

Reflections on Dr. Richard Jordan's Presentation During Globalization and Sustainable Mountain Development Class



On Monday, April 8, 2019, Dr. Richard Jordan delivered a presentation to Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev's Spring 2019 class "Globalization and Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD)." Dr. Jordan's presentation occurred as part of his week-long visit to Utah Valley University to give recommendations on how Utah Valley University's (UVU) student engaged learning model can be used to contribute to the upcoming United Nations (UN) Civil Society Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, on August 26-28, 2019; to instruct the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU, on how best to advocate for SMD and mountain women and girls at the UN level; and to present UVU with his library of UN resources to create a UN Depository Library at UVU, which would constitute Utah's second such library.

During his presentation at our SMD class, Dr. Jordan described the history of SMD at the UN, teaching our class about the importance of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, more well-known as the Rio Earth Summit, and the Agenda 21 created at the summit, in achieving global environmental sustainability, ending poverty, and including civil society in sustainable development. Mr. Jordan also described the mountain sustainability aspects of the mandate of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and the importance of the 2002 International Year of the Mountains.

Dr. Jordan also described his long and involved role in promoting and organizing global initiatives on issues of sustainability and gender equality in particular, as well as working with both UN diplomats and civil society groups such as UIMF to advance such topics. Apart from his indispensable assistance in helping UIMF members make oral statements at the 2018 High Level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF) and to gain recognition for UN-level mountain advocacy from Congressman John Curtis in the Utah Congressional Record, Dr. Jordan helped make preparations for the Rio Earth Summit, played an important role in creating the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, NGO Commission on Sustainable Development, and a number of other organizations that advocate for the implementation of the UN 2030 Development agenda.

Dr. Jordan also gave recommendations for most effectively advocating at the UN level for women and girls in mountain areas. One of the main messages of his presentation that I learned was the importance of building meaningful connections with individuals and achieving great goals through small means. To that end, Dr. Jordan told a number of stories in which he personally spoke with and made friends with UN diplomats, world leaders, and leaders of NGOs and civil society groups, all of which mutually helped each other to advocate for a number of topics related to sustainable development. Dr. Jordan also recommended that UIMF register for the upcoming World Meteorological Organization's High Mountain Summit in Switzerland on October 29-31, 2019. He emphasized that UVU is the only academic institution actively contributing to HLPF and Commissions on the Status of Women, and that UIMF should continue to build coalitions with other civil society groups and UN member states as "the voice of colleges and universities at the UN."

Overall, Mr. Jordan helped me better understand both the role of academia in the UN system and how small efforts—such as the efforts that UIMF performs to reach out to local, state, national, and international civil society groups and UN member states to advocate for SMD and mountain women and girls—can eventually lead to large and impactful results. I am appreciative of the UIMF leadership and UVU faculty and staff that were instrumental in bringing Dr. Jordan to UVU to teach us these important lessons.

Michael Hinatsu, UIMF Vice President