

Student Engaged Learning Experiences About Mountain Women Advocacy at the UN

On October 2nd, 2017 I was afforded the opportunity both to co-host and to attend the Roundtable of the NGOs in Consultative Status with the United Nations ECOSOC titled: “Joint Advocacy of the Mountain Women and Agenda at the United Nations.” My peers and I listened to the conversation of five presenters: Dr. Baldomero Lago, Dr. Andrew Taber, Dr. Jed Shilling, Dr. Rusty Butler, and Ms. Wendy Jyang. Two of them represented the Mountain Institute, Washington, D.C. and the rest of the participants were from Utah.



Speakers during the UN Roundtable event October 2nd, 2017

The event was held at Utah Valley University (UVU), in the Fulton Library. While the event itself lasted from 11:00am until noon, I was working from 10:00am until 5:00pm. The Roundtable discussion was hosted by the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF) a coalition of student clubs at UVU as a student engaged learning initiative, where students gain professional skills through practical activities on their own with teachers providing them advice only when it will be necessary.

The goal of the event was to bring attention to numerous challenges with the sustainable development which mountainous regions and women face across the globe. Another goal was to educate students about the issues in mountain development, and allow them to network and understand the professionals who are experienced in sustainable mountain development (SMD). As a result, students could then define how they could share their own experiences through the UN activities as contributors to the economic development of mountainous Utah, one of the leading states in this nation not only to do business but also with fiscal discipline. It was the goal of UIMF to bring attention to these issues in preparation for both the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2018 in New York and the United Nations International Mountain Day on December 11th, 2017, an event that focuses on the climate, hunger, and migration in mountainous regions.

During the event I had many responsibilities. I oversaw the setup of the room prior to the event to ensure that all logistical measures would be in place and that the event in general would run smoothly. During lunch I sat with Dr. Rusty Butler and learned from his experiences in working with students while he was VP for International Affairs and Diplomacy at UVU. I also hosted two of the out-of-state visitors; Dr. Andrew Taber and Dr. Jed Shilling. While hosting them, Mark Driggs and Danny Davis, UIMF members and myself took VIP guests on a tour around our university, and then proceeded to take them on a sightseeing tour of Orem and Provo and the surrounding areas. During this time, I was able to speak further with both guests to further understand their work and how they each got to be in their specific fields. Both men have many years of professional work and dedication to mountain cause under their belts and it was inspirational to be around them and understand how one day I may also be able to contribute to my society in the same way these men have done and continue to do.

One of my personal goals in life and my hopeful career of peace advocacy is to take efforts that are successful around the world and implement them in places in the United States that are in need of such assistance. Therefore, the opportunity to attend this event was very educational for me and gave me a lot of ideas on how I can personally improve my society. While I consider global development important, I also believe my country's national development is also important. In specific, Dr. Taber has worked all around the globe, and as he even said, that he does not see himself as having a specific "home country," I found his story especially inspirational as he has been to work in so many different areas of the world - which I'm assured has taught him how to improve other mountain areas of the globe. Dr. Taber, to me, seemed to be a human embodiment of what the United Nations is about; he works in and with a multitude of mountain countries to improve society globally as a whole. I am very grateful for his, and every other VIP guests' time during the event as they showed and empowered myself and my peers to go out into the world and do more and do better - and leave this world better than it was when we were born into it.



Students and faculty engaging in UN Roundtable event October 2nd, 2017

Utah Valley University is an engaged learning institution, and events such as this round table demonstrate just how dedicated to that ideal the University is. I feel very lucky to have been able to afford the opportunity to contribute to this event and even more so to attend a school that encourages events like it. I look forward to the immense amount of learning opportunities ahead of me, and future discussions about mountain development in Utah and around the world.

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