

# Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

Volume 164, No. 33

Serving Chicago's legal community for 163 years



A moot court team from The John Marshall Law School will compete for the first time in The Willem C. Vis East International Commercial Arbitration Moot next month. Bottom row, left to right: Coach Kristen Hudson and team members Zike "Ariel" Yang, Brittany Mancuso and Zhiwen "Jeannette" Jie (alternate). Back row, left to right: Coach Daniel Saedi and team members Kasim Carbide (alternate), Angela Lewosz and Nora Fitton. Photo provided by The John Marshall Law School

## Students prepare to take on the world

BY SARAH MANSUR  
Law Bulletin staff writer

Next month, a six-student team from The John Marshall Law School will embark on a trip to Hong Kong to compete for the first time in The Willem C. Vis East International Commercial Arbitration Moot.

The competition is open to law students from all countries and it runs parallel with The Willem C. Vis Moot International Commercial

### John Marshall team heads to Hong Kong; match will test skills in moot arbitration

Arbitration in Vienna — something John Marshall's teams have previously competed in.

The event drew 125 teams last year and a similar number is expected this year.

The competition involves a dispute arising out of a contract of

sale between two fictional countries, Equatoriana and Mediterraneo. At least one country is a party to the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods.

There is a written phase of the competition, which requires the

teams to submit a claimant brief and a respondent brief. Those briefs were due in December. The oral phase takes place in Hong Kong beginning March 12.

Team member Ariel Yang said she first learned of this moot competition while trying out for a different trial team.

"I am interested in business commercial litigation so I thought this could be a great learning experience," Yang said in an e-mail.

Over the past four months, the

team has worked together to complete the briefs and participate in multiple oral practices, Yang said.

“Each time we met, we learned something new from each other and we became stronger as a team. Our coaches have worked with us a lot in improving our oral advocacy skills,” she said in the e-mail.

Nora Fitton, another team member, said the process has been rewarding but it is also challenging to collect the legal sources they need for the competition.

“This is an international competition so we need to draw on legal principles from around the world. It has been very time consuming to go through the available sources but it is also difficult because international legal research is different. We have had to work a little harder to find English translations of the relevant case law and international authorities,” she said in a separate e-mail.

But, Fitton said she has enjoyed seeing the progress her team made to meet those challenges.

The competition’s focus on international commercial arbitration and international business transactions is unique, said Kristen Hudson, who is one of the team’s coaches along with Daniel Saeedi.

Hudson is a principal and

general counsel at Chuhak & Tecson P.C.

“When I heard that the position for coach for this team was coming open, I jumped at the opportunity,” said Hudson, who competed in the Vienna moot when she was a student at John Marshall.

“Because the competition’s focus is on providing a clinical tool for students to get practical experience in both international business transactions as well as international arbitration, the problem has both a procedural and substantive aspect to it,” she said.

The procedural issue in this competition deals with the disqualification of one of the arbitrators on the panel as a result of some information that has come to light relating to his affiliation with third-party litigation funding, Hudson said.

The contract issue involves questions surrounding whether or not the seller country met the sustainability requirement for the products that both parties agreed to in the contract.

“It’s a very current legal issue,” Hudson said. “It’s a really interesting problem and I think it’s a credit to the competition for training students on a real life problem that practitioners are currently struggling to resolve.”

In practicing for the oral component, Hudson and Saeedi have been teaching the team oral advocacy and what it means to be an oral advocate on an international stage.

“That style of advocacy is different from your typical U.S. courtroom, for example the Circuit Court of Cook County. Even stylistically and the way you present it and just your mannerisms and your gestures would be different sitting at an international arbitration table,” Hudson said. “There are principles of oral advocacy that don’t change as a result of the international setting, and we focus on that with them.”

Team member Brittany Mancuso said she found it difficult to curb her use of verbal fillers during her oral arguments. Early on, she said, the coaches’ feedback was to stop using “so.”

“Such a tiny word that seems harmless but when used in oral advocacy can negatively impact your credibility and professionalism. I started to become aware of myself saying ‘so’ in practices and made a conscious effort to stop,” she said in an e-mail.

Saeedi, a partner at Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP, said he is proud of how the students have handled the problems presented

by this competition.

“They have worked hard and acted as a true team throughout our practices. We are looking forward to competing in Hong Kong,” he said in an e-mail. Saeedi is also a John Marshall alumnus, and he competed in The Willem C. Vis Moot International Commercial Arbitration in Vienna when he was a student.

Many of the team members, like Kasim Carbride, said the competition sparked an interest in arbitration as a possible career path after graduation.

“I plan to pursue a career in international arbitration, or at the very least domestic arbitration, to continue to sharpen the skills I learned in this competition,” said Carbride, who is an alternate on the team.

“The experience of being surrounded by law students and experienced arbitrators from around the world for a week in a foreign country — all working to better understand the complexities of international law — is something that can never be replicated outside this competition. Win or lose, the experience of the Vis will stay with us forever and will remain the highlight of our law school careers.”

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