

## **Using Simulation Across Courses To Serve Under-Represented Populations**

Helen G. Boutrous  
Assistant Professor and Pre-Law Director  
Department of History & Political Science  
12001 Chalon Road  
Los Angeles, CA 90049  
(310) 954-4207  
[hboutrous@msmc.la.edu](mailto:hboutrous@msmc.la.edu)

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*The benefits of simulation exercises as required coursework are well documented, and can be enhanced by incorporation of these techniques throughout political science departments. These benefits can be particularly pronounced in colleges serving traditionally under-represented populations. As the Americanist at a Hispanic-serving institution primarily for women, I have included simulation exercises in my American Party Politics, Legislative Process, Legal Reasoning, Moot Court, and Mock Trial courses. Through mock Presidential Debates, Model Congress, Moot Court and Mock Trial competitions, my students have developed their critical thinking and communication skills, and found self-confidence, to a degree well beyond what can be expected from traditional coursework alone. I have combined these simulation exercises with experiential learning elements in my Public Policy course, which requires each student to take a volunteer position with a governmental, NGO or advocacy organization. This approach has proven to be a powerful combination toward educating students to use their knowledge to better themselves, their environments, and the world.*

The benefits of simulation and role-play in the college classroom have been well-documented and the technique is being used increasingly in a wide-variety of disciplines including the physical sciences (Colella 2000), mathematics (Resnick & Wilensky 1998), history (McDaniel 2000), and, of course, political science (*see e.g.*, Smith & Boyer 1996; Kathlene & Choate 1999). These exercises build oral and analytical skills and, within political science, work to instill a deeper understanding of political processes and concepts. For female students from traditionally underrepresented populations, simulation not only provides the skills-building benefits necessary for success in academia, but, in my observation, increases their sense of political efficacy, engagement and participation. By including simulation or experiential learning in five separate courses, the benefits for our students have been enhanced and reinforced with a taste for competition that has resulted in better performance in their classes, mentoring and scholarship opportunities, and increased acceptances to graduate and law schools.

This paper will describe how the simulation and experiential learning exercises I use in my American Party Politics, Legislative Process, Legal Reasoning, Public Policy and Mock Trial/Moot Court courses serve our student population well, and have become an integral part of

how our political science department strives to meet the mission and academic goals of Mount Saint Mary's College (MSMC). The choices I made in simulation design were calculated to best meet the college mission and goals, while providing optimal benefits for our particular student population. After a discussion of the benefits of simulation for our particular student population, I will discuss the specifics of the simulation exercises undertaken at MSMC.

### **MSMC Student Population**

MSMC is a Catholic, liberal arts college primarily for women. MSMC is designated as a Hispanic-serving institution. The student population is 97 percent female, 40.3 percent Hispanic, 18.5 percent white, 18.2 percent Asian-Pacific Islander, and 10 percent African American. Ninety-eight percent of the student body receives some form of financial aide, and 58 percent of the students are the first in their families to attend college. (MSMC Office of Institutional Research)

### **Serving Under-Represented Populations**

Education scholars have identified a number of factors that too often represent obstacles to academic success for minority and first generation students (Ford, Baytops & Harmon 1997). With greater numbers of minority and first generation students attending poorly funded elementary schools, and facing economic hardship, an "achievement gap" has developed between those students and white students who tend to be more affluent, attend elementary schools with more services, and face fewer "risk factors." (Goldsmith 2004; Fleming, Garcia & Morning 1995) These "risk" factors include lagging communication and critical thinking skills, a lack of self-confidence, and failure to form mentoring relationships (Ford, Baytops & Harmon 1997; Banks & Banks 1995).

Simulation and role-play develop the very skills that tend to be lacking in “at-risk” students. As explained by Smith and Boyer (1996, 691), simulation techniques, “develop critical thinking and analytical skills through collaboration efforts” and they “enable students to develop speaking and presentational skills, simultaneously building their confidence.” Ford, Baytops & Harmon (1997, 209) suggest, among other approaches, simulation and role-play as a strategy to assist gifted, but underachieving, minority students reach their potential at the elementary and secondary school level.

