

Marcia Barlow: The Tools Needed for Engaged Learning



Kymberlee Anderson, Anthony Franks, Marcia Barlow and Andrew Jensen during the class discussion of Utah model of sustainability

I was fortunate enough to engage with Marcia Barlow during her visit to Utah Valley University (UVU) on March 2, 2018, where she taught students how to effectively engage with the United Nations. As someone who has had many years of experience of advocacy in the UN, Ms. Barlow taught students about the mechanisms that exist within the UN for engagement. She also taught us about the terminology used in the UN and about the varying levels of impact each method can have on the UN from written and spoken statements to how event organization actually takes place. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend each meeting she held as I was running the audio and the recording services for the UVU Office of Global Engagement.

Ms. Barlow was also able to attend one of my classes which focuses on sustainable mountain development. I was able to engage in a discussion with her about my research on mountain

communities and how the early Utah model of self-sufficiency, economic diversification, and central community planning is a viable alternative model to promote sustainable mountain development. She was able to provide wonderful feedback on my proposition and we discussed how economic models that are dependent on one industry, resource, or trade partner tend to fall into economic depression while communities with economic diversity and self-sufficiency can effectively engage in a global market on even footing because they lack the desperation that accompanies a community that is dependent on others for basic necessities. She also asked good, crucial questions that helped me, and all the students in our class, to approach our research from a variety of perspectives that we had not considered before.

Ms. Barlow's visit is a perfect example of an event that enables UVU's core value of engaged learning. By teaching us how to engage directly with the UN, students can effectively circumvent barriers that keep them from direct advocacy. According to the traditional student model, students at universities learn theory and engage in simulations (i.e. Model UN classes). Then upon graduation they are hired by organizations that provide access to the established channels of advocacy. With the engaged learning model, students not only learn political theory but are expected to engage directly with advocacy efforts; because while a cursory knowledge is necessary for engagement, only by direct involvement can a student truly learn the skills needed for professional success. Ms. Barlow's visit was in anticipation of a UVU delegation visit to the UN that will host their own event in which students and faculty will present the results of their research efforts.

It is always interesting when outside speakers share their expertise with students, but with Ms. Barlow she not only shared her knowledge, but she engaged students and empowered us with practical knowledge that will be used in our professional and academic careers.

Anthony Franks, member, Foreign Affairs club at UVU