

Representation in Mediation Competition

(with the optional 1-credit “Advocacy in Mediation” Course)

Event at a Glance

Competition Date: Saturday, November 21st from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in-person at the University at Buffalo School of Law.
Deadline to register for the Competition: Friday, October 2, 2026.
Participation is limited to 2nd and 3rd year law students.
The Competition requires teams of 2 law students —1 playing the role of the attorney and 1 playing the role of the client.

This Competition is a great practical learning experience for law students regarding a core and often used lawyering skill: **Negotiation**. This Competition’s popularity amongst students and lawyers in our community has significantly grown over the last several years – we usually have between 40 and 52 law student competitors with up to 70 lawyer volunteers acting as mediators and assessing judges!

Because an increasing number of civil legal cases are required to go to mediation by the courts, or mediation is agreed to by both sides of a legal dispute without a court referral, it is vital that the lawyer accompanying their client to the mediation table has the knowledge and skill-set necessary to maximize the client’s results in this context. This Competition is great practice for future lawyers looking to hone their advocacy and negotiation skills in a realistic mediation setting. The interaction between lawyer and client and the use of interest-based problem solving is the focus of the Representation in Mediation Competition.

Participation and Competition Format

- **Participation is limited to 2nd and 3rd year law students.** However, 1st year students can get a valuable hands-on learning opportunity by assisting the volunteer lawyers with the session rules and timing-keeping.
- **All students** are encouraged to contact one of the student ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) Society officers (listed below) for more information!

There are two rounds – each team member **must** play the role of the lawyer in one round and the client in the other round.

The teams are given two short Competition fact patterns (different for each round) 2 to 3 weeks prior to the Competition.

Teams then strategize and prepare to negotiate during the two mediation sessions.

On the day of the Competition, the teams engage in negotiations with an opposing attorney-client team, facilitated by a professional mediator from the community.

Three lawyers and/or other professionals with mediation advocacy knowledge are present to score the rounds and provide feedback.

Judging, Rules, and Opportunities

- Competitors are judged on preparation and teamwork, in addition to how well they represent the client's interests, use the mediation process to further those interests, and other elements of effective attorney advocacy in mediation as set forth in ABA scoring criteria.

Our Competition will also follow the ABA Representation in Mediation Competition rules. We will go over the rules at the **mandatory informational meeting on the morning of Saturday, October 3rd** (see below). Here is a link to the scoring criteria and the rules:

[2025-2026 Representation in Mediation Competition Rules Score Sheets Host Guide](#)

- There are further **travel and competition opportunities** after this Competition!
- The two winning teams will have the opportunity to compete at either regional or national Representation in Mediation Competitions in the spring, or at the NYSBA Mediation Competition in March 2026.
- Whether or not you win or place in our Intramural Competition, participation alone qualifies you to apply to represent our team in person at any International Competition in which we compete (for example, we have competed in person in Vienna, Austria; Paris, France; and Goa, India).

Participation in this Competition is also one of the requirements to obtain a training Certificate in Mediation from our law school, which allows you to mediate basic cases in the NYS Court System (ask the ADR officers or Professor Sugarman for more details on this if interested).

There are 2 ways to participate in the Representation in Mediation Competition—either WITH or WITHOUT taking a 1-credit Advocacy in Mediation course:

OPTION #1: Participating as part of a 1-credit course entitled “Advocacy in Mediation” (LAW 570).

Participating in this manner involves:

1. **STEP 1:** By Friday, October 2nd, sign up for the Competition **with a partner** (unless you do not have one—see below) by filling out and submitting the registration form found at:

<http://www.law.buffalo.edu/beyond/competitions/mediation/team-registration.html>

By submitting a registration form you must honor this commitment to prepare and fully compete in good faith on Saturday, November 21st.

Your team can still fully participate in the Competition if only one team member takes the 1-credit Advocacy in Mediation course. While you can only get credit for taking the 1-credit course once, students that participated in the Competition last year are encouraged to do so again this year!

If you do not have a partner for the Competition, but would like to participate, submit your registration form with just your name on it, and **clearly and prominently indicate on the form that you need a partner**. While we cannot guarantee that we can find you a partner, we will try to randomly pair you with another student that also indicated the need for a partner. Students **must** have a partner to compete in the Competition and to earn credit for this course.