Simulation in the political science college classroom, then, addresses the needs of underrepresented populations well. In addition to skills and confidence building, these exercises are bonding experiences among students and faculty at MSMC and have led to external mentoring opportunities with lawyers from area law firms. Course content is not sacrificed, but enhanced by “giving students a deeper level of insight into the political process.” (Smith & Boyer 1996, 690). As discussed in more detail below, with simulations in courses on American Party Politics (Presidential Debate), the Legislature (Model Congress) and the Judiciary (Moot Court, Mock Trial), MSMC students receive a more comprehensive and fully grounded understanding of American government institutions and processes.

### **Engaging Young Women in Politics**

As a professor at a women’s college, I see benefits to simulation in political science courses that may not be as obvious at other institutions. According to the literature, “women are less politically interested, informed, and efficacious than men and...this gender gap in political engagement has consequences for political participation.” (Verba, Burns, & Schlozman 1997). One might presume that this does not apply to young women who have self-selected to become political science majors. However, this troubling finding is not to be taken lightly, or assumed

away based on major selection. The possibility that young women political science majors feel less efficacious than male political science majors should be considered. Also, non-political science majors take courses from our department, and can gain from the benefits of the simulation exercises. Simulation exercises in political science courses directly address the political engagement gap by increasing political awareness, giving them “power” within the political process, and thereby sparking enthusiasm for politics and feelings of efficacy that may lead to increased political activity.

According to data drawn from the Citizen Participation Study (Verba, Shlozman, Brady & Nie 1990), while women turn out to vote in numbers similar to men, they read newspapers less, are less likely to be able to identify members of Congress and are less likely to believe that they can affect political change. Part of the explanation for these phenomena is that women perceive politics to be a “man’s world.” According to this study, the only public-officials women can identify more readily than men are local school board members, a domain traditionally associated with women. (Verba, Burns, & Schlozman 1997) With growing numbers of women in Congress, the first female Speaker-of-the-House, and Hillary Clinton’s apparent run for the Presidency, this should be changing. Gender studies have suggested that female representation leads to greater political awareness among women (Atkeson 2003). However, other studies have found little evidence that the presence of women in Congress affects the political attitudes and behavior of female constituents (Lawless 2004). Particularly in light of these mixed findings, one should not take increased political awareness among women for granted. The simulation exercises in my courses require students to be fully informed regarding political actors, their positions on policy debates, the opposing viewpoints and the consequences of those positions. Extensive research is required on their part, including a search

of congressional records and committee, presidential statements and orders, appropriate case law and coverage in major newspapers. Students must become sufficiently familiar with the positions of actual politicians and officials so that they can ask and field questions, as that politician or official, during exercises. That kind of active learning and demonstration of knowledge under pressure allows students to retain the information to a much greater degree than passive learning and gives them a much deeper understanding of current political issues. Hopefully, this experience will lead to a life-long commitment to political awareness.

The Presidential Debate and Model Congress exercises put the young women in “positions of power” and allow them to confront and experience the male dominated process. While it is role-playing, the excitement generated at these events takes on an energy that simulates not just substantive debate, but feelings of political power, as well. As students play presidents, candidates, members of Congress, they gain a sense of empowerment and what it feels like to command political attention. The entire campus is invited to these events bringing an air of urgency and gravitas to the proceedings. The students are most often playing men in positions of power, and these young women tell me that they want to experience the reality of that power, their own power, some day. This feeling of, and desire for, political effectiveness may lead to active political participation throughout these students’ lives.

Ubig and Funk (1999) posit that individuals who are averse to conflict avoid political participation. Some studies suggest that women tend to be more passive, peace-loving and conflict averse than men, thereby affecting policy choices such as use of military force (Caprioli 2000). These findings suggest the possibility that women may avoid political participation because they tend to avoid conflict. Simulation of political encounters addresses this issue effectively. During Presidential debates and Model Congress students are required to challenge

the position of others and aggressively support their assigned position throughout the exercise. This allows students to become comfortable with contentious settings and political debate. Mock Trial and Moot Court likewise provide opportunity for vigorous intellectual argument. The more students are exposed to controlled conflict, the less anxiety they will feel, enabling them to engage in political discourse and action on their own. They are taught to engage in conflict within the rules of the game and become effective advocates.

