Law. The winning team represented Mercer University's Walter F. George School of Law, with second-place honors going to a team from the Appalachian School of Law. Other teams competing represented the University of Michigan, New York University, the University of Wisconsin, William & Mary, American University and the University of California at Davis.