

Discussing Model UN conference agenda with Ambassador Jan Kickert



(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

The Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University's (UVU) is one of the most active clubs on campus. The UIMF gives UVU engaged learning initiative credence by encouraging students to work with each other to accomplish tasks with focus on the promotion of the sustainable mountain development agenda in the State of Utah.

The UIMF hosted during special meeting Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kickert on Tuesday, February 19, 2019. To accomplish this task, students needed to work with each other by meeting after class and organizing everything the event would require. As a result, student members were able to sit at a roundtable to discuss more about Austria's policies at the United Nations and in particular with focus on Sustainable Mountain Development.

I spoke during the meeting about UVU student team and myself plans to represent Austria at the Model UN Far West conference in San Francisco this April. I was able to ask advice and information from Ambassador Jan Kickert and his diplomatic mission about policy priorities of Austria in regard to the issues of religious rights, empowerment of women (in mountain areas in particular), and the rights of the elderly. PR of Austria to the UN discussed policies of Austria to include minority languages, which were recognized by government institutions in the last few years. Additionally, Ambassador Jan Kickert stressed that his nation's policies regarding gender are progressive, and that there have been many efforts to ensure gender equality. When informing on religious rights, PR of Austria to the UN notified us that there is an official procedure for religions to become recognized by the government, and recognized religions include Islam, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and other Christian religions.



(L to R) Brandon Pedler, member, MUN Club, Ambassador Jan Kickert, Dr. Geoffrey Cockerham, History and Political Science Department at UVU, and Dirk Gum, member MUN Club at UVU

This event was a great opportunity for aspiring diplomats and myself to learn by inviting and hosting such a high-level UN diplomat to speak about current issues. Surely, UVU students are lucky to have so many opportunities for engaged learning.

Dirk Gum, member, Model United Nations Club