

The Pictet Experience



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As a leading institution in the study of international relations, HEI is a frequent participant in numerous moot courts and law competitions around the world, one of which is the Jean-Pictet Competition in International Humanitarian Law, or as it is widely known, the Concours Pictet. This April, the competition was held in Collonges-la-Rouge, France. The HEI team was represented by Fiona Le Diraison (DEA Law), Fabio Oliva (Ph.D. Political Science) and Karen Oliveira (Ph.D. Law). The team, commended by judges for their positive spirit and good team

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relations, put in an excellent performance at the Competition, finally reaching the semi-finals, only to be beaten by the final victors from the London School of Economics.

What is the Concours Pictet?

The Concours Pictet held its first edition in French at Clermont-Ferrand, France, in 1989. As its popularity burgeoned, an additional session in English was introduced in 2000. The Concours Pictet has been held in various countries around Europe, and in Canada and the United States. HEI has taken part in 13 of the 17 sessions.

In contrast with a law moot court competition, the Concours Pictet is based on role-playing outside a formal legal context. Roles are attributed spontaneously and can include being

ICRC delegates, military officials, guerrilla fighters, diplomats in a peace conference, prisoners of war, or any other actor in a situation where IHL has relevance. To that end, the participants are given the opportunity to construe of the full effect of the law with its practical consequences and to argue in the light of that context.

The teams are evaluated on the basis of their knowledge of IHL, their understanding of its inter-relationship with Public International Law, analysis of IHL in light of current affairs, and the ability to work as a team. Ultimately the Concours Pictet is well known for providing a unique experience that positively affects the personal and professional lives of its participants.

With the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross and other sponsoring institutions, the Jean-Pictet Competition is organized by a Committee of creative, committed and accomplished individuals who have the benefit of distinguished careers in humanitarian law, humanitarian aid and international relations. HEI PhD students and alumni continue to participate in the Competition as members of the organizing committee, judges or support staff.

HEI boasts a noteworthy record of performance in the Concours Pictet. In 1995 the HEI team obtained the award Jean-Pictet. In 1996, 1998, and 1999 the HEI team made it to the finals, and in 2003 to the semi-finals. Additionally, HEI team members have been repeatedly nominated for the Gilbert-Apollis award, granted to the best speaker in the competition. In 1997 and 1998 HEI team members Céline Pouilly and Christophe Menu won the award. In 2003 and 2004 respectively, Alexandra Boivin (French session) and Deborah Ruiz-Verduzco (English session) were nominated as best speakers.

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Coaching

The competition does not require written submissions; instead it focuses on the development of an in depth knowledge on International Humanitarian Law which will be drawn upon over the course of the Competition. The Competition emphasises the need for participants to be adaptable and creative in their legal argumentation, so as to display the breadth of their legal knowledge. For this reason, the team undergoes an intensive 4 month preparation period prior to the competition. Over the last three years, HEI has enjoyed the expertise of Yasmin Naqvi, a former Pictet participant and teaching assistant at HEI. This year, former participants, Melissa Su Thomas (DEA Law) and Deborah Ruiz-Verduzco (PhD Law), have joined in this year's preparation to support, organize, and motivate the team.

Tutoring

Starting in 2005, the Concours Pictet has employed a new system of tutoring. The teams are no longer accompanied by coaches or professors from their institutions, rather, they are assigned a tutor, who is part of the organization committee, who supports them and another 3 or 4 teams along the competition. This system ensures a degree of equity amongst the teams with regards to preparation and support during the competition. The HEI team to the 2005 session benefited from the tutoring support of Jean Phillippe Kiehl, former student and Coach of CUDIH team to the Concours Pictet in 2004.

The team

Despite all this institutional support, the success of the team ultimately lies with the participants. The coaches undertake a rigorous selection process for the team, evaluating their ability to work as a team, their motivation, creativity and

dynamism. However, a good Pictet team is made, not born. The crucial part of the process in becoming a good team actually takes place during the preparation phase and over the course of the competition in itself. Given the unorthodox approach, held dear by the organizers of the competition, participants need to demonstrate a mature, well developed knowledge of the law, without forgetting their sense of humour and humility.

To learn more about the Concours Pictet please visit www.concourspictet.org.