

# UVU Celebrates the 75th Anniversary of the UN through Engaged Learning

On Monday, March 2nd, 2020, Utah Valley University (UVU) students gathered to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the conception of the United Nations (UN). The event was hosted by the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of clubs at UVU that supports the UN's 17 goals for sustainable development.

As a member of UIMF, I had the opportunity to participate in preparation for the event. I was able to design an event poster, which was posted around campus advertising for the event. I was also able to produce the event brochure. In order to accomplish this, I worked with fellow club members to retrieve information about the event's agenda and speakers.



*Event poster and program brochure*

On the day of the event, I assisted fellow students in setting up for the event. Learning about the logistics of creating such an event has been really beneficial. From employing UVU's student engaged learning model, I feel more confidence in collaborating with others to successfully accomplish a goal.

Once started, the event ran smoothly. Kyle Warren, UVU Rotaract president moderated the panel, which included UVU faculty and other influencers in Utah's community, as well as internationally. Each of the five panelists presented at the event, before a portion of time for questions and answers.

The first speaker was Dr. Baldomero Lago, who is the Chief International Officer for UVU's Global Engagement Officer. Dr. Lago discussed UVU's relations with the UN. For many years UVU has been inviting UN diplomats to speak on campus. This process has built our institution's relationship with the UN, and led Dr. Lago to help UVU become an official affiliate of the UN - the only university in the state of Utah with such status. Now, UVU's model for presenting credentials in order to gain affiliate status is being used all over the country for other universities.

With affiliation comes responsibility. UVU hosts 10-12 UN events every year. Recently UVU faculty and students helped host the largest Civil Society conference in Salt Lake City. This conference, focused on sustainable development, had representatives from over 134 nations in attendance. 60 percent of those at the conference were youth. UVU is leading in the opportunities

it provides students to prepare for future careers through their student engaged learning model, and making connections with international organizations. In August of 2021, UVU campus will host another UN conference, focused on academics. This is an exciting opportunity for UVU faculty and staff to present, and to advocate for the UN 2030 agenda, including the 17 goals for sustainable development. UVU is proud to contribute to those goals.



*Kyle Warren, UVU Rotaract President Introduces Panelists*

We were also able to learn about the history of the UN. Dr. Geoffrey Cockerham, an associate Political Science professor at UVU, presented on the conception of the organization, including the impact of the League of Nations in leading the way for the UN to eventually develop. He discussed the original goals of international peace and cooperation. 75 years later, the UN is still working to achieve those goals.

Dr. Ryan J. Vogel, the director of National Security Studies at UVU, discussed the role of the UN Security Council (UNSC). The UNSC expanded in the 1960's to include 15 members, 10 of those members rotational. The five permanent members of the UNSC include the United States, China, United Kingdom, France, and Russia. The UNSC is considered the most powerful organ in international organizations, seeing as they can authorize use of force and coercion for maintenance of international peace and security.

Dr. Clark Merkley is the president of Orem, Utah's chapter of Rotary International. Dr. Merkley discussed the role of non-governmental organizations in supporting the UN's 2030 agenda. He discussed the positive history and relationship between Rotary and UN. He supports the idea that the greatest change can happen in communities at the grassroots level. He shared examples of how Rotary International has created change, such as the process of eradicating polio, and other peace initiatives. Without NGO's, many positive changes would be unable to occur. We, as civil society, can have a powerful impact on creating peace and sustainable development.

The last panelist was UVU Political Science lecturer, Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev. Dr. Abdrisaev discussed the practical application of UN values, and how UVU students have participated at UN events. UVU students have had the opportunity to present at the UN High Level Political Forums (HLPF) in New York City, advocating for women and girls in mountain communities. Their work includes research on the successful model of Utah's sustainable development, despite unfavorable conditions related to living in mountains. Many mountainous regions in the world have neglected and suffering populations. UVU students had the opportunity to present a sustainable development model for mountainous communities at the HLPF.



*Students gather to hear the panelists speak at UVU's UN75 celebration*

During the question and answer portion of the event, I asked the panelists why UVU sends students to present - what will really be accomplished at an international level? The value of such participation is that youth are raising their concerns on a global level, ensuring marginalized groups have a voice. UVU students are coming up with solutions for problems they see in the world around them, and promoting applicable models. There is so much value in uniting efforts and promoting positive ideologies, such as the UN's 17 goals for sustainable development. As we continue to involve youth, students, local NGOs, to lobby for positive change, we can have an international impact.

The UN 75 celebration at UVU embodied the UN's purposes - gathering together to discuss the potential we hold for positive change. I was impressed by how UVU faculty and students are increasing in our influential power through supporting the UN's goals and acting on both local and international levels to make our communities more peaceful, inclusive, and safe. I am grateful to

have been apart of such a meaningful event and look forward to participating in more UN events on UVU campus.

*Yana Andersen, UVU Rotaract Vice President*