

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**UH Law Center and Mexican Teams to Compete in Bilingual Dispute Resolution Competition**

**Dec. 20, 2019** —The University of Houston Law Center is launching an innovative bilingual alternative dispute resolution competition to test law students' skills in mediation, arbitration and negotiation in both English and Spanish. Beginning next April, the competition will pit teams from the Law Center against Mexican teams from Universidad La Salle and Universidad Anahuac Norte.

"This competition is a first for the Law Center and very relevant today. Business and legal transactions are often international in nature, whether they are cross-cultural or transnational," said Karen L. Jones, executive director of Global and Graduate Programs. "The competition will bring in many practical aspects that are very real and current in today's legal and business practices. It will be an enriching experience for the students."

Alternative dispute resolution is a way to resolve disputes without litigation, Jones explained. ADR tends to be faster, less costly and highly effective. The grant for the pilot program was approved by Paula Myrick Short, UH senior vice president for academic affairs and provost, through her Multicultural Success Initiative.

"With the most diverse population in the United States, Houston needs more important international and cross-cultural connections such as this competition between our student legal scholars," said Short. "Students from both sides of the border will benefit, as will the communities and clients they ultimately serve."

The competition was developed by Jones, Jim Lawrence, executive director of the Blakely Advocacy Institute and interim director of the A.A. White Dispute Resolution Center, and Alfonso Lopez de la Osa Escribano, director of the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law.

"Programming innovation is one of the key aspects of the Blakely Advocacy Institute," said Lawrence. "This competition seeks to reach students who might not otherwise participate in interscholastic competitions and at the same time, further the BAI's goal of sending more skilled law students into the ever-changing practice of law."

With its proximity to Mexico, cross-border business interests and large Hispanic population, Houston, and Law Center students in particular, will benefit greatly from the international legal interaction and skills training. The Law Center already has strong relationships with many universities, companies and law firms in Mexico and beyond.

“This competition is an amazing exercise to train bilingual English-Spanish future lawyers, in a global environment where cross-border legal services are on the rise,” said Lopez de la Osa. “The Law Center is proud to be a pioneer with Mexican universities in putting in place academic ways to professionally bring closer Mexico and the United States in the legal field. To understand respective legal cultures is key to grant the success of any transaction, in long-lasting terms.”

The preliminary rounds of the competition will feature two-member teams from each school competing through an online dispute resolution format with the top team from the Law Center and Mexico going head-to-head in the championship round slated for April 23, 2020 in Houston.

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### **About the University of Houston**

The [University of Houston](#) is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university recognized with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter for excellence in undergraduate education. UH serves the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. Located in the nation's fourth-largest city and one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse regions in the country, UH is a federally designated Hispanic- and Asian-American-Serving institution with enrollment of more than 46,000 students.

### **About the University of Houston Law Center**

The [University of Houston Law Center](#) (UHLC) is a dynamic, top tier law school located in the nation's 4<sup>th</sup> largest city. UHLC's Health Law, Intellectual Property Law, and Part-time programs rank in the U.S. News Top 10. It awards Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) and Master of Laws (LL.M.) degrees, through its academic branch, the College of Law. The Law Center is more than just a law school. It is a powerful hub of intellectual activity with more than 11 centers and institutes which fuel its educational mission and national reputation. UHLC is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools.