

## Gaining professional experiences through the Model UN conference

The MUNFW (Model United Nations of the Far West) was an extraordinary experience, one which I will never forget. It would be a memorable and useful experience for any student regardless of their chosen degree. The entire conference was student run with no teacher interruptions. This kind of learning promotes autonomy of the students enabling them to be self-driven and to accomplish great things without the direction or orders from teachers. I believe this kind of learning is what students need most to prepare them for the work force of the future and to propel them into their chosen fields of profession. The ability to work on one's own is incredibly valuable and this conference nurtured that ability.



*Steven Johnston (second from the right in the first row) with delegates from other universities*

To continue on this subject of self-reliant students who are capable of being creative, innovative, cooperative, and cunning it is important to note that many of us, the participants of the conference, were there for the first time with no previous experience, but quickly were assimilated into the work.

Many of us overcame fears of public speaking, networking, and of group brainstorming. This kind of accelerated growth could never be seen in a typical classroom where the students merely sit in their seats and listen to an instructor give a lecture. This kind of learning can only happen in an environment of action and necessity. This environment was very present at the conference. If the students did nothing, nothing would get done. Every student was needed for every student carried the equal amount of voting power (well at least in my committee which was the World Health Organization -WHO).

However, it was more than the equity that allowed students to experience unbelievable growth, but also it was due to the nature of representation. Each student chose a country to represent. This meant that he or she did not have to defend his or her own viewpoint but that of the country which they chose to represent. This allowed to have for a serious conversation with strong argument for or against without offending the students or hurting their feelings. But it is this kind of conversation students need to prepare for the real world when they have to defend their own viewpoints.

There was nothing to complain about. The whole conference was fun, useful, and unique. We left late Friday morning from the Salt Lake Airport and flew directly to San Francisco. We flew Delta which was nice because we got a free carry on. Upon arriving at San Francisco I remember seeing a horse statue made of what appeared to be old wooden branches of desert pine trees combining to form the skeleton of some ancient mighty steed symbolizing that this event would accelerate my learning. From the airport we went directly to the hotel. The hotel was awesome! We had just enough time after checking in to get lunch. Then the meeting commenced and lasted the rest of the evening.

The first meeting that Friday night was mostly introductory in nature and they explained some of the history of the MUNFW and talked about how excited they were to be hosting us and wished us the best of luck in making the most of this conference. They had speakers from different bodies of the UN come to speak and tell us about how important diplomacy is and of the importance of word choice. One of the speakers was from the Human rights body of the UN in the department of inquiry. His job was to travel the world going to zones of conflict to investigate whether or not human rights were being violated, and if so to what degree. His stories were truly amazing and it gave me insight as

per what kind of career I hope to build someday. After the meeting I approached the speaker to ask him how I could get started in his line of work / internship opportunities. He asked me a few questions after which he explained that they do not have any internship opportunities but that after I graduate it would be great if I were to apply for a position in his department and gave me his business card.

This was a great start to what would be one of my favorite weekends of the year two-thousand seventeen. At the adjournment of the first set of meetings Friday night I felt like I had done so much that when I got back to my hotel room I immediately retired to bed to sleep. Saturday was the best day of all. In the World Health Organization the first topic were voted on to discuss was pandemics. Representing The Kyrgyz Republic no one was very familiar with what my position would be nor with the problems which Kyrgyzstan faces. Many honorable diplomats when they presented their positions in front of the body brought a pre-prepared parchment with what they had planned on saying. This was great but when I came up to speak I wanted my speech to be relevant to what the body had discussed in the time of the unmoderated caucusing. I remember the feeling standing there before more than sixty of my fellow peers, all eyes on me, there was a moment of silence right before I began, I feel it - the verge of greatness. I spoke in my normal voice but there was an undertone of seriousness and competence. I briefly reiterated much of what was being discussed in our caucusing and then stated my country's stance of favorability toward them. Then I brought forth what was most pressing, that of alcoholism. The room was stunned that I would bring forth some an unorthodox topic. Alcohol is the third leading cause of health problems in the world. It is attributed for nearly 7% of the world's deaths. I positioned that alcoholism should be recognized as a pandemic. Initially the bodies made points of inquiry to asking challenging questions to try and throw down the posit. However, I answered all of these questions tactfully with great skill. After that many teams representing states stood to commend the diplomat for the Kyrgyz Republic.

The feeling of satisfaction reverberated throughout my entire being. I had made a bold move, I stood my ground, I won the affection of my fellow delegates, and I did so honestly and with impressive competence. The next session every voting bloc leader approached me and ask of ways to implement what I said into their resolutions. The meetings on Saturday only went till 3pm and we had the rest day to explore the city. San Francisco is such an awesome city, way better than Los Angeles. I

met some amazing people who invited me to come back to San Francisco to visit them again. It was an incredible adventure, a bit too crazy for a school paper. The last days were spent to finalize the draft resolutions and try to gather enough support to get them passed.



*Steven Johnston with the Achievement Certificate*

On the last meeting, conference organizers treated the delegates to a dinner and had closing speeches commemorating us for our valiant and joyful efforts in our committees. Our team for UVU was able to bring home an award. This is the first award the school has received in 5 years.

*Steven Johnston, UVU student*