

UIMF members meet with Ambassador Jan Kickert

The Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University was involved by the UVU office of Global Engagement in co-hosting Permanent Representative (PR) of Austria to the United Nations, His Excellency, Mr. Jan Kickert on February 19, 2019. Visit of Ambassador Kickert was met by excitement and engagement by both the staff and students of the University.

At UVU, the Global Affairs Office hosted a luncheon for Mr. Kickert, several members of the university staff and several students from UIMF and the Foreign Affairs Club. The German Club was also represented at the event. Ambassador's son was also a present during lunch and welcome addition. During this informal meeting, Mr. Kickert entertained questions from the other guests on a variety of topics, including his opinion of skiing in the "Best Snow on Earth." He also spoke on some of the issues facing Austria and the European Union and what their current concerns are at the UN. Some of these points were reiterated and expanded upon later during his presentation to the students.



(L to R): Ambassador Jan Kickert, Samuel Elzinga, UIMF President, Hannah Bieker, UVU Rotaractor, Brandon Pedler, German Club at UVU and Dirk Gum, member, Model UN at UVU

After the luncheon, a small break was taken and then Mr. Kickert met with a small group of students, joined by Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, UIMF mentor, for a briefing on what UIMF is and what their goals are as a group. It was discussed how a partnership between UIMF and the Ambassador would be beneficial in promoting goals at the United Nations for Sustainable Mountain Development. I informed Ambassador about UIMF efforts to advocate for the adoption of the mountain targets during global campaign in 2013-2015 to select Sustainable Development Goals. Mr. Kickert commented on how difficult it sometimes is for groups to have their issues raised at the UN and voiced his interest in supporting UIMF and our communal goals for mountain development.

UVU is also sending a team to the Model United Nations Conference of the Far West in San Francisco and will be representing the nation of Austria at the conference. William Gum, a student of UVU, asked questions on how our delegation could best represent Mr. Kickert's nation. He was very happy to hear this and was able to give us some general ideas on how we could be successful in representing Austria at the conference.

One can hope that this visit of the Ambassador Jan Kickert and meeting is the beginning of a strong and cooperative partnership not only for UIMF, but for the state of Utah with the country of Austria. Both areas are very mountainous, and the problems that our communities face are very similar. Hopefully we can help one another find solutions and make the world a better place and continue on in Sustainable Mountain Development.

Brandon Pedler, German Club President, Member of UIMF