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PERSPECTIVE

UCLA law team wins National Civil Trial Competition

By Christer Schmidt

Daily Journal Staff Writer

A UCLA School of Law team won top prize in the National Civil Trial Competition, designed to help students learn litigation skills.

“This is probably one of the youngest teams in the competition and I was proud that they overcame their inexperience with hard work and team work,” Justin Bernstein, director of trial advocacy at UCLA School of Law and coach of the winning team, said Monday.

“This year’s case was about negligent hiring and negligent supervision, an employee who killed a customer in their home,” said Bernstein. “On the plaintiff’s side of the case, we knew we had to come up with a way to make the company responsible even though it was an employee that did this. Our theory was that they shouldn’t have hired him in the first place.”

Sixteen law schools from across the nation participate in the competition from Friday through Sunday on the Loyola Marymount Law School campus in Los Angeles. The runners-up included Chicago-Kent College of Law at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Illinois, St.



From left: Kathryn Rosenfeld, Sydney Gaskins, Justin Bernstein, Sophia Cherif, Erica Kelley.
Courtesy of Loyola Marymount University Law School

Mary’s School of Law in Texas and Campbell Law School in North Carolina.

Every school got four trials — including one as the plaintiff and one as the defense — and if they advanced from the initial rounds they went through

two more trials. The 21-year-old competition “is a great way for young litigants to get real-world experience arguing a complex legal case,” said Geoff Wells, a partner at Green Broillet & Wheeler who was the keynote speaker at the opening reception.

Event runner Susan Poehls, director of trial advocacy at Loyola Marymount, said the contest “gives students the chance to learn the skills of a civil trial lawyer.”

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