

NEWS FROM:



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5 December 2011

UCT students become first Africans to win global negotiation competition

A team of four law students from the University of Cape Town have become the first African team to win the Copenhagen Competition – an international negotiation contest hosted by the University of Copenhagen in Denmark. The UCT team beat competitors from the University of Copenhagen, the National University of Singapore and Yale University at the finals on 1 December 2011.

Professor PJ Schwikkard, Dean of the Faculty of Law at UCT, said: “The faculty is very proud of our students. Their achievements contribute to our standing as the only African Law School in the top 100 law schools in the QS World University Rankings. Today’s law students need to be able to think and work in a global community, and the success of our Copenhagen team indicates that our students are able to do this.”

In the annual competition, students from top universities around the world take part in a mock international treaty negotiation process on a highly topical, controversial and politically sensitive topic. Themes are chosen in collaboration with senior officials from international organisations like the World Trade Organisation. This year the students had to argue the terms of one remaining article in what would be a binding treaty around a fictitious international Agreement on Access to Food.

The UCT team comprised Andrew Fisher, Brigid Kell and Unesu Moyo, who are studying towards LLB degrees; and William Attwell, who is completing an MPhil degree in Public Law. They were coached by Associate Professor Debbie Collier of the Department of Commercial Law at UCT. The team negotiated on behalf of the Republic of Kenako, a fictional country based loosely on South Africa. The name, they explained, was borrowed from the 2010 FIFA World Cup slogan *Ke Nako*, a Sesotho phrase meaning “the time has come”.

They said their game plan for the event was to focus on promoting food security in Africa through increased production of food crops, enhanced smallholder agriculture, technology transfers and technical assistance, and lower barriers to trade.

“The four members of the UCT team worked exceptionally well together, and were particularly successful at negotiating strategic coalitions with other countries and emerged as a clear winner,” said Associate Professor Collier.

The University of Copenhagen was their closest competitor, but Singapore had the best speakers, said Attwell: “Copenhagen was by far the most diplomatic and polite, and we were kind of somewhere in the middle.”

Caption to accompany attached photo (Copenhagen.jpeg): (From left) William Attwell, Unesu Moyo, Andrew Fisher and Brigid Kell celebrate winning the 2011 Copenhagen Competition.

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