

My contribution to Utah Valley University 2019 Diplomatic Conference



I volunteered this year at Utah Valley University's 2019 diplomatic conference on November 4, 2019. My responsibility as a diplomat host was to guide people, especially the country representatives, to the correct rooms after the plenary session for the breakout sessions. I was able to listen to the various remarks and speakers during the plenary session as well as one of the breakout sessions who had diplomatic representatives from Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, and Finland.



Dr. Astrid Tuminez, UVU President, speaks during conference

The plenary session started with remarks from Utah Valley University's president Dr. Astrid Tuminez who welcomed everybody to the university and talked a bit about the student body.

She emphasized the teaching style of Utah Valley University as well as the global awareness of the student body, many of which speak a second language. After her remarks, Lt. Governor Spencer Cox talked about Utah and its growth in the nation.

Many of the people who spoke during this session talked about economics and Utah's role in the nation and worldwide. Many mentioned Utah's continual growth especially the area which has been nicknamed "Silicon Slopes". Utah has seen continual growth both locally and internationally and one aspect contributing to this has been Utah's constant increase in population both from within the state and from people moving in from elsewhere.

The last speaker of the plenary session was Ms. Vicki Bennett, the Director for Sustainability and Environment in Salt Lake City. She talked about sustainability in Utah and how Salt Lake City is trying to pave the way and set an example for other places. Much of Salt Lake is moving toward renewable energy. This is slightly concerning for some factions of the economy who work for coal burning plants, but those pushing for more sustainable energy are hoping that new businesses will move into these areas and workers will be able to be retrained in a new field. She also talked about promoting local growers and providing small loans as well as a public kitchen where people can produce goods to sell.

During the breakout sessions, each country's representatives had an opportunity to provide information about their particular country and what they have to offer Utah. I participated in the A Group session. First to present was Ms. Stéphane Lessard, Consul General of Canada, who focused on the fact that Canada is the United State's largest trading partner. This is due in part to the friendly relationship between the two countries as well as the large shared border. Many jobs in the United States and in Utah are sustained through trade and interaction with Canada.

Next to present was Ms. Odette Hampton the Consul General of Australia. One of the things emphasized in her presentation was how although Australia is small in terms of population, its people have had a big impact worldwide through inventions and businesses that have emerged from the country. She showed that Australia has much to offer the United States and especially Utah.

His Excellency, Ambassador Hynek Kmoníček represented the Czech Republic. Many people forget about the Czech Republic because it is small and was once under the influence of the Soviet Union. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, it has continued to rebuild and become

economically strong in Europe. It has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe and is responsible for the production and innovation of many products.



Ms. Zsuzsa James Consul General of Finland and Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the US, Hynek Kmoniček during the break out session

Finally, Ms. Zsuzsa James, Consul General of Finland spoke about her country. One area that Finland is leading in is quality of life, human rights, and education. It is constantly rated the happiest nation on Earth and has one of the best education systems in which teachers are required to have a high level of education. Aside from this, Finland has and is producing technology that is used around the world. Their clean tech is very advanced and much of the country's energy comes from renewable sources. It is leading to world into a cleaner, more sustainable future.

Overall, I thought that the conference was well worth attending. It was insightful to have so many people from different countries and to hear how they are interacting with the state of Utah. It is exciting to see the growth happening in Utah and how Utah's people are culturally engaged. I think this will continue to help Utah in the future as it continues to grow and expand internationally.

Jeff Hibbard, UVU student