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Law school moot court team continues winning streak

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**News Release**

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**LAW SCHOOL MOOT COURT TEAM CONTINUES WINNING STREAK**

**MISSOULA** –

For the eighth consecutive year, a moot court team from The University of Montana School of Law is bound for the national finals.

“This is by far the longest such winning streak in the nation,” said Larry Howell, an assistant professor of law and UM’s moot court team coach. UM most recently won the national championship in 2000.

The moot court team earned a finals berth during the Northwest Regional Moot Court competition at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash., Nov. 17-18. Members of the first-place team are law students Jill Peterson of Great Falls and Jonathan McDonald and Paul Shae, both of Helena.

Howell said the team defeated a University of Washington team in the final round of regionals, even though the UW law students were competing for the second year in the competition and the UM students had lost to the UW team in a preliminary round on Nov. 17.

Before the regional competition, the competitors prepared a brief that accounted for 40 percent of their score in each argument, with oral arguments accounting for the rest. The students argued two problems. The first involved whether a law requiring expensive equipment for roller-
coaster safety was so onerous that it amounted to a taking of private property under the Fifth Amendment. The second involved whether a litigant could raise an issue in federal courts that could have been raised in previous state court litigation.

Howell said another UM moot court team won the Best Brief Award “by a landslide” at regionals. Members of that team were Joe Gillis, a student from Connecticut, Becky Rutz of Kalispell and Maggie Weamer of Billings. Howell said the four-day National Moot Court Finals will kick off Jan. 30, 2006, in New York City. The national competition is sponsored by the New York City Bar Association and the American College of Trial Lawyers. He said the brief prepared by last year’s UM finals team was judged the second-best in the nation.

More than a thousand law students from about 145 of the 180 accredited law schools in the United States participate in the National Moot Court Competition in a given year. The country is divided into 14 regions, and the first- and second-place teams from each region move on to the National Moot Court Finals each January.

During UM’s eight-year winning streak at regionals, UM teams have finished first five times and second three times. In that same period, Howell said, UM has won the Best Brief Award four times and the second-best brief five times.

Howell and Visiting Professor Andrew King-Ries coach the team.

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