

## **Discussing Sustainable Mountain Development With PR of Germany to the UN, Ambassador Dr. Harald Braun**

On October 31, 2016 Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Ambassador Dr. Harald Braun and his wife Ute visited UVU campus. The purpose of his visit was to promote Germany and its role at the United Nations, and to learn about the Utah model of economic development, its people, their traditions, culture and heritage. Ambassador Braun made a presentation before UVU students on the topic: "Germany's Role in the United Nations"



*(L to R): Munkhbat Batmunkh, Ambassador Harald Braun and Christian Jensen after breakfast*

Before the major presentation, Ambassador Braun and his wife met with UVU leadership and a group of selected students during the early morning breakfast. Two represented the only UVU students during breakfast in addition to three students from Germany, who study now at UVU through the foreign exchange program. Dr. Jeffery Olson, Senior Vice President, (UVU) hosted the honored guests. After the brief introductions by all participants at breakfast, the

Ambassador and his wife curiously asked about the Foreign Affairs Club, and student involvement in the club's activities. It was a great moment for the Foreign affairs club presidency to present the Ambassador with documents about both the club and the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU, which advocates the United Nations sustainable mountain development (SMD) agenda at UVU in the State of Utah. In addition, he was presented with a copy of the United Nations Secretary General's Report on SMD featuring UVU students as the hosting of the International Women of the Mountains on October 7-9, 2015. The students emphasized the importance of the club for student engaged learning. Club members engage by hosting dignitaries and different events to share ideas and initiatives to bring about real change throughout the world and among mountain communities in particular. The Ambassadors' wife, Ute Braun, had questions about the Model UN initiative, which involves students in the UN agenda. The students informed the distinguished guests that the UIMF focuses on encouraging students to look for and share experiences in economy, political life, culture and ideas in the State of Utah with people and dignitaries from abroad. They explained how Utah is a great model of sustainability for mountainous nations around the world. The economy was built in a place that was desolate, by Mormon Pioneers venturing west one century and half ago.

Ambassador Harald Braun was impressed by the efforts and work of UVU students featured in the United Nations Secretary Generals' report. He and his wife commented on the huge potential we have in Utah to reach out to similar mountainous countries and share stories of success. This led the Ambassador into discussions about the cooperation in education between the State of Utah, the Federal government and in Germany. European nations have seen a decline in exchange students from the United States to Europe; this is partly due to differences in language. Dr. Olson informed the VIP-guests that the State of Utah is combating this by helping students learn multiple languages through its dual language programs.

Ambassador Braun made brief remarks about the current economic and political situation in the Federal Republic of Germany. Much has happened in the past hundred years to bring his country to where it is today. Germans can finally say that they are in peace with its surrounding neighbors. They have a rich history and a beautiful country; it has survived two world wars and the split of east and west. The German economy is thriving magnificently today.

After breakfast, the Foreign Affairs club presidency spoke with the Ambassador about future plans and the possibility for the student delegation to see him during their visit to the 61 session of the UN Commission on Status of Women (61CSW) next spring. During 61CSW, UIMF will make a special presentation about contributions to the promotion of gender, and SMD agendas of the United Nations by hosting International Women of the Mountains conferences in Utah since 2007. Ambassador Braun expressed his willingness both to meet members of the delegation and to work in any ways to advance the UN agenda on sustainable development goals.

*Christian Jensen, President, Foreign Affairs Club and Munkhbat Batmunkh, Vice President, Foreign Affairs Club*