

International Mountain Day at UVU



Dr. Baldomero Lago, the CIO/ Vice-Rector for Global Engagement at UVU as a keynote speaker

I was able to attend the International Mountain Day event on Monday, December 4, 2017, on the campus of Utah Valley University. Dr. Baldomero Lago, the CIO/ Vice-Rector for Global Engagement on campus, began the event by thanking the honored guests, such as the Mayor of Orem, Richard Brunst. He also stressed the importance of “from local to global” as it relates to the initiatives dealing with the United Nations and sustainable mountain development. I did not realize how many opportunities are available to me as a student here on campus. This is why UVU is on the rise, because they put resources in programs and institutions that matter a great deal. Dr. Lago said that the new partnership will allow students to increase their relationship with the United Nations, and share that with the community. He made an interesting point about what the community hears about the UN, and why the media’s outlook on the initiatives are not true. He

then introduced us via skype to the representative of the UN, who officially announced UVU as a NGO, an associate member of the UN.

The next speaker was Mayor Brunst, who read a letter of greetings. The letter addressed the core elements of sustained global mountain development, including poverty and climate change. He encouraged us to see what we can do individually to help and change the less fortunate areas in our community.

We next heard from Chelsey Butchereit, who is an advocate for refugees, and currently teaches at Brigham Young University. She spoke of her experience dealing with refugees in Utah, and how college students can get involved in the process. Her classes deal with refugee and migrant health, and she previously studied at the University of Oxford this past summer. In an interesting twist, she decided not to show a PowerPoint, because of the shock value that normally come with such photographs. Instead, she had us imagine our own situation. What gets lost, she said, is that the media fails to mention that most of the displaced people are actually children. Ms. Butchereit mentioned that although the state of Utah is conservative, we consistently take in more refugees than other red states. I believe that this is due to the influence of the LDS church in the state of Utah. Her talk was briefly interrupted, and the vice president of student affairs, Mr. Reyes addressed the audience and thanked the previous VP, Michelle Taylor for her work in maintaining the current club of mountain development. Ms. Butchereit then finished her remarks by calling out the social media sound bites that some of us receive information from. I absolutely agree with this statement, and believe that it goes for more than just refugee news, but all news. She concluded by reading a narrative written by one of her students that advocated for changing the outlook of Americans from "Make America Great Again" to welcoming those who are fleeing.

The next speaker was Gina Cornia, the Executive Director at Utahns Against Hunger in Orem. She had some pretty intriguing statistics related to the food crisis currently going on in the world. For example, 1 in every 4 college students experience food insecurity. I would like to know what the methodology was behind these numbers, what qualifies as being insecure with food in college? After all, most students are eating cereal and ramen to make ends meet, are they mentioned in the food insecurity numbers? Not to disregard the study entirely, but it is always nice to know the background. Her words were important at this time, but she took a few statements out of context to push her agenda, things she was criticizing others of doing. She gave some good advice about being all in for the decades ahead of me to create change in social justice issues. My

only clarification is determining what counts as social justice in a world that continues to see who can be outraged the most. However, her advice to get out and vote or even run for office, are things that I endorse completely.

Mark Wait, UVU Student