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Changes are Made In Case Club Program

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Changes are Made In Case Club Program

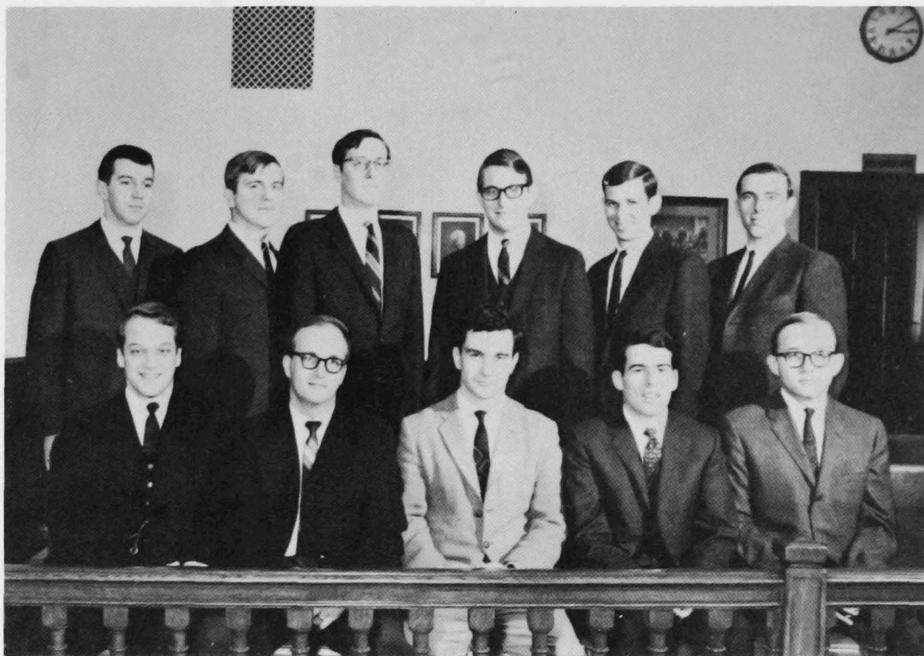
From time to time over the past several years, the question of whether to make the voluntary Case Club (freshman moot court) program compulsory has been considered. Last year's senior judges, after several meetings on the subject, presented to the faculty Curriculum Committee a proposal for making successful participation in Case Clubs a requirement for graduation. The need for making such a change was summed up as follows:

The present non-compulsory, non-credit program of Freshman Case Clubs has failed to provide training in legal research, writing, and oral advocacy to a substantial number of first year law students. . . . It is the belief of the senior judges that the resulting absence of legal writing and oral advocacy experience for those who do not participate in Case Clubs is a serious weakness in the education offered by this law school. We believe that a compulsory Case Club program is the most feasible way to assure that each Michigan Law student develops basic skills in research and legal writing.

After extended discussion with the senior judges, the Curriculum Committee recommended that the faculty adopt the proposal for a compulsory Case Club program. The faculty approved the Committee's four point resolution which:

1. made satisfactory participation in Case Clubs required of all students entering in or after the 1967 summer session, and
2. called for the appointment of a faculty advisor to each of the twenty-three clubs, and
3. called for the merger of the Library Orientation program into the Case Club program, and
4. called for the creation of a joint Faculty-Student Case Club Committee to work out the details of, and to supervise this program.

While the basic format of the Case Club program has been retained, several changes have been initiated. The most significant of these has been increased faculty participation in the program. This has been accomplished by the appointment of a faculty advisor to each of the twenty-three clubs.



Semi-finalists in the 1967 Campbell Competition and now leaders of Case Club program are: front, from left, Tom Smithson, Steve Wood, John Conley, Nick Eddes, and Carl Von Ende; rear, from left, Chris Cooke, Richard Egger, Richard Herrmann, Robert Hurlbert, James Lesniak, and Edward Robinson.

The advisor serves the dual function of advising the club on matters relating to legal research and argumentation, and of advising each individual freshman on other academic problems they may bring to his attention. In addition, many of the advisors have invited the members of their club to their homes for an informal get-together. The primary responsibility for instructing the freshmen, however, still rests with the senior judges who are assisted by the junior clerks.

The library orientation program has also been changed. Rather than trying to compress it into two days of rapid fire instruction in the use of the basic research tools, we have extended orientation instruction over two weeks. The freshmen meet as clubs approximately every other day, are given instruction in one or two of the basic tools at each meeting, and then asked to work a short hypothetical through that tool before the next meeting. The evaluation of this new system has not been completed, but it appears to have been more effective than the rapid fire system used in the past.

After completion of the library orientation, each club is given a hypothetical written by his senior judge in

consultation with the faculty advisor. Each freshman will research the legal issues presented, prepare a legal memorandum, write an appellate brief, and then deliver an oral argument before a bench consisting of his senior judge, junior clerk, and a "visiting" judge who is usually a third year student. Throughout this program, the freshman is given instruction and individual assistance by his senior judge and junior clerk. This procedure is repeated during the second term, except that there is added a competitive element, with the top freshmen receiving prizes at the annual Case Club banquet in the spring.

While it is believed important that each freshman have the experience provided by Case Clubs, it is hoped by all concerned that the program does not become just another requirement in the minds of the freshmen. Most of those who participated in the voluntary program found Case Clubs to be both a rewarding and enjoyable experience, one which allowed them the opportunity to get some idea of what it is like to represent a "client before an appellate court." It is hoped that this year's freshmen will likewise enjoy the chance to try out the skills

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they will have to rely upon within a few short years.

In any event, Michigan has joined the other major law schools which require first year students to participate in a moot court program. In so doing, the objective of Case Clubs remains the same as it has always been: to teach the first year student the essential skills of legal analysis, legal writing, and appellate advocacy in order to assist him in making the long step from layman to lawyer as well as to help him in his study of the law.