

Statement

**Parallel event “Student Engaged Learning to empower mountain women and girls”
63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women
Rebecca Bindraban, member, Utah International Mountain Forum,
a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University**

It is my honor and privilege to speak as Editor-in-Chief of the Youth and the Mountains Journal, and how Utah Valley University students contribute to the main theme of the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women about empowering mountain women and girls. The journal provides a forum for student undergraduate research along with advocating and developing student academic scholarship, and engages students across the campus, in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal #5 on gender within the United Nations Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD) agenda. The idea about establishing this journal came when 19 members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU contributed research on mountain ranges to the Mountain Partnership Report on Sustainable Mountain Development in North America for the landmark RIO+20 UN conference on sustainable development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The first issue of the journal was unveiled during the third Global Meeting of the UN Mountain Partnership in Erzurum Turkey in September 2013 by Jordan Giles and Mark Petersen, two UIMF members.

The empowerment of mountain communities and women has always been a focus of attention for student research in our journal in the past and present. In 2013, Shelby Jorgenson advocated for women by stressing how the benefits of education experienced by mountain women also helps society at large. In 2014, Lisa Shepherd highlighted the politically courageous women in Utah who paved the way for other women, a history of women in the Rocky Mountains, and the horrible and damaging effects of human trafficking on women. In 2015, Sadie Conover tackled the subject of how women worldwide are missing out on their educations as a result of a lack of feminine products and important role played by NGOs, like Days for Girls, who help to address that challenge. That year the journal also published essays of the winners of the Utah high-school students workshop on gender issues such as Chayston Wood and Caroline Moss. Megan Rains, UIMF member, is a single mother of ten children, and in her research she raised the issue of the burden single mothers must undertake post divorce when traditional gender roles are employed by court systems and legislatures. She argued that children and mothers suffer when men post divorce have responsibility to cover financial needs but no legal obligation to be present in a child's life.

As the Editor in Chief during 2017 and 2018 I encouraged students to submit research papers on the advocacy for women as well: Marie-Chantal Niwenshuti addressed challenges of being a female refugee in Utah, Michael Hinatsu wrote about the fragile economic and social position of Bedouin women in Israel, and the issues surrounding the lack of healthcare facilities and as a result high maternal mortality rates in mountainous region of Mt. Elgon in Uganda were reported by Titus Elanyu.

Contributions to the 2018 issue of the Journal were made by today's panelists: Megan Davis, William Gum-Casey, and Hannah Bieker as associate editors, and Michael Hinatsu, Aldon Trimble, and Abdulrahman Alghanmi as authors of papers on different SMD aspects.

For a second time, the journal includes copies of official documents of the ECOSOC and U.S. Congress, highlighting UVUs student engaged learning model and the Utah International Mountain Forum contribution to SMD advocacy. The journal provides a perspective on SMD in the Rocky Mountain region and worldwide, and cover topics such as expanding digital capabilities for society in the mountains for educational purposes in Nepal, ensuring the availability of water and the sustainable management of water in Yemen among others.

I am confident that in the future the journal will continue to raise an awareness among students through research about the importance of the mountain communities, and women to be in the focus of the UN 2030 Development agenda. Thank you.