### **Simulation Exercises Designed to Serve the Student Population**

#### **Presidential Debate: Bush v. Kerry**

##### Goals, Scheduling, Location

In the Fall of 2004 I conducted a presidential debate simulation as part of my Party Politics course. I outlined the structure of the exercise for the students on the first day of class and the research, written assignment due dates, and practice schedule was included on the syllabus. Students could drop the class if they did not want to participate, but participation in the debate was required as part of course requirements. I chose a date for the debate, October 19<sup>th</sup>, that would fall before the election, but after the three actual presidential debates. Our debate would be billed as the “last” presidential debate of the campaign season. This would allow students to watch the televised debates so that our “candidates” could get a sense of the Bush and Kerry style and demeanor, the students could download transcripts of those debates as research tools. I instructed students that the debate was not to be conducted as a scripted “play,” nor were the students instructed to do “impressions” of the candidates. Rather, the students were to use the actual debates as research tools for their own rigorous questioning of the candidates. Holding

our debate before the election served to educate participants and audience members alike regarding the most important political issues of the 2004 election.

I chose to hold the debate in our “Lecture Hall” which holds 150 people and has a “townhall” feel to it. I rejected the offer of our “Little Theater” which holds 500 people. I did not think it would fill to capacity and the acoustics give it a cavernous feel. My goal was to have standing room only. I thought that would bring an air of excitement to the event for the debate participants and our college community. All faculty, staff, administration, friends and family were invited to attend.

#### Assigning roles and responsibilities

I approached selected students to offer them the role of the “candidates.” I chose two very hardworking, reliable students. I asked them in confidence and assured them that they could turn me down without consequence, and they would be free to take-on a less demanding role. I wanted enthusiastic candidates. Also, because I planned to invite the entire MSMC community and the school had never attempted a similar event, I did not want to pressure these students into a situation that would overwhelm them, but rather challenge them. Both accepted the assignment. One of these students tended to voice a “liberal” point of view in my classes, and the other a conservative one. I offered the role of Senator Kerry to the liberal student and the role of President Bush to the conservative student. While I could have chosen to challenge these students by making assignments in the opposition direction of their political inclinations, I preferred to take advantage of their natural passions for the roles. Also, assigning the role of the sitting president running for re-election was a delicate task. As tends to be the case with college-age women, an overwhelming majority tended to support the Democratic candidate. Of the nineteen students in the class, four supported President Bush for re-election. I did not want to

assign a student who would sabotage the Bush performance. I could trust the student I chose to play the role of the President with integrity.

I then approached another dedicated student to be the moderator of the debate. This student was required to make a welcoming statement; cue the candidates for opening statements; cue “reporters” for their questions; ask the closing question; keep time and move the participants along where necessary; and thank the audience for coming. I gave the student the option of choosing who to play as moderator, and she chose Judy Woodruff, then of CNN. This role was very important and carried much responsibility. She was tasked with keep the debate on track and resolving any arguments or confusion. Once the debate began, I did not exist. The students were to carry out the event completely on their own.

I chose four students to serve as our reporters. There were two rounds of questions, one for domestic policy and one for foreign policy. Each reporter asked one question, with a follow-up for each round, and the moderator asked a final question, for a total of nine questions per candidate plus follow-up questions. There was a time limit of five minutes for each candidate’s answer, plus two minutes for any follow-up questions. The “reporters” were allowed to choose the real life reporters or commentators they would play. They chose Suzanne Malveaux of CNN, Elizabeth Vargas, then of ABC’s 20/20, conservative syndicated columnist Linda Chavez, and Britt Hume of Fox News. The reporters drafted their own questions based on research of the issues of the 2004 campaign, the candidates’ positions and the ideology of the reporter or commentator, if known. They were not to repeat questions asked in the actual debates, but instead to find questions of domestic and foreign policy that were missed or not thoroughly answered in those debates. The “candidates” were to answer the questions as President Bush and

Senator Kerry would answer them. The preparatory research of all concerned was crucial to the success of the enterprise.

Next, I selected two students to be the campaign chiefs of staff. These students' personal political preferences also coincided with the parties I assigned them. They were tasked with supervising all staffers, coordinating research efforts, assigning a publicity committee, managing the allotted funds for campaign materials, and helping to prepare the candidate. An important part of this job was to keep the staff and candidates motivated, on schedule and enthusiastic for the cause. This was more difficult for the Republican chief of staff, since her team was solidly Democratic in their personal preferences. However, as the time drew near for the debate, and the competitive spirit and team loyalty took over, the staffers were working hard to support their candidate and vigorously cheered "President Bush."

