

## **SPOTLIGHT ON TENNESSEE LAW SCHOOLS**

This Year at the University of Memphis School of Law...

By Chris Collins

In the midst of all the buzz regarding the law school's upcoming move, two students recorded an outstanding performance at the ABA National Appellate Advocacy Competition National Finals in Chicago. Students Jennifer Bellott and Michael Goodin advanced undefeated through the regional advocacy competition, and went on to defeat Seton Hall and Texas Wesleyan in the preliminary rounds of the National Finals. They also defeated UC-Berkeley and Washington University, and then eliminated Seton Hall in the Final Four. That left Memphis and Harvard as the final two teams. During the final round, despite a strong showing, they lost on a split decision. In addition to the impressive accomplishment of making it to the final round, Bellott was named National Best Advocate, the award given to the best oral advocate in the competition. Special recognition also goes to Associate Dean Barbara Kritchevsky, who served as the team coach. Approximately 180 teams entered the competition and the top 25 advanced to the National Finals. All Tennesseans should be proud of these future lawyers!

The biggest news on campus, however, is the upcoming move downtown. The school has finished raising funds to move to its new location and the postmaster handed over the keys to the building on Dec. 3. Taking possession of the historic downtown customs house and post office at 1 North Front Street brings the law school one step closer to its goal of beginning classes there in August of 2009. "We launched this fundraiser on a dime...[and] Memphis law firms were a galvanizing force during this process," says University of Memphis Vice President Julie Johnson of the efforts that began in April 2006.

The school has already received \$5.3 million of the \$9.8 million in pledged funds from 16 area law firms, individuals and foundations. "We have a lot of U of M alumni and have had good experience with the students and graduates from the school, so we thought it would be a sound investment," Johnson says. According to her, "the American Bar Association takes into account the condition of the facilities when granting accreditation, and the law school's accreditation was challenged. I've been in the current law school building – they needed to move."

The next goal is to raise \$12 million in private funds by 2009 to add to the \$42 million committed by the state for renovations, according to Shawna Engel, director of development for the law school. Construction is due to begin immediately on the 160,000-square-foot building, which is a vast improvement from the 50,000 square feet to which the law school is accustomed, she says.

Future law students at the University of Memphis will be able to study in a beautiful, historic building that has a background closely associated with the law. They also will be taking their classes in close proximity to the offices of lawyers and judges and the courts in downtown Memphis. The university is grateful to the U.S. Post Office for its cooperation in making this unique opportunity possible.

After viewing the drawings and renditions of the student areas and facilities, it's an anxious feeling for students and faculty alike. While I'll be finishing a semester before the move, I will most assuredly be taking my fair share of CLE at the new location.

*Chris Collins served as the TBA YLD's second-year liaison to the University of Memphis School of Law this past year. He can be reached at [gcollins@memphis.edu](mailto:gcollins@memphis.edu).*