

## Lessons of the Utah Diplomatic Conference at UVU



*UVU President Astrid Tuminez during the plenary session of the Diplomatic Conference*

I had the opportunity to attend as volunteer at the Utah Diplomatic Conference on November 4, 2019, at Utah Valley University (UVU). I had the privilege of attending the opening plenary session and then volunteering during the breakout session. During the plenary session, much of what I was able to listen was centered around the growth and opportunity surrounding Utah. UVU President Astrid Tuminez spoke concerning her both unique and distinct background of living in 5 different countries. She spoke about the wonderful things happening at UVU, and how UVU is uniquely set up to succeed. She then spoke about the Great State of Utah. She specifically spoke about what I call the Missionary Factor. The Missionary Factor is the unique situation in Utah due to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' strong influence in the state. A very significant portion of the state has lived outside of the state, and many outside the country, which can be advantageous for Utah because of the understanding of different cultures. Another part of the Missionary Factor is that many of that same group mentioned just previously speak a second language, a massive plus to have when dealing with international business. The

young people of this state have been exposed to new cultures and languages, which puts Utah ahead of other states.



*Lt. Governor Spencer Cox speaks at the conference*

Lt. Governor Spencer Cox spoke about the Missionary Factor as well. He also highlighted the great growth both from the current residents (growing number of families), and the number of migrant families that relocate to Utah for opportunities across the Wasatch Front. Lt. Governor Cox also pointed out the recent declaration that he and Governor Gary Herbert just announced asking President Trump to allow for more refugees to be allowed to settle in the United States. Mr. Cox shared with the audience the history of Utah, how it was founded and settled by religious refugees. He said that Utah's history gives us a unique empathy that allows us to provide many opportunities to refugees to realize the American Dream, something Harvard University in a recent study said was very much alive in Utah.

Others spoke in the opening session, but I had to leave to set up a room for the next part of the conference, a breakout session where diplomats from various countries had the opportunity to share what they have to offer in terms of international business. I was asked to record the

presentations made by each country. In my breakout session, I had dignitaries from Hungary, India, Japan, Mexico, and The Netherlands.

Atilla Danku, Consul General of Hungary, stationed in California, had a great presentation about the competitive nature of the Hungarian economy, which offers the lowest corporate tax rates in Europe, which recently attracted Jaguar Automobiles to relocate several offices to Hungary. Much of his presentation focused on the automobile industry, which made me think that there could be real opportunities for the automotive students here at UVU, who have an excellent program here.

The presentation of Rajesh Naik, Consul General of India, stationed in San Francisco, just really put into perspective how powerful India is going to become. The massive population, which is educated, is growing and is significantly younger than other powerful nations like the United States and China. The presenter also made a good point saying that India's influence over the Indian Ocean has major implications, since the Indian Ocean serves as a natural choke point in international trade, particularly oil trade.

Midori Takeuchi, Consul General of Japan, focused on *Abenomics*, the terms to describe the economic strategies utilized by Shinzo Abe, the Prime Minister. Unemployment is at 2.4% in Japan, which I find incredible. Like India, the Japanese presenter put an emphasis on having a free and open Indo-Pacific Region, allowing international trade to flourish there.

The presentation of Mario Rodriguez Montero, Minister of Economic Affairs of Mexico, highlighted how much of the Mexican economy is invested in the United States and in Utah. A majority of the Mexican exports come to the United States. The same is true of Utah. While Utah isn't influenced by Mexico to the same extent that states like Texas, Arizona, and other border states, the influence of Mexico still reaches far across the state.

Gerbert Kunst, Consul General of the Netherlands, impressed me very much. His presentation highlighted the work that The Netherlands is doing to push forward renewable energy. The Netherlands has the goal to become a circular economy, which is the idea to eliminate waste and develop alternative use of resources, by 2050. A circular economy creates almost a closed loop system where everything is recycled, refurbished, etc. I found this to be a noble idea and one that I can support.

Overall, I am glad I had the opportunity to attend and volunteer at the conference due to the invitation from the UVU office of Global Engagement. I had to leave after the breakout

session, when a networking time was built into the schedule, but I am just glad to know that opportunities like this exist on campus. I am thankful that UVU continues to demonstrate a passion and emphasis towards engaged learning.

*Tom Webb, UVU student*