AN INTRODUCTION

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1. WHY DO IT?

The life of a law student is busy and complex and often the last thing students want to undertake is another time consuming and stressful obligation in the form of a moot court competition. Although moot competitions are stressful and time consuming the pros far outweigh the cons. Besides the obvious of having an additional merit on your resume, which is highly desirable and recognized by employers in the legal field, moot competitions provide students with skills and experiences that will aid them in their future professional and personal endeavors.

First and foremost, students learn to work in a team environment. Students learn how to work with individuals with differing personalities, backgrounds, work ethics and expectations to achieve both team and individual goals. As a teammate, students learn how to identify their, as well as their colleagues', strengths and weaknesses and how they can be respectively maximized and minimized in pursuit of a common goal.

Most competitions require students to submit written pleadings (sometimes called memorials), which often include a brief description of the facts, legal pleadings and relief sought. These memorials provide students with an opportunity to have their writing scrutinized and constructive criticism provided by teammates, coaches and judges. Students will learn how to draft effective, yet simple and straightforward, legal arguments.

Oral pleadings win or lose moot competitions; as such, participants receive substantial training and guidance on how to effectively present oral arguments. Through numerous practice moots and even video recordings, students are taught how to argue effectively in a legal context. Few people have the opportunity to receive so much public speaking training as one does as a participant in a moot competition.

Moot competitions provide a student with an opportunity to delve deep into a subject matter of interest. Students will learn the subject matter usually to a greater

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degree than in any classroom and are often awarded academic credits for participating in a moot. Furthermore, students may have the opportunity to benefit from taking classes on the subject while preparing for the moot competition – obviously mutually reinforcing knowledge to benefit both classroom exams and moot court pleadings.

Moot court competitions provide students with a unique opportunity to meet individuals with similar interests in a particular area of law. Besides from the obvious personal benefits, these friendships can be very helpful professionally.

Finally, moot courts are fun. Working as part of a team to achieve goals, strategically plan and overcome opponents (not to mention picking apart their arguments) is simply a lot of fun.

2. SELECTING A MOOT COURT COMPETITION

Students should select competitions based on subject matter interest. This is easier now there are many competitions ranging from broad areas of practice such as international law to highly specific competitions focusing, for example, solely on aboriginal law. Although the skills necessary to be successful are transferable across moot court competitions, selecting a competition based on subject matter is important. Participating in a moot is a long and arduous process often taking several months, and at times students become tired and unmotivated, which can be exacerbated if students are not interested in the subject matter of the competition.

Although students should select competitions based on subject matter, this is not always possible because of the size, budget and/or specialization of the student’s institution. This can be discouraging, but potential participants should bear in mind that the skills honed and acquired during moot courts are applicable to a variety of legal areas and desired by employers.

3. GOAL SETTING

Once a student has determined a wish to participate, they must determine if they can participate and what their desired outcomes are. Determining expectations for a competition based on an informed assessment of the competition and an honest evaluation of one’s abilities and commitment is probably the most important step in the process of determining whether to participate and what goals to be set. Some competitions emphasize camaraderie, meeting new people and participation; others are highly competitive, involving several qualifying rounds that require students to dedicate hundreds of hours of work. For example, it was rumored that the 2005