

Launching the FORUM/ABA Law Student Division National Law School Arbitration Competition

By Roger S. Haydock

I was recently presented the opportunity to do something for the profession that I had long wanted to do: establish a national arbitration competition for law students. I am very pleased to report that, with the help and support of many dedicated people, the competition is up and running.

During my 33 years as a law professor, I coached a number of law student teams in national negotiation and trial advocacy competitions with some success. I had never coached in an arbitration competition, however, because one had not yet been developed. As a leading arbitration and mediation administrator, it was natural that the National Arbitration Forum (FORUM) would be very interested in supporting the creation and development of a law school arbitration competition to encourage law students to learn more about alternative dispute resolution (ADR).

Indeed, it is my belief that, as ADR solutions such as arbitration and mediation continue to gain popularity as alternatives to

court litigation, it is essential that we equip law students with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and employ out-of-court solutions to benefit their clients.

With the strong support of FORUM managing director Ed Anderson and backed by a pledge of funding, I submitted a proposal to the ABA Law Student Division, with the help of Director Patricia Brennan and Assistant Director Peggy Pissarreck. The ABA Board of Governors approved the plan, and the inaugural FORUM/ABA Law Student Division National Law School Arbitration Competition was held this past fall at William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota.

I have the honor of being the Chair of the Arbitration Competition Committee. That Committee—consisting of Nancy Schultz and Christine Brewer, with the help of Peggy Pissarreck and Jeanne Backes and Darlene Finch of William Mitchell—successfully ran the inaugural competition.

Teams from 20 law schools competed head-to-head in a round-robin format over the three days of competition. FORUM neutrals volunteered to preside over the arbitrations in three-arbitrator panels. The University of Texas edged out Stetson University for first place. The University of Alabama and William Mitchell tied for third.

We expect next year's competition to be even larger, so we have instituted regional rounds in advance of the 2006 National Finals, which will be held in Austin, Texas. To learn more about the upcoming competition, visit the ABA Law Student Division's Arbitration Competition website: www.abanet.org/lstd/competitions/arbitration/home.html.

Thanks to the efforts of many bright, dedicated people, we have established a great event that will benefit students for years to come. I hope my experience with the arbitration competition will inspire you to think creatively and “do something” for the betterment of our profession. Connect with your colleagues. Reach out to the next generation of attorneys. Learn about and advocate for ADR. In short, take advantage of your opportunities. GP SOLO

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