

Foreign Affairs club contributed to the Diplomatic Conference at UVU



Break out session of the Diplomatic Conference at UVU

On Monday, March 12th 2018 Utah Valley University and the Office of Global Engagement hosted the Diplomatic Conference on International Trade Relations. Students attended this conference along with the Foreign Affairs Club who also participated in logistical protocols with the diplomats during the event. This diplomatic conference was the biggest gathering of diplomats in Utah state history. 15 diplomats in attendance represented nations from Europe, Asia, South America, North America, and Africa.

The conference opened with a speech from the UVU President Holland welcoming the diplomats. He spoke about the engaged learning model of UVU. Following President Holland, the Lieutenant Governor of Utah, Spencer Cox, addressed the audience. Lieutenant Governor Cox dedicated his speech to Utah and how quickly it is growing. He emphasized Utah's strong economy and how it is leading in the nation in growth right now. Additionally, he emphasized how important it is to

invest in Utah's economy due to its upward trajectory and being the home to booming businesses. After Lieutenant Governor Fox, we had the opportunity to listen to Jackie Biskupski the mayor of Salt Lake City, who talked about role of sustainability in Utah. She spoke about the importance of sustainability and emphasized that it is a core value of Utah. Particularly, Mayor Biskupski articulated the point that fossil fuels should be viewed as a good thing belonging to the past but that renewable energy is the fuel of the present and the future. I thought she made excellent points on how important sustainability is and was impressed by initiatives she is undertaking all over Utah to make Utah more sustainable.

Following the opening key note speakers, the diplomats split into two breakout sessions. I attended the session that included the diplomats from France, Ghana, Finland, Belarus, Canada, and Mexico. During this breakout session the diplomats were asked several questions regarding trade, commerce, business relations, and international relations. A commonality that kept coming up was the opposition of trade barriers and the repercussions of the protectionist agenda on international trade. The diplomat from Canada was very concerned with this due to Canada being the biggest bilateral trade partner with the United States, which also happens to be the biggest partnership in the world. This was such a unique experience for me to listen to all the perspectives of each country, and to hear from them personally where they are coming from really changed the discourse of what I often hear and read in the news.

In summation, the conference was a very big success for Utah Valley University. Not only was it an honor for members of our club and myself to be present but it was an excellent opportunity for us to be engaged in student learning in such a real world way. I was tasked for the day to aid the French Consul General Emmanuel Lebrun-Damiens and it was an extraordinary opportunity to speak with him about France's relations with Utah. Prior to this conference I was unaware of how much France is invested in Utah and after meeting and talking to the French diplomat it became clearer for me than ever how much Utah is engaged in globalization.

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