

Learning from Mr. Richard Jordan about United Nations



Richard Jordan visited Utah Valley University (UVU) from the United Nations in New York City, where he has been working through non-governmental (NGOs) activities for the past 40 years. Richard Jordan helped form a committee on sustainable development within the United Nations. He spoke on the parallels between the Roots of Knowledge at UVU, which was more than a story of art, history, and human drama with his involvement in similar activities at the UN. Mr. Richard Jordan explained that the Roots of Knowledge came down to the body of knowledge that surrounds the earth; in his opinion it is about people from all different backgrounds and cultures who live on earth. He related this concept to students and professors by giving the example that not only do professors teach students, but at the same time, students teach professors as well.

Regarding the United Nations, Mr. Richard Jordan stated that this organization was a complex NGO. Even working for the United Nations for as long as he has, he understands that there are still phrases used which are complex for many, to understand, even within the organization. He spoke about the start of the first Earth Summit of the UN in 1989. He attended what he called the

“forgotten summit of the 1990s,” on trade efficiency. The name of the summit was due to it being called a conference instead of a summit.



Mr. Richard Jordan at the Roots of Knowledge in the Bingham Galley at UVU

Mr. Richard Jordan explained what had changed at the United Nations since the first Earth Summit. The most notable change he mentioned was the great emphasis there is now on coordination and harmonization within the UN, which takes incredible leadership. The leadership of the UN differs from regular organizations that would normally have a board of members because the subsidiary bodies which must align with the theme of the economic and social council.

Following this, Richard Jordan explained the importance of informal mechanisms in the role of NGOs and CSOs; for example, the daily brainstorming sessions with the co-chairs of the drafting group during the negotiation of the 2030 agenda and one for sustainable development goals. Each day, UN Ambassadors have informal briefings to share ideas with co-chairs. This process is good because it includes ways in which civil society can participate. Member states are able to speak directly to each other through state Ambassadors. In part of the role of NGOs, there is an increasing

reliance on reporting mechanisms such as through the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, where teams of reporters create only one page of reports from member states.

In regards to meetings of the UN Security Council, countries serving as the president of the council regularly devote meetings with NGOs to speak about issues of importance to that country. Due to the difficulty of questions, Ambassadors of the countries get any questions sent in advance to avoid answering informally. At these meetings, reports of previous month events and future month events are mentioned, as well as anything that has changed recently.

In relation to UVU, Mr. Richard Jordan mentioned a few recommendations for the university. One strong recommendation was that UVU should host an annual retreat for UN ambassadors. For example, Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago, Penelope Beckles, who is on the UN Women's executive board could be invited to brief UVU students and in return have us give presentations for her to take back to other Ambassadors. Any future-oriented work with Ambassadors in the presidency of the council of the European Union would also be effective.

Hosting a Universal health coverage event to promote physical and mental health and to extend life expectancy, with guests from the committee of rare diseases, would also be a great impact to UVU.

Mr. Richard Jordan briefly spoke about the concept of human security and a road safety strategy, and lastly spoke about the current time for women to lead within the UN. In the recent Women and Girls Summit, Ambassadors signed an agreement for the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. In total, 25 countries signed the document, which took 8 months of preparation. He gave great emphasis on the topic that more women should be involved in leading the United Nations.

Vanessa McCann, UVU student