The rest of the class made up the campaign staff. Each campaign had ten staffers. They conducted supporting and opposition research to help prepare the candidates, and created press releases and campaign posters that covered the campus leading up to the debate. At the close of the debate, the staffers mingled among the audience members to "spin" for their candidates.

Our class met two days a week for one and one-half hours a session. One day a week, for the six weeks leading up to our debate, was dedicated to debate preparation. All other preparation was to be done outside of class time. In week four of the preparation, a written position paper was due from every student presenting their research on a campaign policy issue. Assignment of issues was coordinated by the chiefs of staff, with instructor approval. These position papers allowed me to ensure that students were on track with their research and the issues would be covered thoroughly and accurately. These policy papers also served as an

excellent analytical exercise, reinforced their knowledge regarding the issues in the campaign and served as an assessment tool for individual students.

### Debate Day

The debate was a huge success. We drew an overflow crowd. The line to get in wrapped around the center of campus, and students, staff and faculty stood on benches to look through the windows. As the moderator introduced the candidates, they remained behind a curtain. When the candidates made their entrance from opposite ends of the stage and the two young women in men's suits and ties approached each other to shake hands, the roar from the crowd was deafening. There was something about seeing two young women playing two men vying for the presidency of the United States that thrilled the audience. The moment seemed to suggest possibilities for the future. The stellar performances of all the participants only confirmed the optimistic mood. At the close of the debate the staffers took to the crowd with enthusiastic spin and their own debates with audience members.

After the debate, as most practitioners suggest, we had a debriefing session. We began with critiques, moved to what we learned, and what we would do differently if we had it to do all over again. The students who had been sublimating their personal political opinions on the issues in order to be loyal staffers were then allowed to speak freely. They did so, for hours.

### Benefits

This simulation exercise far exceeded my expectations as a teaching tool. I was confident that students would gain in a deeper understanding of the political issues of the campaign than they would have in a traditional format. However, I was unprepared for the pride and confidence gained by every single participant in that debate. From candidates to staffers, those students seemed to feel a part of something that made them feel a sense of accomplishment

that they carried with them to other classes. Professors commented to me that they saw the change as well. This first experience with simulation and role-play convinced me that it should not be a once in a college career event.

**Model Congress:**  
**Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**  
**Hearing on the Government's Response to Hurricane Katrina**

With the success of the Presidential debate, I planned a Model Congress exercise for my Legislative Process class in the Spring of 2006. I anticipated similar skills- and confidence-building benefits. This exercise also would be an effective way to teach legislative procedure and party politics within the Senate, and provide a deeper understanding of a national emergency and the implications of the government response to that tragedy. The committee hearing format would allow me to engage every student in the class in a speaking role, which was an advantage over the Presidential Debate format. I suggested several topical subjects for the hearing and allowed the students to vote on which subject would be covered. They chose to examine the federal, state and local government response to the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina that had hit the Gulf Coast in August of 2005. Participation was mandatory. Once they chose their topic, the first assignment was to research which committee had jurisdiction over the matter, and the identity and party of the members on the committee. I again chose the Lecture Hall as the venue, and ultimately invited the MSMC community and encouraged participants to invite friends and family.

### Assigning Roles and Responsibilities

I invited students to tell me whether they preferred to be a witness or a Republican or Democratic Senator. With a few minor negotiations, students got the roles they requested. I assigned which student Senator would play the then Chair of the committee, Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), and which student would play the then ranking minority member, Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT). The other student “senators” chose which senator on the committee they would portray. The entire class participated in research to develop an appropriate witness list. Once the witnesses were identified, students chose their preferred roles and began research into those individuals. The witnesses called at the hearing were: two victims of the hurricane who told their story of surviving the hurricane and its aftermath (one more angry at the administration than the other); Michael Chertoff, Secretary of Homeland Security; Michael Brown, former head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency; Ray Nagin, Mayor of New Orleans; Kathleen Blanco, Governor of Louisiana and Colonel Richard P. Wagenaar, Commander and District Engineer of the U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers.

