

Celebrating International Mountain Day at UVU



The Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF) is “a coalition of several different clubs on the campus of Utah Valley University (UVU) including: College Democrats, College Republicans, Foreign Affairs, Model UN, Russian Club, and Sustainable Mountain Development” (*Utah*). This coalition works to make the public more aware of mountain issues and make foreign guests more accessible and contactable to the public.



Michael Hinatsu, Vice President of UIMF speaks during the event at UVU

I had the opportunity to attend their International Mountain Day 10-year-anniversary (anniversary of celebrating it at UVU) event on December 2, 2019. International Mountain Day is on December 11, but presumably the UIMF chose to host this event a week beforehand so that attendance would be maximized, as December 11 is during UVU Finals Week, so many people likely would not attend on that day. I enjoyed attending this event and actually learned a great deal about mountain--particularly rural mountain--neighborhoods and economies. It was a valuable experience indeed to see how these communities are struggling and how they can potentially be helped. My favorite part of the whole event was just the event itself. I loved seeing how everyone rallied together to demonstrate the importance of both the cultures and productivity of those places. I loved seeing everyone show that those people mattered. Even though those people are frequently overlooked in international, national, and even local politics, there are many who do support these people and act on their support, like the great speakers at the celebration.

One thing frequently brought up in the event was not only the importance of these mountain communities, but also how they are very much taken for granted. They are often overlooked by politicians and civil servants. This is despite how much, material and immaterial, they contribute to the world. The speakers at the event addressed this and addressed how this can be rectified. The speakers noted that rural mountain areas are highly dependent on finite resources, like fossil fuels, for their economies. This is a problem for many reasons. One, all these finite resources will obviously run out at some point. This is concerning, as many mountain communities are, by and large, dependent on these resources, so there will need to be creative solutions made when these resources run out. And two, much of the world is trying to distance itself from the usage of fossil fuels, due to the knowledge that they are harmful to the environment. Examples are prevalent and found most anywhere, such as the US-local Green New Deal or the international Paris Climate Accords. This also poses a large problem to mountain communities, as many of their economies are dependent on fossil fuels. Luckily, this threat to rural mountain economies has not been overlooked as much as many other rural mountain problems, and there are potential solutions to this. Clearly the economies of rural mountain communities need to shift to become less dependent on fossil fuels. The question, however, is what they should shift to. What is likely the most popular opinion on the answer to this is that mountain economies should shift to become more based on technology and renewable energy sources. This has been somewhat implemented in some areas and has seen some success. For an example of such success, look at what is known as the Silicon

Slopes of our own Utah. The Silicon Slopes are not quite so rural, but they still provide an example of success in this endeavor. Another potential solution is making the mountain economies based more on tourism. This would not work for the entire year, of course, but it would certainly help to wean their economies off a dependency on fossil fuels. All in all, I learned a lot from the UIMF event, and it prompted me to think more about how to help rural mountain economies.

Carter Morrison, UVU student

Works Cited

Utah International Mountain Forum, <http://utahimf.org/sample-page>.