

# OPENING STATEMENT COMPETITION RULES

The purpose of this competition is to give law students the **opportunity to develop their trial skills**, thus the actual merits of the case presented are irrelevant to this purpose and will not be taken into consideration. Participants should focus instead on their presentation and their theory of the case. This competition is open only to LSU Law students are entering their “2L” year in August 2015 (i.e.; the Class of 2019).

## Sign Up Information:

- All participants must sign up for the competition **no later than 5PM on August 22, 2017**. Students will be contacted following their registration with their assigned side as Prosecution or Defense.

## General Competition Information:

- Each participant must be prepared to present a seven (7) minute opening statement regarding his or her assigned side of the case (Plaintiff or Defense) based on the Fall 2017 Ira S. Flory Trial Competition problem. The time limit will be **strictly** enforced. In the event the participant runs over the allotted time, a deduction of one point will be subtracted from their score for every 10 seconds over the time limit.
- Please confine your presentation to the facts given in the case packet. Do **not** create additional facts or witnesses.
- Participants are **not** allowed in the courtroom or classroom to observe other participants in preliminary rounds. All participants are encouraged to attend the Final Round.
- For resources on presenting an Opening Statement, we encourage you to attend the Trial Advocacy Boot Camp on August 20 or visit: [http:// advocacy.law.lsu.edu/resources](http://advocacy.law.lsu.edu/resources).
- Competitors have an ongoing obligation to advise the Trial Advocacy Board of any scheduling conflicts. The Board will make every reasonable effort to accommodate conflicts.

## Competition Procedure:

- **Check-In:** Participants should arrive in the Student Lounge to check in ten (10) minutes prior to their scheduled time on all nights of the competition. Arrivals less than 5 minutes before a participant’s scheduled time may cause forfeiture of participation in the competition.
- **Preliminary Round:** The preliminary round of the competition will be held on August 24, 2017. Competitors will present their opening statement to a panel of Trial Advocacy Board members. Judges will use the scoresheet annexed to these rules to evaluate all competitors, and will also provide constructive feedback on the opening statement following each match.
- **Final Round:** Based on average scores (mean scores) from the Preliminary Round, the top five (5) students from each side (Prosecution and Defense) will advance to the Final Round, which will be held on August 28, 2017. (Thus, ten (10) persons will advance to the Final Round.) A panel of attorneys and judges will evaluate the ten finalists using the annexed scoresheet. The winners of the Final Round are the two students with the highest average score (mean score) from all final round judges for the Plaintiff and the highest average score (mean score) from all final round judges for the Defense.

# LSU LAW CENTER OPENING STATEMENT COMPETITION

## JUDGES' SCORING SHEET

STUDENT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

JUDGE'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

STUDENT REPRESENTING (CIRCLE ONE):                      PROSECUTION                      DEFENSE

Performance Category	Scoring Range	Score
Attorney Preparedness and Case Knowledge	Weak: 1 to 2 Fair: 3 to 4 Average: 5 to 6 Good: 7 to 8 Excellent: 9 to 10	<b>/10</b>
Clearly and Persuasively Presented Theory of Case	Weak: 1 to 2 Fair: 3 to 4 Average: 5 to 6 Good: 7 to 8 Excellent: 9 to 10	<b>/10</b>
Clearly Developed a Legal and Factual Theory of the Case	Weak: 1 to 2 Fair: 3 to 4 Average: 5 to 6 Good: 7 to 8 Excellent: 9 to 10	<b>/10</b>
Personalized Him/Herself and Client	Weak: 1 to 2 Fair: 3 to 4 Average: 5 to 6 Good: 7 to 8 Excellent: 9 to 10	<b>/10</b>
Style (Good Volume, Eye Contact, Use of Courtroom, Etc.)	Weak: 1 to 2 Fair: 3 to 4 Average: 5 to 6 Good: 7 to 8 Excellent: 9 to 10	<b>/10</b>
<b>TOTAL SCORE (OUT OF 50):</b>		<b>/50</b>

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

JUDGE'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

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## JUDGES' SCORING SHEET

### JUDGING INFORMATION

Reminder: The opening statement is a persuasive outline of the trial. It is not an argument.

For purposes of this competition, when evaluating the success of a competitor's opening statement, you should ask yourself whether the competitor:

- Introduced themselves and their client?
- Explained the issue in plain English?
- Stated a theme?
- Entertained short attention spans?
- Teased the jury ("The testimony/evidence will show...")?
- Left the jury wanting to know more?
- Used a conversational tone?
- Restated their theme at closing?
- Explained the verdict they will request?
- Gave a basic summary of the law?
- Left on a high note?
- Personalized their client (Stayed away from terms such as "the defendant" "the victim")?
- Moved with purpose?

You should also look for whether the competitor:

- Got bogged down with small, insignificant details?
- Violated the "Golden Rule"? ("How would you feel if ...?")?
- Used too much "lawyer talk"?
- "Talked down" to the jury?

**Please be sure to give positive and useful feedback with your critiques. Thank the competitor for their participation.**