

UIMF partners with the Global University System at HLPF 2018



(L to R): Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, adviser for the UIMF meets with Dr. Takeshi Utsumi, and Mr. Gabriel Avgerinos, representatives from the Global University System.

On Wednesday, July 18th, Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, Adviser for Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU) and myself, members of the UVU delegation to the High-Level Political Forum sustainable development of the United Nations had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Gabriel Avgerinos and Dr. Takeshi Utsumi, representatives from the Global University System network. The Global University System is a coalition of universities across the world that work together to promote the implementation of the sustainable development goals of the United Nations through modern curriculum.

We met with representatives of GUS to discuss further potential collaboration. This venture was started when on behalf of our delegation I was able to submit a cross-cutting statement with language emphasizing mountain targets for the Voluntary National Reviews of all countries

participating in the conference before the HLPF. We tried to do that for VNRs of 14 countries, members of the UN Mountain Partnership. As an additional factor facilitating mutual interest and beginning of the conversation was the involvement in GUS activities of Dr. Jed Shilling, representative of the Mountain Institute (TMI) and the Millennium institute, who partners with UVU since 2006 and visited UVU in October 2017 for the round table about joint advocacy of the mountain agenda at the United Nations by UVU and TMI. When I contacted GUS and asked them to include a special language mentioning mountain communities in the cross-cutting statement, Mr. Avgerinos agreed and did that without hesitation. After connecting with the organization, I informed our adviser, Dr. Abdrisaev about potential to build a partnership with GUS and he supported my idea. As a result, Dr. Abdrisaev and I agreed to meet with GUS leadership during HLPF activities with the intent to further our collaborative work.

At the meeting we explained the role that UVU plays in promoting sustainable mountain development in the Utah area, an area that has been long plagued by air pollution, North America and globally. Mr. Gabriel Avgerinos and Dr. Takeshi Utsumi explained how GUS as a global network promotes sustainable development through clean and renewable energy. They explained also that their established system involves mentoring universities by creating classes, online in particular, in sustainable development, and then creating incubator labs at Columbia University and NYU in New York which students can practically apply the things they've learned.

This promotes hands-on learning that creates vocational training opportunities in renewable technology as opposed to the classical strictly higher-level technology positions that are created by universities. We agreed with our counterparts from GUS, that this presents an excellent opportunity for UVU to continue to promote its student engaged learning through implementation of mountain targets with integrating elements of the GUS model. Mr. Avgerinos mentioned that it could be mutually beneficial approach because of Utah potential in tourism and recreation activities, which will attract interest of many students from New York. As an additional important element to strengthen our partnership could be the partnership between UVU and TMI and role of Dr. Jed Shilling as an adviser at GUS and at the same time a close friend and supporter of UVU efforts in promotion of the UN SMD agenda, As a result, Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev wrote and submitted a formal letter of participation at GUS to develop joint mutually beneficial curriculum and activities

For this reason, the meeting was a success because it will provide faculty and students at UVU an unprecedented opportunity to create a partnership with renewable energy global university network with headquarters in New York and wide range access to the United Nations which would allow to develop the mountainous area of Utah more sustainably.

Mr. Avgerinos and Dr. Takeshi Utsumi were very kind to provide to me the opportunity for sightseeing in New York after the meeting. I was able to visit with their guidance such places, as Times Square and the New York Public Library.

Andrew Jensen, President, Model United Nations Club