Student Services Fee Request for the 2014 - 2015 Academic Year

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"We acknowledge that the Fee Committee does not award actual dollars, but rather a penny fee that earns dollars based upon student enrollment levels. Any differences between anticipated and actual income resulting from changes in enrollment are the responsibility of the student organization, not of the Fee Committee."

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Is your organization an IRS 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit? Yes_____X______ No __________
Funds are being requested for (check all that apply):

- General Operating Support: X
- Start-Up Costs:  
- Capital:
- Project / Program Support: X
- Technical Assistance:  
- Other (List):

Budget

- SSF Dollar Amount Requested $16,081.00
- Total Annual Organization Budget $30,386.07
- Total Program Budget (apart from General Operating) $24,403.00
Section 1: Narrative

History: The University of Minnesota Mock Trial Association has existed at the University of Minnesota for over a decade now, and in its time on campus, the organization has competed in various tournaments primarily in the Midwest, but occasionally travels much farther. The University of Minnesota Mock Trial Association has three teams which compete in invitational tournaments and American Mock Trial Association (AMTA) sanctioned tournaments. In recent years, the organization has become one of the most competitive teams in its region, consistently finishing among the best teams at invitational and AMTA regional tournaments and sending the maximum of two teams to the AMTA Opening Round of Championships. In the past, teams have competed at the AMTA National Championships. In addition to attending competition, the University Mock Trial Association hosts its own tournaments every year. In October, Mock Trial hosts a three day college invitational where schools from across the country come to the University of Minnesota in order to compete in four rounds of Mock Trial. Additionally, a tournament is hosted each January which is attended by area high schools who compete in two rounds of Mock Trial.

Mission: To provide an avenue for students from diverse disciplines and fields of study to interact, exchange ideas, and gain a better understanding of the legal profession; and to participate competitively in the activities of the American Mock Trial Association including Regional, Invitational, and/or National Tournaments

Goals: We have two primary goals.

1) To create an atmosphere for students from all backgrounds to gain a better understanding of legal practices, procedures, and the judicial system

2) To develop and enhance critical thinking and public speaking skills of participants through trial simulations

American Mock Trial Association: The American Mock Trial Association (AMTA) was founded at Drake Law School in 1985, and today, it acts as the governing body for undergraduate, intercollegiate mock trial competition. AMTA creates and provides the case materials used by students across the nation and hosts and sponsors both regional and national competitions. Each year, over 5,300 students on approximately 600 teams from over 350 universities and colleges compete in AMTA-sanctioned tournaments. These tournaments normally consist of four trial simulations in which two teams from different schools will present a side of the case (either prosecution/plaintiff or defendant).

University of Minnesota Student Legal Services Board of Directors: The University Mock Trial Association and the USLS Board have been closely connected for several years. Many Board members are competing members
Department of Political Science: The University Mock Trial Association is a Campus Life Program through the Department of Political Science. Our advisor in the Department is Dr. Joan Tronto.

Community and Student Benefits: The University of Minnesota expects students to be involved both in the classroom and out of it. In doing this, the University believes that students will improve on seven skill sets: the Student Development Outcomes. Mock Trial helps in developing these skills in many different ways.

1) Responsibility and Accountability: Competitors are expected to be prepared for and to attend practices and tournaments. They often must meet outside of designated practices to complete work and to ensure that they will not hurt the team. Within trials, competitors must be held accountable for what they say and do.

2) Independence and Interdependence: Within rounds, competitors often must be able to make rapid decisions on objections, questions, and comments aimed towards the judges without being told or asked by teammates. Within practice, individuals need to stay focused on their tasks in order to make the best use of everyone’s time. Individuals are expected to accept criticism from coaches and teammates and to make changes as is necessary.

3) Goal Orientation: Individuals must accomplish their tasks by the expected date and have them memorized for tournaments. Doing this can be difficult when also tasked with classes and jobs, yet members of the organization consistently are able to complete what is expected.

4) Self-Awareness: Individuals need to be aware of their shortcomings as an attorney or witness in order to improve. This often requires one to help teammates learn new material or improve current material in order to help the team. Members also need to be aware of what other members are working on, so they can offer advice about what they have seen before and how it has fared.

5) Resilience: After low scoring rounds or performances, individuals are expected to recover and think to the next round or competition. Disappointing scores are not rare in mock trial and competitors often must be able to quickly improve on the mistakes made.

6) Appreciation of Differences: With teams constantly shuffling, members of the organization need to be able to work with people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Our organization has individuals from different regions of the country, different fields of study, and occasionally from different countries, so members need to be respectful and able to work with these differences.
2013-2014 Student Organization Student Services Fees Request
University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
University of Minnesota Undergraduate Mock Trial Association

7) Tolerance of Ambiguity: Every round of Mock Trial is different, and each can bring a new twist or a new idea. Members need to be prepared for many different outcomes and need to be able to adapt to unforeseen twists.