The class met two days a week for one and one-half hours. For this simulation I allotted one day a week for four weeks for in-class preparation. Each Senator and witness had an opening statement and five minutes of questioning. To develop questions and prepare for answers, students were able to draw upon eight previous Senate Hearings as research material. The transcripts of these hearings could be downloaded from the Committee website. Similarly to the presidential debate, the Senators were not to ask identical questions asked in the actual hearings, but rather they were to probe unanswered or unasked areas of inquiry. The witnesses were required to answer questions as the actual individuals would likely answer them. Students made excellent use of newspaper accounts found through NEXIS searches and clips of television

news broadcasts from various websites. A paper was due the week before the hearing analyzing the role, responsibilities, and viewpoint of the person they would be playing.

### Hearing Day

The model Congress hearing did not draw as big of a crowd as the Presidential Debate. However, it was very moving exercise. The students playing the victims of Hurricane Katrina powerfully invoked the pain of the people of New Orleans. The exchange between participants was lively and even at times heated. This was particularly true of exchanges between “committee members” and “Mayor Nagin” and “Michael Brown.” These exchanges raised important and sensitive issues surrounding the Hurricane Katrina response efforts. The student playing Mayor Nagin accused the administration of racism and used some of the same incendiary language that Mayor Nagin had in fact used in testimony and in the media. The student playing Michael Brown attended the hearing dressed as a man, complete with wig. With her very long hair hidden, many in the audience did not recognize her and thought we had brought in a male student to play the role. Her defensive “Brownie” performance, complaining that she was the administration’s scapegoat, demonstrated very well the frustrations and anger surrounding the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

At the close of the hearing, audience members, including students, faculty, and administration, joined us in a debriefing session. The “arguments” continued. Almost like fans of television characters, the audience members reacted to the Model Congress participants as though they actually were the officials they had portrayed.

## Benefits

The model congress exercise was an obvious success in terms of teaching the students the legislative process and its implications for public policy outcomes. They also gained insight into a major and tragic event in America that otherwise might have seemed like a distant event, unrelated to them. And, clearly, the simulation technique had again hit the mark in terms of raising awareness, confidence and feelings of efficacy among the students. This time, not only did I observe that effect in the participants, but in student audience members, as well. I also think the extent to which the students were willing to enter into reasoned conflict with each other is an important step toward full and sustained political engagement and participation.

## **Moot Court and Mock Trial**

Quickly upon arriving at MSMC, I realized that MSMC students would benefit greatly from legal simulation exercises. A pre-law minor was already in place and included courses such as Legal Reasoning, Constitutional Law, and Business Law, but no courses or opportunities for developing analytical skills through oral argument. Moreover, I thought that moot court and mock trial exercises would improve their confidence to speak in public and defend the positions they take, not just in pre-law courses but in all their classes. These are important goals not just for students hoping to enter law school, but for the entire student body.

I conducted my first moot court at MSMC as part of my Legal Reasoning class. The last two weeks of the course were devoted to reviewing the assigned case law, and providing instruction on appellate analysis and oral argument. I based the exercise on a case then pending before the Supreme Court of the United States. I assigned students to play the roles of the justices and the attorneys, with a team of three attorneys representing petitioner and respondent. I asked the Department Chair to join us. The students were extremely rough, but thoroughly

enjoyed themselves. It was clear that they were hungry for this sort of challenge. Learning from the initial experience, and with the support of my chair, I founded the MSMC Mock Trial and Moot Court teams.

I needed to structure a format that would meet the needs of the MSMC students. Meeting outside of class for practices is very difficult for our students. Virtually all MSMC students hold at least one job to meet financial needs. I therefore decided to incorporate trial and appellate simulation as part of a course that would earn students credit toward graduation. I also applied for, and received, a “general studies designation” for the course. This way, students can take the course as part of their regular coursework load, earn credit toward their minor and fulfill the general studies requirement for a course in “communication skills.” This makes the course academically valuable and cost-effective for the students.

In the course, students receive an overview of the theory, concepts, methods and techniques of oral advocacy. They receive instruction in two types of argument: (1) mock trial and (2) appellate advocacy. During the mock trial portion of the course, students learn the fundamentals of constructing persuasive opening and closing statements; conducting direct and cross examination; making objections, and defending against them. Students practice these skills in “scrimmages” throughout the semester. All students in the course participate in on-campus mock trial competitions. Select students compete at the inter-collegiate American Mock Trial Association (AMTA) competition. The “case” we prepare is the fictional one provided by AMTA.

