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Boston College Law School

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Hickey Wins Best Oralist Award

2/28/06--Third-year BC Law student Alison Hickey won the Best Oralist Award for her presentation at the 16th Annual National First Amendment Moot Court Competition held at Vanderbilt University last week. Teams of two law students from various US law schools attended the competition to debate a hypothetical court case. The other BC Law representative was Chris Gosselin, also '06. The duo is the first BC Law team to attend the conference, which this year drew 40 teams of students from law schools across the United States and more than 200 attorneys, professors, federal and state judges, and legal scholars to judge the preliminary and final rounds.

"I am tremendously proud of both of our talented students," said BC Law Professor and team coach Mary-Rose Papandrea. "I'd like to thank all of the BC Law professors who gave their time to help them prepare, as well as the many media lawyers in the area who also helped out. Chris and Alison said that they didn't receive a single question in the competition that they hadn't already heard in their practice rounds."

The competition was comprised of four demanding rounds of debate on the issue of reporter's privilege. Hickey said the high level of competition instantly impressed her. "I was really surprised to win the Best Oralist award, as both Chris and I were so impressed by the level of oral advocacy skills in all of the arguments we both competed in and saw," she said.

Many of members of the BC Law community contributed to preparing the duo for the intense two-day event. Professors Tom Carey and Papandrea arranged practice moot arguments for Hickey and Gosselin with Boston area practitioners, including a number of BC Law alums, like Jon Albano ’82, Jeff Newman ’82, and Kathleen Celio and Jenny Rabbit, both ’05.

Hickey viewed the competition as a great learning experience that helped her sharpen her skills as a defender. "I've learned so much through this experience that I'll take with me forever -- how to finesse facts to best suit your client, how to speak with passion in favor of your client while maintaining proper courtroom demeanor, and how to really approach arguments as a conversation with a judge," she said.

The competition is organized by the First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, which works to preserve and protect First Amendment freedoms through information and education. The center serves as a forum for the study and exploration of free-expression issues, including freedom of speech, of the press and of religion, the right to assemble and petition the government.