These developments are very specific to competitors but Mock Trial also provides a lot for the greater University community. The tournaments we attend allow many more students to see the strength and diversity of this school. Attending these tournaments is also a tremendous avenue to spread the name of the University of Minnesota. When traveling to tournaments we expect competitors to be the best representation of the “U” they can be. In fact, we have won awards for the good sportsmanship we bring to each round we compete in.

The tournaments we host every year offer an opportunity for students from around the nation to see the campus. High school and college students both consistently comment on the quality of our tournaments. Many high school students who attend our tournament reach out to us afterwards with interest in competing at the collegiate level. Additionally, any student can attend our tournaments to judge or to view a round. In just hours, an individual would learn a fair amount about the trial process and the judicial system.

The Mock Trial Association not only benefits these communities by providing another avenue to improve their educational experience, but we also benefit from the incredible diversity that the University has to offer. Despite being within the Department of Political Science, the organization makes a point of reaching out to students from numerous different areas of study and backgrounds. The current organization has students from the College of Liberal Arts, College of Science and Engineering, College of Biological Sciences, and the College of Education and Human Development. We actively recruit the University's brightest minds by advertising in the Honors Living Learning Community and by posting on its Facebook Group. The University Mock Trial Association also has several members of the Greek community competing for it.

Section 2: Organizational Chart
2013-2014 Student Organization Student Services Fees Request
University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
University of Minnesota Undergraduate Mock Trial Association

The University of Minnesota Mock Trial Association is a Campus Life Program through the Department of Political Science. It has five executive board positions, each with different duties. The president has ultimate authority over the executive board and is held responsible for its decisions. He or she is responsible for communicating with AMTA officials as well as other schools’ tournaments directors. The Vice President is responsible for fundraising, recruitments, and is the liaison to the coaches; he or she will fill in for the President if the President is unable to fulfill his or her duties. The Events chairperson is responsible for all the events hosted and attended by the organization. The treasurer works closely with the Political Science department’s accountants to ensure accurate financial record keeping. The secretary is responsible for organizational communication, such as meeting minutes, and for maintenance of the organization’s website (which is currently being updated).

The University Mock Trial Association consists of 3 teams. Each team consists of a maximum of 10 competing members and one anchored coach. Of the ten members, two serve as team captains who are responsible for communicating with the executive board. The organization has several coaches which help teach the law to competitors and offer advice and instruction on how to argue and construct cases. Competing members are divided between different roles which are categorized as either attorneys or witnesses.

Section 3: Performance Report

We believe it is difficult to measure the impact our organization has on campus; however, we have listed some notable achievements which we believe can help in this task.

• Organizational Practices are held weekly with 25-30 students attending each practice. Additionally, there are usually two or more legal professionals at the practices.

• Teams meet once every week in addition to these organization-wide practices. These practices usually have approximately ten students and one legal professional.

• This past fall, the organization attended 5 tournaments, finishing in the top 10 at three of them. At one tournament, we unfortunately had to withdraw after only two rounds due to poor weather.
  o U of MN Undergraduate Mock Trial Battle: 2nd place (22 teams)
  o Hamline Brawl: 1st place (12 teams)
  o Macalester Trials: 2nd, 7th, 10th places (36 teams)
2013-2014 Student Organization Student Services Fees Request
University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
University of Minnesota Undergraduate Mock Trial Association

- We have sent two teams to the Opening Round Championship Series Tournament for four years consecutively.

- Upon graduation, members have attended University of Minnesota Law School, Harvard Law School, gone to work for the Central Intelligence Agency, and more.

- We have assisted other related organizations in advertising and hosting events such as the Careers in Law Forum.

Section 4: Reserve Accounts

We do not keep a separate reserve account; however, our organizations constitution requires that we keep $1,500 in order to pay the fees associated with registering three teams for AMTA sanctioned tournaments. We have three accounts all through the Political Science Department that are separated based on the source of funds.

Section 5: Fees Request

This is the first time we are requesting Student Service Fees. We are asking for $16,081 in order to help fund the significant cost of hosting and attending quality tournaments. We also hope to attend more tournaments in future years, which we have been unable to do in the past due to the cost of travel. Receiving funding would allow us to travel and compete outside of the Midwest, making the organization more well-known. We are not actively competing or operating during the summer (other than basic preparations for Fall semester).

- Hosted Tournaments total cost: $2,064.00

- Attended Tournaments total cost: $28,742.00

Section 6: External Funding

Every year, the organization takes on an extensive letter writing campaign to secure fund from local legal offices. This has been an effective way to keep the organization afloat in recent years, but it has proven to be fairly unreliable. We also regularly receive a grant from the College of Liberal Arts for $2,500 and in past years have received a grant from the Department of Political Science, but these are both unreliable as funding continues to decrease for both of these organizations. We regularly apply for Student Unions and Activities grants but because many of our programs make a profit we are ineligible for grants often.

We hope Student Service fees will prove to be a more reliable source of money for our organization. Having a reliable source of funds will allow us to ensure future competitiveness and that we are able to continue traveling to tournament. If granted the full request, it would amount to 52.92% of our total budget.