During the appellate portion of the course, students receive instruction in developing an appellate oral argument. Students learn to organize their presentation in a persuasive manner, explain complex legal principles in the light most favorable to their position; and handle

questions from “judges.” Students write the legal appellate briefs upon which their arguments are based, and practice their arguments during in-class exercises. For example, cases argued in the course have included an atheist’s challenge to the constitutionality of the Pledge of Allegiance (Elkgrove Unified School District v. Newdow); the constitutionality of affirmative action programs in law schools (Grutter v. Bollinger); the constitutionality of closing deportation proceedings to the public when an immigrant has been accused of terrorist acts (Detroit Free Press v. Ashcroft); and the detention of a U.S. citizen as an enemy combatant (Rumsfeld v. Padilla). By selecting cases raising issues of religious freedom, racial diversity and discrimination, treatment of immigrants, and dissenting political philosophies, students are engaged in analysis of some of the most contentious issues facing our country. These cases demonstrate for the student the truth of Alexis de Tocqueville’s words, “[s]carcely any political question arises in the United States that is not resolved, sooner or later, into a judicial question.” (De Tocqueville, Democracy in America, 1832)

The competition at the end of the semester is judged by attorneys from the Los Angeles area. While the students make their arguments, the three judge panel interrupts with substantive legal questions throughout the students’ presentations. Using practicing lawyers as judges, rather than students as I had done in my first moot court, improves the value of the exercise greatly. The improved questions from the bench allow for a much more challenging and meaningful exercise and the lawyers provide helpful critiques after the argument, making the event a powerful and unique learning experience. It also gives students an opportunity to meet practicing attorneys who talk with them afterwards about their experiences in law school, and the legal profession. Developing these kinds of mentoring relationships is incredibly valuable for our students.

## Benefits

The moot court and mock trial experience does much to hone students' analytical skills and their ability to think and respond quickly on their feet. The course is both demanding and rewarding in that it provides students with an opportunity to engage in sophisticated discourse under the pressure of competition. Successful completion of the course results in greatly improved communication skills and a tremendous increase in self-confidence. It also provides yet another opportunity for students to experience and embrace conflict situations. At AMTA competitions, the MSMC students are competing with students from colleges and universities throughout Southern California. Our students who have competed at AMTA report that they no longer fear class presentations or competitive situations – they welcome them. This attitude is conducive to political engagement and participation.

## **Experiential Learning**

In my Public Policy course, I decided to incorporate an experiential learning component that required students to take volunteer positions with an organization that would provide students with exposure to, and involvement in, the public policy process. The work could include policy analysis, advocacy, implementation or enforcement by private advocacy groups, interest groups, NGO's, litigation groups or federal, state or local organizations. The inclusion of the experiential component was designed to give students the opportunity to see the reality of the policy process in real life situations.

### Identifying Responsibilities

Students were required to receive my approval of the job site before beginning work in order to receive credit for the course, and to enter into a contract with organization. Under the contracts, supervisors would agree to: 1) provide students with at least 12 hours of relevant policy work experience; 2) provide instructor with contact information and keep instructor informed of any problems with the student that may arise at the work site; 3) confirm the student's completion of work hours with the course instructor; and 4) provide the course instructor with a written evaluation of the student's performance upon the completion of the student's work hours by a date certain. Students entering the contracts agreed to: 1) conduct themselves at the job site professionally and in accordance with the MSMC Code of Conduct, a copy of which the student would provide to the site supervisor; 2) complete their 12 work hours by a date certain, 3) provide oral reports during class at least twice during the semester; 4) Complete a research paper and a final oral presentation that includes an analysis of the work done by the organization for which they work, and their personal work experience at the job site; and 5) complete all other course requirements as described in the syllabus. The instructor agreed to: 1) provide contact information to the work supervisor; 2) answer any relevant questions the supervisor may have regarding this contract or the Public Policy (POL 176) course; and 3) be available to students regarding concerns that may arise during their work experience.

At various points during the course, students would report to the class on their experiences at their work site. For the final project in the course, the students were required to write a paper and give a presentation explaining the work of the organization and the responsibilities they were given. They were also asked to critique the effectiveness of the organization in achieving its goals.

