



Mock Trial Leads to Diverse Careers: What's Your Story?

By Justin Bernstein

The best mock trial competitor I've ever seen was Bryan Caforio. His first year competing for UCLA (2003) was my last year at UC Berkeley. Bryan had everything. He was smart, articulate, and unflappable. He was dynamic enough to own the room, but effortless enough to keep judges from complaining he was "over the top." One of my teammates called him simply, The Voice. Usually while swooning. Apparently, judges agreed: Bryan competed for three years, winning two national championships and three All-American Awards, and is the only person I know who opened and closed in national final round victories.

A couple months ago, I saw Bryan's name all over my Facebook feed. He had announced a run for Congress in California's 25th District, which encompasses part of north Los Angeles. I feel bad for his opponent, who now has to face someone trained in public speaking and quick thinking. And I was again reminded that mock trial is a valuable activity for those planning a career in law -- and those who aren't.

Recently I ran into into AMTA alums -- Jacinth Sohi (Claremont McKenna, 2011) and Jay Friedel (UPenn, 2013) -- who are working for Uber. Both told me their mock trial experience helps them every day. In college, I had the pleasure of directing witness Sal Baxamusa, now a chemical engineer who researches nuclear fusion targets for Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Of my own former UC Irvine students, Ben Larson does marketing for Hewlett-Packard and has a Kickstarter-funded standing desk

company; Shima Gorgani is the assistant director of graduate studies at NYU's media department; Michael Smith is a partner in one of the world's leading mobile research and surveys-on-the-go companies. None went to law school, and all will tell you that mock trial helps in their careers.

Of course, that's just the tip of the iceberg. Last issue we spotlighted AMTA alumna Sarah Chervinsky, who takes on tough cases as a public defender in New Orleans -- a powerful example of how mock trial can make someone a better future lawyer. We're going to do more spotlights like that. But we also want to share some great stories about our many alums who are thriving in non-legal fields (I said non-legal, not illegal!). If you or one of your former teammates is doing something awesome, email us at amta.newsletter@collegemocktrial.org. We'd love to tell the story.