

Engaged learning from Felipe Queipo in advocating mountain cause at the UN

Felipe Queipo, an information officer at the United Nations Department of Public Information, came to Utah Valley University (UVU) to address students who are interested in creating an impact in the world on May 17, 2017.



Mr. Queipo and members of UVU ENACTUS

Through the many resources, clubs, organizations, professors, and community members, students who are driven enough to help needy people in other parts of the world can receive a plethora of resources. Even at the United Nations, UVU students have made a presence in official statements and by attending events for example at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) during last and this years. This year plan for many of us, members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU is to follow up the results of the advocacy campaign in promoting a gender and sustainable mountain development (SMD) agendas of the United Nations and during the next years CSW to be able to deliver major statement with focus on mountain women, who are very often forgotten by the international community. It will require from us to aggressively lobby NGO's accredited at the UN to form a

larger group that holds a lot more influence than just one group. The challenge will be uniting under a more general and broader agenda, even though the missions of each organization might have more specific goals. And all of this we will continue to do as part of engaged learning when students will combine the practical actions at the UN with learning and gaining professional experiences and skills.

Felipe works within the largest department of the UN which is located in New York and his organization raises public awareness through strategic communications campaigns and supports civil society groups that are associated with it. Cooperation of UVU students with his department would provide a greater resource for the University and would allow the relationship with the UN to expand into more than three departments and offices. Enactus is a worldwide organization centered on sustainable social ventures created by students all over the world with a goal of sustainability. As the name entails EN stands for entrepreneur, ACT means action, and US represents us, the students who make it all possible. Members of Enactus are students who have a head for business and a heart for the world. With the primary goal to advocate SMD in the State of Utah and North America and the mission to further the development and lives of underprivileged women around the world, UIMF joint efforts with ENACTUS can present that agenda not only here in Utah but throughout the rest of the world. Being recognized by the UN through several internal organizations will boost the already prestigious reputation UVU has through the international community. The benefits of this will bring many more high-profile dignitaries from the globe and the ones who have already come to visit are more than impressed with the work that the students here have accomplished.

Many of these students are non-traditional ones, meaning that they are not exclusively students, but often parents and heads of households. What makes this incredible is that the work being done by the students is completely volunteer, yet the work is top quality and the hours worked are impressive. This is just to accomplish and do the work that many are not willing to do and all for the name of service to others. For example, one of the projects being done by Enactus along with a student member of UIMF, is the Zambia Project, also known as “Pambano,” which roughly translates to English as “impact” in Swahili. This is a very important project which shares the missions of entrepreneurship, women empowerment, and mountain sustainability.



One of the Stores Opened in Zambia with help from UVU students

UVU students have partnered with an organization, SHE TALKS TO THE WORLD, who approached UVU to ask for help on how they could sustainably run the school and teach these young women business skills to the point of opening their own businesses. The opening of one of these ventures would be financed through a micro-loan process that UVU students will set up through the help of the girls at the school. It is very important that the girls are doing most of the work and that they see us here at UVU as equals, not only so the workload is levied but also so that the girls will take ownership of their own projects. Last year, when we first began working with them, we were able to establish two businesses in Lusaka, the capital nestled in the Mubindi Mountains of Zambia. These addressed not only a financial gap in the school's budget which was 100% dependent on donors prior to these businesses, but the safety issue of the girls getting to and from school. Prior to this safety mechanism, four out of twenty girls had been kidnapped.



Mr. Queipo Advising Students On the Future of the Social Projects

However, since the implementation of new policies and new staff, we are confident that our franchise model will allow the school to become self-sustaining by the end of the year. This is true sustainable work and UVU is very proud of this. This is the sort of agenda that the students will have when going to the UN. It is an agenda that promotes sustainability at the micro-level without having to rely on the state. Ultimately, we believe this is what is going to change the state of affairs in the world.

Josman Cereceres, Vice President, UIMF, member, ENACTUS