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Loyola students take home moot court victories

Rambler pair take first place in national competition, collect \$3,000 in scholarships for the combined effort

BY SARAH MANSUR
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A two-student team from Loyola University Chicago School of Law won the championship at the Thomas Tang National Moot Court Competition for the first time in a decade.

Emily Olivera and Jasmine Stanzick defeated the William & Mary Law School team in the competition's final round this weekend in Washington, D.C.

They were awarded a combined \$2,000 scholarship as part of their win. The pair also received an additional \$1,000 scholarship between both of them for earning the best brief award.

"We were a bit shocked at how we were advancing, but it was really exciting," said Stanzick, a second-year law student.

The two Loyola teams that participated placed first and second in the regional competition. Both advanced to the national competition along with 14 other teams.

The moot court competition is an annual appellate advocacy competition that started in 1993, and is sponsored by the National Asian Pacific American Bar.

The competition is named in honor of the late judge Thomas Tang, who served on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals from 1977 until his death in 1995.

Olivera said her favorite moments from the regional and national

competitions involved facing off against her fellow Loyola law students, Lucas Terna and Sowmya Sastri, who were members of the school's other team.

"It was like every practice that we'd ever done," said Olivera, who is also a second-year law student.

Even though Olivera and Stanzick came out on top, it felt like a victory for both teams, Olivera said.

"It was a win for all four of us, not just two of us," she said.

Stanzick said they all felt like one big team.

"We never felt divided as petitioner and respondent," she said. "We both aimed to help each other advance."

The students began preparing near the end of August, and they had about three weeks between the regional competition on Oct. 14 until the national competition, which began Nov. 3.

"I definitely never thought I would become a litigator. And now I think I've chosen my path."

Stanzick said she and teammates practiced with their coaches three times a week for about two hours each practice.

Sevan Avakian, who coached the team along with Kristen Kawaguchi and Ann M. Shea, was a member of the team when he was a



Left to right: Emily Olivera, Jasmine Stanzick, team coach Sevan Avakian, Lucas Terna and Sowmya Sastri. Photo provided by Loyola University Chicago School of Law.

Loyola law student and has coached for the past two years.

Kawaguchi is corporate counsel at Levy Restaurants and Shea is compliance counsel at Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP.

Avakian, an associate with Gould & Ratner LLP, said all four members were prepared.

"I think they put in a ton of time and effort, and it showed throughout regionals and nationals," he said. "[Stanzick and Olivera] are

court judges for the final round was especially intimidating.

"I knew that the questions were going to be much different than the other rounds when it was just volunteer attorneys," she said. "That definitely gave me nerves."

Avakian said this competition is particularly difficult because, even though each team wrote a brief arguing for one side of the case, the participants have to be prepared to argue on behalf of the petitioner or the respondent with little advance notice.

"You have to quickly change and flip your mindset, and be prepared to argue the other side as well," he said.

Although this was the first trial competition that Olivera and Stanzick have participated in, they both agreed it was a fun and valuable experience.

"I definitely never thought I would become a litigator," Stanzick said. "And now I think I've chosen my path."

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probably two of the best oralists I have ever seen, so I know they are going to make really great lawyers when they graduate law school and start practicing."

For Olivera, competing inside the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, before federal district and circuit