

WCL Establishes Inter-American Moot Court Competition

by Mare Fox

The first annual Inter-American Human Rights Moot Court Competition, to be held at WCL in late May 1996, is designed to enhance the development of human rights law in the Americas. WCL founded the English/Spanish competition to expose law students to international law, human rights law and the Inter-American system. The competition also will provide students with the opportunity to practice their skills before colleagues and professionals in a competitive situation.

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Claudio Grossman, Dean of WCL, commented, "The first Inter-American competition will meet a compelling need. Presently, there are no opportunities for law students to learn about the legal basis of the Inter-American system. In creating this opportunity we will strengthen the system of the protection of human rights in this hemisphere." In addition, according to Viviana Krsticevic of the Center for Justice and International Law, "The moot court will be the catalyst of a regional educational process on the Inter-American system. Education about the juris-

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prudence of the system is a crucial step towards its effective use for the protection of human rights. The moot court will provide an interesting forum for fresh debate on both substantive and procedural issues within the system."

WCL has sent hundreds of invitations to law schools, governmental agencies and NGOs. Robert Guitteau, Executive Director of WCL's Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, hopes that "interested individuals and institutions will support the competition by providing local teams with tech-

nical material and their expert assistance." The competition is based on the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, a regional treaty ratified by 23 of the 33 countries in the Western hemisphere. It also will include a day-long seminar on human rights issues and visits to intergovernmental and non-governmental institutions in Washington, DC.



Gabriel Eckstein

(Left to right) Robert Guitteau, Executive Director, Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law, Patricia Jones, WCL J.D. student, and Claudia Martín, member of Inter-American Moot Court organizing committee.

According to Diego Rodriguez, Legal Advisor for Latin America for the International Human Rights Law Group and WCL LL.M. alumnus, "The competition is very important considering that the jurisprudence of the Inter-American system will be used by future lawyers." He added that this increased knowledge of the system may help prevent human rights violations because more lawyers will understand the system's standards.

Claudia Martín, a lawyer from Argentina and alumnae of WCL's LL.M. program, pointed out that the competition was inspired by the Concours René Cassin, an international human rights moot court competition

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held in Europe. "WCL saw the need to implement a competition based on the Inter-American system after participating in the Concours René Cassin," said Martín, who coached WCL's 1994 and 1995 Concours René Cassin teams. Martín also is helping organize the Inter-American competition.

"The competition is a wonderful innovation. We endorse it with enthusiasm," affirmed David Padilla, Assistant Executive Secretary for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Padilla said that the Commission's role

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in the competition has not been determined yet. He hailed the competition as "a seminal event" and concluded, "I'm sure the Inter-American Commission will be very pleased with this development."

Patricia Jones, a WCL J.D. student, stated, "Moot court competitions are unique in a law students' educational experience. [The Inter-American competition will] really challenge our skills and give us an opportunity to work on hemispheric human rights issues which are important to all our citizens." ☺

For further information, contact:

Concurso Interamericano de Derechos Humanos
The Inter-American Human Rights Moot Court Competition
Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law
Washington College of Law
American University,
4400 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20016

Tel: 202-885-2719

Fax: 202-885-3601

E-mail: humlaw@american.edu

After January 1, 1996

Tel: 202-274-4180

Fax: 202-274-4130

Competition will be held May 28-
June 1, 1996