

For Immediate Release

Contact: Brenda Talbot
(314) 340-5754
talbotb@hssu.edu

Harris-Stowe Mock Trial Team Competes in AMTA Regional Competition

ST. LOUIS, MO (February 12, 2015) – The Harris-Stowe State University Pre-Law Mock Trial Association (PLMTA) mock trial team, a seven member team of HSSU students, recently competed in the American Mock Trial Association's (AMTA) Regional Competition held on the campus of the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) on February 6-8, 2015.

Twenty-four teams, including Washington University (WU), University of Illinois (UI) and Saint Louis University (SLU), competed for two days. The HSSU team's appearance in 2015 AMTA Regional Competition represents the fifth time Harris-Stowe has entered into a formally recognized mock trial competition. The members of the PLMTA team that represented Harris-Stowe "A" were Jaymie Conley; Darion Kelley; Freddie Brown; Kristina Taylor; Jazmine Bonner; Troy Donaldson; and Tim Howell. The team received assistance and coaching from state judges and attorneys from the Missouri bar.

The PLMTA members represent both the HSSU Anheuser-Busch School of Business and the Department of Urban Specialization Criminal Justice program in the College of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Johndavid Kerr, founder and attorney coach to the PLMTA mock trial team and recent recipient of the 2015 Emerson Educator of the Year Award, prepared the team for the competition and sponsored and accompanied the students for the weekend. Additionally, Linda Banderet, assistant coach, also accompanied and managed the team while in Kansas City.

"Our students did an outstanding job of competing against teams with ten to fifteen years of experience, earning commendations from their peers, the AMTA representatives and judges," stated Dr. Kerr. "I'm very proud of this team and look forward to building a strong, competitive record with subsequent teams in this area of high-level academic competition."

As part of the competition, the team learned a 145 page civil case and mastered attorney and witness roles from September 2014 to February 2015. AMTA judges gave high marks to the team for their direct- and cross-examinations and to the convincing portrayals by some of the witnesses. In past competitions, Harris-Stowe students have received All Region Witness awards.

Harris-Stowe's mock trial accomplishments have now gained the interest of the Black Law Students Association (BLSA) of WU School of Law to serve as mentors and assist HSSU students with law school related activities. SLU School of Law's BLSA chapter and SLU's mock trial team have expressed interest in working with the PLMTA and in skirmishing with HSSU's mock trial team as well. As such, the federal judiciary is taking notice. The Honorable Charles Shaw recently sponsored the PLMTA's attendance at the Mound City Bar Association's Scholarship and Award Gala. Such partnerships are creating strong working relationships with

area law schools and the local bar associations to welcome Harris-Stowe students into the legal profession.

Currently, Harris-Stowe does not have a formal trial advocacy course or a pre-law program; however, Dr. Kerr stated such a program based upon growing student demand and university support may be offered in the near future. In support, he stated there are several studies that have found undergraduate pre-law programs contribute to stronger retention rates of lower- and upper-level students and to higher academic performance at undergraduate institutions.

Harris-Stowe State University, located in midtown St. Louis, is a fully accredited four-year institution that offers 14 degree programs in the areas of teacher education, business and arts & sciences. In 2013, HSSU ranked No. 1 in the state in degree production of African-Americans in mathematics and ranked 4th of 13 public institutions in the degree production of African-Americans (Missouri Department of Higher Education). The university, which has been in existence for more than 150 years, offers the most affordable bachelor's degree in the state of Missouri.

Cutline: Dr. Johndavid Kerr (back row, center) with the 2015 Harris-Stowe State University Pre-Law Mock Trial Association mock trial team at the AMTA Regional Competition.

###