

**ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY'S 19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL INVITATIONAL MOCK TRIAL TOURNAMENT**

**Dates: Friday through Sunday, November 5-7, 2021**

**Location: McLean County Law & Justice Center – Bloomington, Illinois**

***INVITATION TO MOCK TRIAL JUDGES/EVALUATORS***

Greetings from the Illinois State University Mock Trial Program! Our annual invitational tournament is fast approaching, and ***we need your help!***

Each year, the American Mock Trial Association publishes a case file that undergraduate students from about 650 teams from over 350 colleges and universities across the country use to conduct mock trials in intercollegiate competitions. On behalf of ISU's mock trial program, and in conjunction with the McLean County Bar Association, I write in my capacity as this year's tournament judges recruitment coordinator to inform you that ***we need your expertise and assistance as a mock trial tournament judge/evaluator.*** The balance of this document summarizes the particulars of our invitation for you to join us.

**Mock Trial Competition—Dates and Location**

The ISU Mock Trial Program is sponsoring its 19th annual Illinois State University Mock Trial Invitational Tournament **on the weekend of November 5-7, 2021.** The tournament will take place at the McLean County Law & Justice Center in Downtown Bloomington, Illinois. We will have about 32 teams (each consisting of 6-8 students) from several different Midwestern states traveling to Bloomington-Normal to compete in our very popular tournament. There will be as many as 16 mock trials happening simultaneously in the Law & Justice Center during each competition round, and we estimate 250 college students, coaches, parents/supporters, and guest judges/evaluators will be in the building throughout most of the weekend. It is quite an event, and we want you to be a part of it.

**Tournament Judges Needed**

When universities host an invitational mock trial tournament, they rely heavily upon local judges and attorneys, university alumni, and friends of their mock trial programs to serve as mock trial judges/evaluators for the students. Serving as a mock trial judge/evaluator is a wonderful experience. You would be assigned to act either as a presiding judge who oversees the trial and rules on objections, or as a scoring judge who observes the students' performances and assigns scores to them. During the trial, judges/evaluators provide written critiques of the students' performances. After each round concludes, each judge/evaluator will have the opportunity to provide oral feedback in the form of a brief constructive critique to the students.

As a tournament judge/evaluator, however, you would not need to review any materials ahead of time, and you do not need to have any particular expertise in criminal matters or in trial work in general. All of the information you would need to evaluate the competitors at the tournament would be covered during a brief orientation prior to each competitive trial round and in the materials the student-competitors would present to you during the trials. (Generally, if you are interested in volunteering but do not want to be responsible for acting as the presiding judge in the trial, then we will accommodate your request.)

**This Year's Case: State v. Sutcliffe**

This year's mock trial problem is a criminal case entitled State of Midlands v. Dakota Sutcliffe. The trial will occur in Midlands, the fictional 51st state in the union. The defendant, Dakota Sutcliffe, originally was tried and convicted of felony murder. When the Midlands felony-murder law was subsequently held unconstitutional, the conviction was overturned. Now remanded to the Midlands trial court for retrial, the case involves the prosecution of Sutcliffe for the felony offense of aggravated arson for allegedly igniting paint thinner inside Chuggie's Bar in Midlands City, Midlands, the result of which caused a large fire in which firefighter Jaylen Williams died while battling the blaze.

The competitive collegiate teams will prepare and present both sides of this criminal case during the tournament. The students will build their cases by selecting from among nine available trial witnesses, more than 30 possible exhibits, and nearly 200 pages of case-file materials (including pleadings, deposition transcripts, expert witness reports, diagrams, photographic and other documentary exhibits, court orders, caselaw summaries, jury instructions, etc.) totaling nearly 200 pages.

### Schedule of Tournament Rounds/Trials

This year's tournament consists of four rounds during the weekend of November 5-7, 2021, with each round lasting about three hours (including breaks). During each round, teams from different schools will square off against one another to try the case to a panel of judges/evaluators. I know you will be quite impressed with the trial skills displayed by the college students.

Each round will be preceded by a brief orientation for judges/evaluators. We will provide food and drink to our volunteers. The four rounds of this year's tournament are scheduled to occur as follows:

**Round 1 (Friday Evening):** 6:00 P.M. on Friday, November 5 (with the judges' orientation at 5:15 P.M.)

**Round 2 (Saturday Morning):** 9:00 A.M. on Saturday, November 6 (with the judges' orientation at 8:15 A.M.)

**Round 3 (Saturday Afternoon):** 2:00 P.M. on Saturday, November 6 (with the judges' orientation at 1:15 P.M.)

**Round 4 (Sunday Morning):** 9:00 A.M. on Sunday, November 7 (with the judges' orientation at 8:15 A.M.)

### Please Join Us!

***Would you please consider volunteering to serve as a mock trial judge/evaluator at our competition?*** We would love to have you share a little of your time and expertise by judging one or more rounds. We routinely have attorneys/evaluators who wish to judge two or three rounds, and we would love to have you join us for all four rounds if your schedule permits. If you are able to help out for any of our competition rounds, therefore, then we would be most appreciative.

*We really need your help*, as this huge undertaking requires a very large number of volunteer judges/evaluators (32 per round for four separate trial rounds!). If you can volunteer, then all you need to do is send a short e-mail to me ([sekordi@ilstu.edu](mailto:sekordi@ilstu.edu)) and indicate the specific rounds for which you are volunteering. We then will send you additional details about the schedule for your round(s), how to enter the courthouse for the tournament, and related information. (We also will send reminder e-mails as the tournament date draws nearer.)

### COVID-19 Protocol

Since the tournament will take place at the McLean County Law & Justice Center, we must adhere to the courthouse's COVID-19 protocols. As of this writing, all persons entering the courthouse are required to wear a mask. If the courthouse's requirements were to change prior to the tournament, then we will notify all volunteers.

### Thank You!

We cannot pull off such a successful tournament each year without the volunteer service of dedicated members of the Bar Association, the Central Illinois legal community, and friends and alumni of our program. On behalf of the Illinois State University Mock Trial Program and the McLean County Bar Association, thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, or if you require any additional information, then I would welcome your call (309-826-0022) or e-mail ([sekordi@ilstu.edu](mailto:sekordi@ilstu.edu)). Thank you very much for your consideration!

Respectfully yours,  
S. Kording

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**Scott Kording**  
2021 Tournament Judges Recruitment Coordinator  
Illinois State University Mock Trial Program  
(309) 826-0022  
[sekordi@ilstu.edu](mailto:sekordi@ilstu.edu)