

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY'S 21ST ANNUAL INVITATIONAL MOCK TRIAL TOURNAMENT

Dates: Friday through Sunday, November 3-5, 2023

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 700 teams from around 400 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 21st annual Illinois State University Mock Trial Invitational Tournament **on the weekend of November 3-5, 2023.** 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 about 300 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 trial work or in a given legal field. 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 a trial, then we will accommodate your request.)

This Year's Case: *State of Midlands v. De La Porta & Cameron*

This year's mock trial problem is a criminal case entitled State of Midlands v. De La Porta & Cameron. On October 31, 2022, a charity gala for the Sohi Children's Hospital was underway in Santa Ivo City when a daring caper unfolded in which four masked persons broke into the vault at the gala's venue, Miller Tower. Security responded, and two people—one security guard and one of the armed robbers—were wounded severely. Two of robbers escaped by helicopter, and the other robber fled the scene on foot. Following extensive investigations, authorities arrested and charged Poe Cameron with multiple theft-related offenses related to the robbery. Authorities also charged a co-defendant, local billionaire Berkley de la Porta, for allegedly funding the criminal scheme. The case also involves a cyber-hacking attack, investigations by the FBI, and a whole host of other details.

Both defendants have pleaded not guilty. The parties have disclosed 11 possible witnesses, including the accused suspects, police and crime lab officials, a local philanthropist, the wounded security guard, a waiter, and others. The prosecution will have to elect whether to proceed with the trial of Cameron (allegedly one of the four armed robbers) or de la Porta (the billionaire), as well as which on which of several possible charges to proceed at each defendant's jury trial. Defendant Cameron also will need to determine whether to move forward with a possible affirmative defense of duress.

The mock trial advocates on both sides of the case have many strategic decisions to make, including what evidence to use. They will be working from a case file consisting of more than 230 pages of materials, including legal documents, caselaw summaries, stipulations, witness affidavits, interview transcripts, and at least 30 different exhibits.

Schedule of Tournament Rounds/Trials

This year's tournament consists of four rounds during the weekend of November 3-5, 2023. Each round lasts 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 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 3 (with the judges' orientation at 5:15 P.M.)

Round 2 (Saturday Morning): 9:00 A.M. on Saturday, November 4 (with the judges' orientation at 8:15 A.M.)

Round 3 (Saturday Afternoon): 2:00 P.M. on Saturday, November 4 (with the judges' orientation at 1:15 P.M.)

Round 4 (Sunday Morning): 9:00 A.M. on Sunday, November 5 (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 appreciate you sharing a little of your time and expertise by judging one or more rounds. We welcome current and retired attorneys, paralegals, judges, and others involved in law-related fields to assist us in this effort.

Please join us for at least one round! We routinely have judges/evaluators who wish to serve 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 grateful.

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) 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.)

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/text (309-826-0022) or e-mail (sekordi@ilstu.edu). Thank you very much for your consideration!

Respectfully yours,
S. Kording

Scott Kording
2023 Tournament Judges Recruitment Coordinator
Illinois State University Mock Trial Program
(309) 826-0022
sekordi@ilstu.edu