

The Judge "Rules"

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Robert Shaines '51 has been involved with the UNH Mock Trial program for more years than he can remember. President of the Portsmouth law firm [Shaines and McEachern](#), Shaines has decades of experience as a trial lawyer, and he's willing to share what he knows. Over the years, he has volunteered as a judge for UNH-hosted mock trial tournaments, scoring students on their effectiveness as attorneys and witnesses. He's also offered financial support.

In Mock Trial, undergraduates interested in the law, or those who want to develop theatrical or debating talents, argue mock cases in a competitive environment. Each year, the American Mock Trial Association (AMTA), the governing body for intercollegiate mock trial, creates a case packet that is used by the 600 teams from more than 350 universities and colleges that compete in AMTA tournaments, UNH among them.

This year, Shaines has taken his support of UNH Mock Trial to a new level. He has made a significant pledge of financial support and assisted with securing funding from the local Abraham Burtman Charitable Trust. The combination of these generous gifts will provide much needed stability for the program over the next five years.

“A lot of these students have no legal training whatsoever and Mock Trial really tests their skills in both how to present a particular issue and in public speaking,” says Shaines. “It’s a great introduction to law for students, many of whom have gone on to law school.”

For those who do go on, Mock Trial is solid preparation. Students develop a work ethic and skills that many in law school don’t yet possess.

“The presentations we see from undergraduate students at UNH is better than what I’ve seen at many mock trials at law schools,” notes Shaines.

Jacob Marvelley '08

One undergraduate “mockster” who impressed Shaines during tournaments is Jacob Marvelley '08, who served as litigation coordinator for the Mock Trial team for 3 years. Shaines remembers Marvelley as being “nervous as hell” as a new sophomore competitor but then saw him develop into an outstanding performer. Marvelley went on to law school at Suffolk and earned his J.D. in 2011.

Upon entering the job market, Marvelley asked Charles Putnam, the director of UNH’s Mock Trial team, if he would contact Shaines on his behalf for an interview. It was a call Putnam was pleased to make. Shaines agreed to interview Marvelley, and then he hired him.

Shaines's decision was certainly influenced by his Mock Trial experiences. He met Marvelley through Mock Trial, saw him compete on a number of occasions and, when Marvelley was in law school, judged a tournament with Marvelley serving as side judge. "Mock Trial was good for me and good for Jake," he said. "For me, I knew what Jake's bona fides were and his credentials."

Marvelley is well aware of how he has benefitted from Mock Trial, citing the networking opportunities, the development of public speaking and critical thinking skills so essential to litigation, and the rules and procedures he learned along the way that have served him well.

"UNH Mock Trial also maintains a focus on collegiality, no matter the stress level," says Marvelley. "Courtesy and professionalism are central tenets of the legal profession. UNH Mock trial competitors learn to protect and promote those tenets while advocating for their team, which is a skill that benefits the legal profession as a whole."

Marvelley's move from mock trial to real is the ultimate success story for Mock Trial and one of the reasons why Putnam, a former prosecutor, continues to dedicate himself to the program. Now, thanks to Shaines, the opportunities Mock Trial provides will continue into the future.

"Bob Shaines has been a wonderful advocate and generous supporter of the UNH Mock Trial program for many years," says Putnam. "His recent contribution, coupled with the support of the Burtman Trust, assures that students can compete at the highest levels, confident in the knowledge that the program can afford the registration fees, costs of transportation and hotel bills that go with national competition. Mock Trial requires students to pay a substantial part of the costs themselves. Bob's assistance leverages the students' commitment in terms of time and treasure, and makes it possible for them to aim high in this academic 'sport.'"

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