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Law Students Compete in Society of Advocates

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Dean's Column

BY GUEST WRITER PROF. SARA GORDON, William S. Boyd School of Law

LAW STUDENTS COMPETE IN SOCIETY OF ADVOCATES

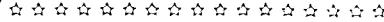
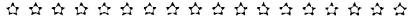
“Wow. Are you really a law student? You performed like an experienced lawyer.” This is the kind of comment our students regularly receive when they compete as a part of the Society of Advocates (SOA) at the Boyd School of Law. The SOA is an organization whose members represent the school in interscholastic advocacy competitions throughout the United States. It is one of two co-curricular student organizations on campus; as in Law Review, students are invited to participate and receive academic credit for doing so. SOA sends teams to three types of competition every year: appellate advocacy competitions, where students argue issues before a simulated United States Supreme Court panel; client counseling competitions, where students conduct an interview with a client and explain how they would proceed in the hypothetical situation; and negotiation competitions, where students negotiate a legal problem with another team to achieve a favorable outcome for their client.

The selection process is rigorous and multi-phased, and the competition for places on the team is stiff. Our appellate advocacy members are chosen based on their performance in the second-semester writing class – performance on both the written brief and in oral argument is considered – and in the Clark County Bar Association’s Moot Court Competition, which is held at the law school

each spring. Selected students, therefore, already have strong foundational writing and oral advocacy skills, but also build upon these in an additional writing class, where they devote significant time to the further study of writing, analysis and oral advocacy. Students are selected to compete in the negotiation and client counseling competitions based on superior performance during a variety of intraschool competitions each year, and then work with professors in the Saltman Center for Conflict Resolution to hone their skills in preparation for those competitions.

This year, the Society of Advocates sent 10 teams to seven different cities around the country. Our teams participated in:

- The Williams Institute Competition on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Law at UCLA Law School,
- The Asylum and Refugee Law Competition at UC Davis Law School,
- The Tulane Sports Law Competition,
- The ABA National Appellate Advocacy Competition (NAAC) in San Francisco, California,
- The Prince Evidence Competition at Brooklyn Law School,
- The ABA Negotiation Competition in Salt Lake City, Utah, and
- The Client Counseling Competition in Honolulu, Hawaii.



Our results were impressive: our UC Davis team won the second-place brief award, and placed second overall out of 18 teams; our Tulane team advanced to the quarter-finals round; one of our NAAC teams received an award for fourth-place brief; our Prince Evidence team won the second-place brief award; and one of our Negotiation teams advanced to the national round in Florida. All of our other teams performed at a very high level and received many accolades from the visiting judges. Our Client Counseling teams have always performed exceptionally well: each year from 2005-2008, our team placed in the top three teams in the country, and twice represented the United States in the International round as the top U.S. team.

Boyd's participation and success in these competitions has an effect at both the local and national level. SOA students receive advanced training in oral advocacy, negotiation and counseling skills, complex analysis and writing. This scholastic preparation transfers to the assignments students receive when they begin to practice. Our students have the confidence and

experience to formulate complex arguments, competently advise a client and negotiate effectively on behalf of a client. Nationally, Boyd's success at these competitions has enhanced our reputation as a strong school that produces highly qualified attorneys who are prepared to practice.

SOA's enormous success is due, in no small part, to the dedication of our students, who often give up nights and weekends to prepare for competition, and who work tirelessly to represent the school at competitions around the country. Of course, the same is true of our faculty coaches, who work with the teams – often every day for weeks – to prepare them for competition. The law school and SOA are tremendously proud of their accomplishments this year. ■

SARA GORDON is the faculty advisor to the Society of Advocates and a professor of lawyering process at the William S. Boyd School of Law, UNLV.



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