

UIMF prepares to participate at HLPF



For the past several months members of the Utah international Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU), myself and four of my peers, Sam Elzinga, Andrew Jensen, Kyler Pigott, and Caitlin Tomley, have been preparing for a trip to the United Nations in New York City. From July 16-19, all five students and Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, a UIMF mentor are planning on attending the 2018 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development. This is one more highlight of the UIMF activities during this year after successful participation of 11 UVU students, including 5 UIMF members at the 62nd Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62) in March 19-21, 2018. At that time, UVU students were able to host a side and a parallel event and submit a written statement advocating the mountain women cause through student engaged learning model at UVU. During the visit next week, we plan to achieve for the first time what was not done previously – to deliver an oral statement with focus on three mountain targets and the importance for UN to assist the sustainable development for the mountain communities, the poorest and the most neglected ones by the international community.

It's been a whirlwind of fine tuning and hours upon hours of meetings to get ready for this trip. The student engaged learning model developed at Utah Valley University encourages students to work together as a group on implementing specific aspects of the sustainable mountain development

agenda of the United Nations. Faculty provides students advice and mentorship when necessary. We, students were in need to handle all aspects of the visit, starting from raising funds, arranging logistics, protocol and agenda. For me, as a non-traditional student, the preparations for this trip have been strenuous, but the reward is great. Once we all decided to pursue this project the first thing that we did was to prepare a draft of the written and oral statement. Our peers submitted one during their March visit to the CSW62 and we followed the similar procedure and created templates and system, which is described clearly at UIMF web-site. I never did this type of professional writing before, and it was tough at first, but I was able to contribute to the project. Once the most important parts of the statements were completed, revised and then rerevised we submitted it through two non-governmental organizations, the Russian Academy of Natural Science and the Utah China Friendship Improvement Sharing Hands Development and Commerce to the secretariat of the HLPF, as it is required by the United Nations. Both NGOs are eligible to make such statements as NGOs registered in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Then we began to delegate responsibilities to each member of the attending UIMF representatives through special task list posted online at UIMF web-site following the established methodology of the student engaged learning initiative.

The logistics of the operation proved to be more than we all expected at first, but the challenge was welcomed and it provided us the opportunity to learn many new skills, including the establishment of new contacts with staff and administration at UVU who helped us with that task. The next thing that we focused on was funding and tickets. With the help of the Dean of College of Humanities and Social Sciences at UVU, we applied for travel grants and were able to receive funding for the plane tickets. Following this organization, I was delegated the responsibility to find

accommodations for all the UIMF students attending the 2018 HLPF in New York. After searching I was able to find rooms for us only a couple minutes' walk from the front gates of the United Nations (UN) headquarters. After Sam Elzinga, my colleague, arranged the agenda and Andrew Jensen, another student, arranged the transportation to and from the airport, the other administrative tasks were divided up among us.

My next responsibility was making sure the registration was submitted before the due date on June 19th, 2018. This proved to be more complicated than it should have been because of my inconveniently times military training that month, but every registration was submitted on time through the United Nations system called Indico. My second responsibility was less of a headache; I oversaw the folders that we were planning on handing out to the VIP delegates that we were planning on meeting with and updating the information on the trifold. Once the statements were officially accepted by the UN I began my preparations. This process was another new learning experience for me. While putting together these folders I was able to strengthen one more time what our purpose for the trip really is, because we included in the folders several UN documents, which highlighted both the UVU and UIMF as contributors to the UN agenda on sustainable mountain development. I had to boil down our agenda and goals for the trip and make sure that everyone that we met with would have the pertinent information about the UVU student engaged learning model and how its implementation was further the goals outlined for the 2018 HLPF. Now all that is left is for us to prepare for the oral statement to be presented on June 19th, 2018.



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**Statement submitted by Utah China Friendship Improvement
Sharing Hands Development and Commerce, a non-governmental
organization in consultative status with the Economic and
Social Council***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



After hours and hours of preparation and with the help of our mentors, Dr. Rusty Butler and Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev from UVU, we all feel like we are finally ready to go. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to represent UVU and encourage leaders from all around the world and to help them remember those living in mountainous communities and the difficulties that they face.

Damon Ashcraft, vice-President, Sustainable Mountain development Club at UVU