In the event we have too many registrants to accommodate in the Competition, students taking the 1-credit course and third-year law students with partners would have preference, and second-year law students not taking the course would be chosen by lottery.

2. **STEP 2:** Register for the 1-credit course with the Registrar **by Wednesday, September 30th**. Those that are already registered for the course are all set, but you still have to sign up for the Competition (Step 1 above).

3. **STEP 3:** Attend two **mandatory** in-person classes (in Room 102) in advance of the Competition (Class One: Saturday, October 3rd from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (the first part of which is a Competition informational session) and Class Two: on Saturday, October 31st from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.). **Those not taking this 1-credit course must attend the informational session** (from 9:30 to 11:00) virtually or in person, as they choose as discussed below.

There will be required articles to read regarding effective mediation advocacy as part of the course, a quiz on the readings in the 2nd class, and some written exercises to be done between the classes. You will also be provided a mediation advocacy video after the second class to review and analyze.

4. **STEP 4:** You will be sent the two Competition fact patterns with further instructions 2-3 weeks before the Competition.
5. **STEP 5:** Participate in person in the Representation in Mediation Competition on November 21st (you will be notified of the day's schedule well in advance, but for now assume you will be at the law school from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.).
6. **STEP 6:** On Sunday, November 22nd, meet for a mandatory 90-minute virtual class for debriefing and discussing what you learned from the Competition experience—this class would be at a mutually agreeable time on the 22nd (and not to interfere with the Bills game that day!).
7. **STEP 7:** Write a five-page reflective paper on the Competition experience and what you learned about effective client advocacy at the mediation table (and integrating concepts from the required readings). This paper is **due within 2 weeks** after the Competition.

OPTION #2: Participating in the Competition, but NOT taking the one credit course.

Participating in this manner involves:

1. **STEP 1:** By Friday, October 2nd, sign up for the Competition **with a partner** (unless you do not have one—see below) by filling out and submitting the registration form found at:

<http://www.law.buffalo.edu/beyond/competitions/mediation/team-registration.html>

By submitting a registration form, you must honor this commitment to prepare and fully compete in good faith all day on Saturday, November 21st.

Your team can still fully participate in the Competition if only one team member takes the 1-credit Advocacy in Mediation course. While you can only get credit for taking the 1-credit course once, students that participated in the Competition last year are encouraged to do so again this year!

If you do not have a partner for the Competition, but would like to participate, submit your registration form with just your name on it, and **clearly and prominently indicate on the form that you need a partner**. While we cannot guarantee that we can find you a partner, we will try to randomly pair you with another student that also indicated the need for a partner. Students **must** have a partner to compete in the Competition and to earn credit for this course.

In the event we have too many registrants to accommodate in the Competition, students taking the 1-credit course and third-year law students with partners would have preference, and second-year law students not taking the course would be chosen by lottery.

2. **STEP 2:** Attend the Competition informational session (virtually OR in person as you choose in Room 102) during the first portion of the Advocacy in Mediation class on Saturday, October 3rd from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. (the full class goes until 1:30 p.m. if you are taking the 1-credit course). **Even if you are not taking the 1-credit course, the attendance of your team at this informational session is mandatory for your team to compete** (unless you have special permission from Professor Sugarman for neither teammate or only one teammate to attend—sometimes allowed if both teammates competed last year). Attendance will be taken at the beginning and end of this session.
3. **STEP 3:** You will be sent the two Competition fact patterns with further instructions 2-3 weeks before the Competition. You and your teammate will then effectively prepare in the weeks leading up to the Competition.
4. **STEP 4:** Participate in person in the Representation in Mediation Competition on November 21st (you will be notified of the day's schedule well in advance, but for now assume you will be at the law school from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.).

Every year students express how much they learned from and enjoyed participating in this Competition! The Competition is also a great networking opportunity with local legal practitioners and even judges!
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Contacts

If there are any questions or concerns, please contact any of the following:

- **President:** Hannah Kilburn - hkilburn@buffalo.edu
- **Vice President:** Olivia Bryant - owbryant@buffalo.edu
- **Secretary:** Leah Perry - leahperr@buffalo.edu
- **Treasurer:** Skyler Rehbein - sdrehbei@buffalo.edu
- **Advisor:** Professor Sugarman - sugarmanmediate@gmail.com
- **Associate Director of the Advocacy Institute:** Lizzy Vinal-Adams - law-advocacy@buffalo.edu