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Law School students make it to finals of national negotiation competition

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05 March 2010

Second year law students from Canterbury Christ Church University have come first in regional heats of the Negotiation Competition of England and Wales.

Paul Morgan and Jack Ridgway will now move on to the national finals in London, this month, as the number two ranked team in the nation.

Twenty teams from nine law schools took part in the day long competition at the southern regional heat in Guildford in mid-February. Canterbury Christ Church, in its first ever entry into a negotiation competition, entered two teams. The second team, Rachel Levett and Greg Dunne, came in ninth place, in a field of very tight scoring. The other three winning teams in the regional heat were students from the University of Sussex and the University of Portsmouth.



From left to right: Diana Yip, Rachel Levett, Jack Ridgeway, Paul Morgan, Greg Dunne and Emmy Reed-Poysden.

Visiting Senior Lecturer in Negotiation for the Department of Law and Criminal Justice at Canterbury Christ Church University Samuel Passow, said: "This competition is a unique opportunity for our law students to test a key skill they will need in their professional lives against their peers from some of the top-rated law schools around the country. They not only seized the opportunity, they excelled in it. To use a sports metaphor, they clearly punched above their weight."

In all, 60 teams (120 students), from 34 law schools in England and Wales took part in the regional heats held in Guildford, Birmingham and York. A total of 12 teams will now proceed to national finals at the College of Law in London on March 27th. Based on the overall scoring of the three regional heats, the University will enter the national finals as the number two ranked team. The top ranked team is the College of Law in York. The winner of the national finals will go on to represent England and Wales in the international competition which will be held in Brisbane, Australia, in June.

Only two British teams have won the international finals since 1998, the University of Leicester in Singapore in 2007 and Inns of Court School of Law in California in 2001.

The negotiation programme at Canterbury Christ Church University was set up in 2009 by Mr Passow who co-taught the Theory of Dispute Resolution (TDR) course to second year students, along with Leo Raznovich and Ben Waters.

The final exam for that course in December 2009 was a 12 party simulated negotiation of a United Nations climate change treaty designed by Harvard University involving 52 students who negotiated in teams over a six week period, mirroring the real-time climate change negotiation going on at the same time in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The six students who were selected to represent the University in the negotiation competition were chosen for their outstanding performance during the final exam. The two other members of the University negotiation team, Diana Yip and Emmy Reed-Poysden acted as alternates this year and will compete in the 2011 competition as third year students.

In addition to the hours they spent negotiating during the TDR course, the six students volunteered their time to spend three hours each Saturday morning, for the past month, practising their negotiation skills in a Master Class taught by Mr Passow.

Notes to Editor

There were two negotiating rounds in the regional competitions, and there will be three in the national final. Occasionally there are three- or four-way negotiations, but the most common format of each round is that a team of two law students representing a party/client negotiates either a transaction or the resolution of a dispute with an opposing team of two students.

The teams receive, in advance, both a common set of facts and confidential information known only to the particular side they are representing. Typically, each round consists of a 50 minute negotiation session. At the end of the 50 minute period each team has a ten minute period to analyze their performance in private and a ten minute self-analysis period (per team) in the presence of the judges.

Each round is judged by a panel of three judges. Judges are chosen to be independent of the teams they are judging, and as a further precaution participating teams in each heat are identified only by a letter rather than by the name of the institution they are representing. The judging criteria require the judges to address the following: (1) the apparent preparedness of a team; (2) its flexibility in deviating from plans or adapting a strategy; (3) the outcome; (4) teamwork; (5) relationship between the negotiating teams; (5) ethics; (6) the self-analysis.

The Negotiation Competition began in 1998 and the previous national winners included The College of Law (London); Liverpool John Moores University; University of Leicester; University of Buckingham; Staffordshire University; Inns of Courts Law School; University of Southampton; Kingston University Law School and the University of Westminster.

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