

Honors and Scholars AND Mock Trial: A Marriage Made in...Court?

"The rule of law", wrote the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle in 350 BC, "is better than the rule of any individual."- That translation from Aristotle's *Politics* 3:16 is an excellent starting point for anyone interested in law AND a rigorous, classical education. What better place to begin a Miami education, especially for those students looking for that "something extra" in higher education? Well, those students need look no further than the University Honors and Scholars program and its marriage with the university Mock Trial Program.

"It is a natural attraction," Business Legal Studies Professor Dan Herron claims. As Director of Miami's nationally ranked mock trial program and former associate director of the university honors program, Herron argues that "...those students who are highly driven and competitive will get that "academic rush" from intercollegiate mock trial competition. Mock trial is intellectual athletics at its best. How many times do Miami students get the opportunity to regularly compete intellectually against students from schools such as Cornell, Michigan, Harvard, Washington University, and Columbia, just to name a few? But, even more compelling is that we win against these teams far more often than we lose!"

The Miami University Mock Trial Team brings together students with diverse backgrounds, varying interests, and a myriad of career goals. Singers, engineers, future businesswomen and undoubtedly soon-to-be lawyers grace the rosters of Miami's team each and every year. Yet there is a common theme which unites many of the team's thirty members – a majority of the participants also take part in Miami University's Honors and Scholars Program.

"Honors students are known for their passion for intellectual challenge and their willingness to apply their learning to real-world situations," Honors & Scholars Program Director Carolyn Haynes said. "The collegiate mock trial experience pushes students to their fullest."

It is a symbiotic relationship between mock trial and the Honors & Scholars Program at Miami. Honors & Scholars awards students honors credit for competing under the Miami Mock Trial banner as the mock trial experience contributes to the Honors & Scholars Program's co-curricular educational enhancement.

"Not only is the process of preparing for and competing in tournaments intellectually rigorous, but it also hones students' ability to function productively on a team, communicate effectively, and organize their thoughts in a persuasive and compelling manner," Haynes added.

In February and March 2008, Miami Mock Trial placed two teams into the national championship tournament to be held in Minneapolis, MN in early April. A third team would have also qualified to compete on the national scale, but American Mock Trial Association rules allow each college a maximum of two participating squads to compete beyond the regional level.

Of the sixteen students involved in the national championship round teams, over half are involved in Honors & Scholars. That proportion increases when factoring in students from Miami's other two teams. The 2008 Regional Championship team, which claimed the school's tenth consecutive regional title with an undefeated record, boasts 7 university honors students from its 8-person roster. The second Miami team moving on to the national championship

tournament boast 4 honors and scholars students from its 8-person roster including two Harrison Scholars.

After leaving Miami, Honors & Scholars students who competed on the Mock Trial team tend to enjoy bright futures. Past Honors & Scholars “mockers” have gone on to law schools including the University of Michigan and Georgetown University. Others have pursued careers with companies like Proctor & Gamble or have sought graduate degrees – particularly in economics and business.

University Honors and Mock Trial...maybe a marriage not exactly made in heaven, but for Miami students, it is pretty darn close.