

## Student Liaison of UIMF in Washington, D.C.

Receiving the Utah Valley University (UVU) delegation in Washington D.C. this February was truly an once-in-a-lifetime experience. The representatives were invited to participate at the National Prayer Breakfast, which was hosted by the members of the United States Congress on February 5, 2015. The delegation, led by Jesler Molina, President of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU, was composed of UIMF Editor Andrew Allen, as well as Dr. David Connelly, Chair, History and Political Science Department at UVU, and Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, Lecturer, History and Political Science Department at UVU. The delegation also included me, a graduating senior at Utah Valley University and Outreach Coordinator for the UIMF, tasked with the responsibility to both to help arrange meetings and follow up on our interactions with several entities in Washington, D.C.



***UVU Delegation during the Tour at the U.S. Capitol (L to R): Jared Reni, Dr. David Connelly and Jesler Molina***

Since moving here in August of 2014 to spend the final year of my undergrad in an engaged learning environment, I was able to intern in a number of NGO and government institutions in the nation's capital. As a result, I have been fortunate to also take part in advancing UIMF relationships and advocating for the Fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference, to be hosted by UVU students on October 7-9, 2015 in Orem, Utah. Other undergrad programs around the country would surely have delegated this kind of

responsibility to university faculty and staff. But at Utah Valley University, this has not been the case. Our faculty advisors, together with the Department of Political Science, have empowered us, the students, to take a leading role in every aspect of the organization, including both the conceptualization and execution of all initiatives. I have been a large beneficiary of this approach, as I have had the opportunity to participate in important meetings by building and maintaining relationships with our allies in Washington, D.C. in order to foster opportunities for future students. Not only do I see this as invaluable personal experience, but also as a way to give back to my fellow emerging UIMF students.



***Jared Reni (Third from the Right) after the meeting at United Nations Association of the United States in Washington, D.C.***

While the delegation was here in D.C., I was afforded the opportunity to meet with officials from a number of important non-profit and government organizations, including The National Endowment for Democracy, The United Nations Association of the United States of America, The Mountain Institute, The Library of Congress, and the State Department. Each one of these organizations were surprised to find that the students were taking a leading role in the conversation, and I believe that they were very impressed. Even though the focus of the meetings was to promote the 2015 Women of the Mountains Conference, each one of the

above mentioned organizations showed interest in receiving applications from our top UIMF students for internships. It is evident that the experiences that UIMF students are taking part in are catching the eyes of top employers in the non-profit and government sector in our nation's Capital.

I would like to say thank you to Utah Valley University for creating an environment for us to succeed, and to UIMF for being a true laboratory for UVU students to work on their professional skills and to gain truly unique experiences, creating networking opportunities and recognition on national and international levels. Looking forward, I will continue to do my best to stay engaged with our many partners in Washington, D.C. to do my part in making certain that Women of the Mountains will be a success. This will be the first time that the conference will be hosted by students, including UVU and other universities from the state and the rest of the Rocky Mountain region. Topics addressed will include Transmitting Family Values, Heritage & Culture; Education of Women & Children; Human Trafficking and Exploitation; Leadership for Women; and more. For more information on the conference, visit [2015 Utah | Women of the Mountains](#).

***Jared Reni, UIMF Outreach Coordinator***