Pre-Law Advising Center Advocacy Teams

For students interested in improving their public speaking and critical thinking skills, UTD offers several competition teams on which to participate. UTD is one of the few schools in Texas to field teams in all three major undergraduate legal advocacy competitions:

Moot Court

Moot Court (PSCI 4v67) is an exercise in appellate advocacy, modeled after the appellate procedure employed in state and federal courts. Students are given a hypothetical case, including 20-25 constitutional law precedents, and construct both petitioner and respondent oral arguments to present to the Supreme Court of the United States. Students participate in both Fall (2 credit hours) and Spring (1 credit hour) Moot Court class, in order to develop, practice and refine oral arguments for tournament competition.

In the competitions, advocates argue before a panel of judges (typically law professors, actual judges, or law students), and as with real appellate courts, judges on the panel may interrupt the advocate to ask questions about the facts of the case, precedent for or against the advocate’s position, or policy issues that may arise from any potential rulings. Students learn to anticipate difficult questions about their positions and respond intelligently and persuasively. Moot Court is an excellent opportunity to develop the research, analytical, and advocacy skills necessary for success in law school, but the program is not limited to pre-law students. Students interested in careers other than law become better logical and analytical thinkers, and enhance their public speaking abilities.

UTD Moot Court has been very successful both regionally and nationally, as recognized by the American Moot Court Association. Instructor permission is required to enroll in the class, with a prerequisite of either Constitutional Law, Civil Liberties, or an equivalent class beforehand. Students interested in enrolling in Moot Court should contact Dr. Barbara Kirby.

Mock Trial

Mock Trial (PSCI 4v66) is a class for credit consisting of three academic competition teams.

Mock Trial competition is designed to simulate trial-level advocacy. Students are given a hypothetical case in the form of a 150-page packet. Each case contains the affidavits, evidence, case law, and legal documents necessary to try the case in court.

In Mock Trial, members will learn rules of evidence and courtroom procedure. Each student is taught the skills necessary to try a case in court as if they are a seasoned attorney with years of experience.

Students should expect to be treated like a new law student from day one. Every student is called on in every class to be called on to give their interpretation of the case material, rules, and procedure. It is impossible to remain anonymous in Mock Trial.

The Mock Trial competition season typically begins in late September and goes until the Thanksgiving break, then picks back up the first week of the Spring semester and continues up until April. UTD competes in tournaments across the U.S., providing team members with national perspective of the legal culture.

Each team consists of at least six members (three attorneys and three witnesses) who compete against teams from other schools. The tournaments are typically judged by practicing attorneys or law students.
The program is not limited to pre-law students. Pre-law students do develop the analytical and presentational skills necessary for success in law school and beyond. Students interested in careers other than law, benefit from enhanced public speaking skills and the ability to think strategically. All students are welcome. The law touches everyone.

No experience is necessary. There are no specific academic prerequisites for participation in the program other than interviewing with the coach.

Students interested in participating in the program should begin contacting Coach Tony Seagroves in late Spring to interview for a spot on a Fall team. Students are not added in the Spring. The program is limited to 25 students.

Mediation

Mediation is an extracurricular activity.

In Mediation, students become members of a team that competes across the U.S. It is a nationwide pre-law competitive team program.

The competitions are designed to help aspiring lawyers understand the importance of resolving potential legal issues without involving the court system. Almost all civil cases filed in court are expected to mediate at some point. Often mediation is ordered by the court.

Teams consist of three students each. In competition, each competitor will perform as a Mediator, an Advocate, and as a Client. Students compete against teams from other schools, while being judged by actual attorneys and mediators.

Each competition is a set of simulated settlement conferences. Advocates and clients are judged on the effectiveness with which they argue their positions, as well as their flexibility during the negotiation process. Mediators are judged on their active listening skills, creativity, and ability to facilitate settlement. In all contexts, improvisational ability and adaptive skills are necessary for success.

UTD Mediation is one of the premier programs in the nation. UTD sends teams to both invitational tournaments and to the national tournament. The season is Fall semester only with competitions in October and November.

The program is open to any student with an interest in alternative dispute resolution and is not limited to pre-law students. There are no specific academic prerequisites.

Space on the traveling teams is limited to fifteen students. Team selection is held in late August. Students interested in participating in the program should contact Coach Tony Seagroves beginning at the end of the Spring semester for consideration for the Fall program.