

Reflections on Hosting Mrs. Julie Kofoed at 68th UNCSC



L to R: Amy Barnett, UUV Global Engagement office; Mr. Miles Hansen, President of the Utah WTC, Mrs. Julie Kofoed, William Gum, Michael Hinatsu during UNCSC

On August 26-28, 2019, members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU), participated in the 68th United Nations Civil Society Conference (UNCSC), held for the first time in Salt Lake City, Utah. UIMF advocated for women and girls who live in mountain communities, the importance of nontraditional students, and UVU's student engaged learning (SEL) model, as part of the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. During UNCSC, UIMF members worked closely with civil society actors, affiliates in the UN system, and others to promote the inclusion of language about such items in the UNCSC outcome document.

As part of this endeavor, and to prepare for similar advocacy at the 64th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64) to be held in 2020, UIMF had the unique and important opportunity to host Mrs. Julie Kofoed, the Head of Human Rights with the UN Global Compact. The visit of Mrs. Kofoed served to provide closer ties between UIMF, UVU, and the UN, as well as to provide crucial advice and directions on how best to organize a coalition of UN

member states and civil society organizations that could aid in adding language to the final document of CSW64 about women and girls living in global mountain communities.

UIMF member William Gum came into contact with Mrs. Kofoed while he participated in the Model UN Conference in San Francisco earlier in the year. At that conference, Mr. Gum was able to share with Mrs. Kofoed about UIMF's advocacy work, inform her about the need to implement the 2030 Agenda's mountain targets, and invite her to visit UVU to further collaborate on this work. Mr. Gum then informed me about the great opportunity, and I gladly worked with him as he spearheaded efforts to bring Mrs. Kofoed to Utah during the UNCSC.

As vice president of UIMF, I divided my responsibilities to prepare for UNCSC with work to assist Mr. Gum in arranging Mrs. Kofoed's travel and lodgings, providing advice on obtaining UVU funding for Mrs. Kofoed's trip, and developing along with faculty mentor Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev and UIMF president Samuel Elzinga an agenda for Mrs. Kofoed. The final agenda included meetings between Mrs. Kofoed and UVU faculty and officials, visiting dignitaries such as Mr. Kurmanbek Dyikanbaev, the President's Representative to the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan, and others. Mrs. Kofoed also attended UIMF's workshop on August 28.

In particular, we were able to arrange with the help of the UVU Office of Global Engagement a meeting between Mrs. Kofoed and Utah World Trade Center CEO Mr. Miles Hansen, which resulted in cooperation between the Utah World Trade Center and the Utah businesses it represents and the UN Global Compact's mission of helping businesses implement the 2030 Agenda. We also arranged a meeting for Mrs. Kofoed to instruct UIMF members on how the UN system works and how best to prepare to advocate for mountain women and girls among actors in and out of the UN system to prepare for CSW64.

I was very pleased with Mr. Gum's efforts during the planning and carrying out of Mrs. Kofoed's visit. To me, such work clearly demonstrates the efficacy of UVU SEL, in which students are given the primary responsibility to solve problems by working together as a group with faculty serving as mentors. All stages of Mrs. Kofoed's visit, from planning to follow-up, was conducted under SEL, with great communication between Mr. Gum, myself, Dr. Abdrisaev, and UIMF members. More importantly, the SEL model allowed us to gain key insights and help focus our preparation for CSW64.

I also want to thank UVU and the Global Engagement Office, particularly Dr. Baldomero Lago and Ms. Amy Barnett, for their indispensable work in bringing UNCSC to Utah, as well as helping us develop and implement our agenda for Mrs. Kofoed. We are continuing such cooperation with the hopes of attaining similar successes at CSW64 in March 2020.

Michael Hinatsu, UIMF Vice President