## Benefits

The value of the experience for the students varied. Some students were relegated to ministerial tasks that gave them little opportunity to observe the work of the organization. For other students, however, the experience provided terrific insights that could not be gained from classroom coursework alone.

One organization in particular provided invaluable experiences for my students. Public Counsel accepted eleven student volunteers from my class. Public Counsel is the largest public interest law firm in the United States and represents clients who would not otherwise be able to afford legal assistance. They do work in the area of immigration, housing, poverty, homelessness and children's issues. My students were put to work on Public Counsel's Homelessness Prevention Law Project (HPLP). HPLP works to assist people seeking services such as emergency shelter and food stamps from the Department of Public and Social Services (DPSS). Attorneys from HPLP make themselves available to people in the waiting area at DPSS. They assist people in filling out forms, explain the process they will face, and, where they determine it to be appropriate, help those who have been turned away to appeal their case.

My students worked the waiting room of DPSS along with Public Counsel attorneys. The students did not merely watch the attorneys work, but were actively involved in interviewing those seeking assistance and helping them to deal with the DPSS staff. Most of the students involved spoke Spanish, and were able to translate for the applicants. One man who had been denied emergency shelter specifically requested that my student attend his appeal hearing with him. It was clear from the presentations in class that the students had been moved by the experience. Particularly gratifying was the fact that the students were recognized and were excited about the fact that what they had been learning in their classes allowed them to be

effective in real world settings. An understanding of bureaucratic organization helped them to help those seeking assistance. The advocacy skills they had learned in moot court enabled them to affectively argue on behalf of their “clients.” Clearly these students gained an understanding of the empowering effects of education.

### **External Validation and Benefits**

The simulation and role-playing exercises introduced into our curriculum have brought broad benefits and external validation to MSMC students. In 2005 one of our students won a best witness and best attorney award at the AMTA competition. That did much to increase the visibility and support of the team. Last semester the international law firm of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP established a pre-law scholarship fund and mentoring opportunities for MSMC students. Gibson, Dunn attorneys have participated as judges in our moot court and mock trial on-campus competitions for the last four years. Two MSMC mock trial students have received \$5000 and have been assigned firm mentors. Our two winners have been taken to firm events, bar association activities and law school alumni functions.

In the hope of increasing our scholarship fund, I asked two mock trial veterans to join me at a dinner, arranged by one of MSMC’s Board of Trustees, of law firm representatives. With their help we raised \$18,500 that will go to mock trial participants demonstrating promise in the study and practice of law. A press release regarding the scholarship fund led to an invitation for our students to be interviewed on Television Korea 24 by anchor Leland Kim regarding their personal stories and their experiences in competition. One of our students completed the interview twice, once in English and once in Korean, for the dual broadcast that was run by the station. Our students have become powerful advocates for themselves and the program -- skills they honed through simulation exercises.

Since beginning the simulation exercises, more students have been accepted at graduate and law schools than in the proceeding years. Our students have been accepted at law schools around the country including Columbia Law School, George Washington Law School, Loyola Law School, Notre Dame Law School and Southwestern School of Law. Other students graduating in 2005 and 2006 were accepted at graduate programs in public policy, social work, and political science at George Washington University, Loyola University Chicago, Loyola Marymount University, New York University, University of Southern California, University of California, San Francisco and California State University, Long Beach and Los Angeles. Our 2004 and 2006 Mock Trial Captain is now in the master's program in Conflict Resolution at Georgetown University. Each of these students participated in at least one simulation exercise. In the year before I began the mock trial team, no students from MSMC were accepted into law school.

### **Meeting our Mission**

There is a debate within the discipline regarding whether political science should “have a civic mission.” (Snyder 2001) At MSMC we state our civic mission unequivocally: “Our measure of success is graduates who are committed to using their knowledge and skills to better themselves, their environments, and the world.” (2007-2012 MSMC Strategic Plan, Mission Statement) Our academic goal is to: “provide an education that enables students to demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and character essential for socially responsible leadership in a democratic society.” (2007-2012 MSMC Strategic Plan, Goal 1) Within the political science department, we have found that simulation exercises provide students with skills, confidence, passion and opportunities that effectively serve our students and our mission.

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