

ANNOUNCING THE 2021 GLOBAL ROUNDS OF THE JESSUP COMPETITION

28 August 2020

On behalf of the ILSA Board of Directors, I am honored to announce the Jessup Competition's response to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic.

We will not conduct the 2021 Jessup International Rounds in-person in Washington, DC next spring. That's the bad news.

The good news is, this year the Jessup Competition will be consolidated into a one-of-a-kind, fully global online event. Each and every team that registers for the 2021 Jessup will be invited to compete in the virtual Global Rounds.

The Global Rounds will be spread over a five-week period beginning in mid-March 2021, with each team competing against opponents from around the world. With more than 600 teams from over 100 countries and jurisdictions, this will be the largest online gathering of international law students in history. With thousands of memorials and online moots to be judged, this might well also be the largest online gathering of international law practitioners and scholars.

Every team will compete in 4 preliminary round moots against opponents from diverse countries. After these preliminary rounds, the top 150-200 teams (see the [Official Rules](#) for details) will move on to the White & Case Advanced Rounds, where they will compete in an additional 4 moots to determine which teams will move on to the single elimination moots and, ultimately, vie for the Jessup Cup.

We will schedule the moots to accommodate each team's time zone, while making sure that teams compete against opponents from around the world and in front of International Rounds-quality judges from diverse jurisdictions.

We anticipate that the Global Rounds will require nearly 2,000 online moots. This is a massive administrative and organizational undertaking and we look forward to recruiting judges and administrative volunteers from nearly every nation in which Jessup exists.

Over the course of the spring and summer, we have discussed this plan with core Jessup volunteers, sponsors, coaches and competitors, and National Administrators from around the world. A common question that arises is about the National Rounds: Will they still take place?

We recognize and value the contributions that our hosts, volunteers, donors and partners make each and every year to the various National Rounds. In most years, the National Rounds are the foundation of the Jessup experience for the vast majority of our teams and judges. Therefore, we hope and expect that National, Regional and Friendly Rounds will still take place. Some of them (where they may safely be organized) may be in person; many may be virtual. We leave this decision to our dedicated National Administrators, taking into account the circumstances on the ground in the coming months in each of their respective countries. We expect to recognize national and regional champions, but National Rounds will not determine eligibility for the 2021 Global Rounds.

This was not an easy decision. Our Board of Directors, our National Administrators, and our volunteer Friends of Jessup around the world value the International Rounds in Washington, DC – and our National and Friendly Rounds – as the foundation of our motto, “In the future, world leaders will look upon each other differently, because they met here first, as friends.”

However, the health and safety of our global community is our top priority. We sympathize with those who have lost their lives or loved ones, or whose lives have been upended by this global pandemic. Law schools, universities and governments continue to debate and adjust their regulations regarding travel and in-person meetings. We cannot predict where these discussions will lead or how decisions may change in the months ahead.

The least and best we can do is to ensure that the Jessup Competition does not, even inadvertently, contribute to the spread of this virus. We cannot and we will not bring together in Washington more than 1,000 law students and judges from 100 countries and jurisdictions in the middle of an active and evolving global pandemic.

The [2021 Official Rules](#) and the [2021 Schedule](#) are being released along with this Statement. Stay tuned for additional details to come. Within the next month, we will be scheduling live and recorded webinars, hosted by leading Jessup judges, former competitors, and international law scholars and practitioners to prepare our teams and judges for this groundbreaking venue and event. We also hope to create new forums for our competitors to interact with one another as well as with their counterparts around the world.

Of course, we will reveal the details of our dynamic competition platform, along with more information about the schedule, as well as networking and sponsorship opportunities.

Our team has been hard at work for several months to translate the Jessup experience into this new medium. Like you, we wish that we were able to convene in person in 2021. Nonetheless, we are excited at this unwished for but remarkable opportunity to expand the transnational impact of the Jessup.

We look forward to bringing together, if only online, the world’s largest gathering of international law students, legal practitioners, scholars and judges. Years from now, they will say of the Jessup Class of 2021, “Today, world leaders look upon each other differently, because they first met there, online, as friends.”



Lesley A. Benn
Executive Director