

Noah Farnsworth
Utah Valley University student
68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women
Parallel event
“Empowering Mountain Women Economically Through an Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning.”
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Good morning, my name is Noah Farnsworth. I’m a political science student here at Utah Valley University (UVU) and the Vice President of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), which is a coalition of student clubs at UVU. I thank the UIMF for allowing me to speak in support of mountain women and girls during this parallel event within the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I hope to show how UVU’s Student Engaged Learning (SEL) can be a model to accomplish our common goal of sustainable development and the empowerment of women and girls from the mountain regions as a student-driven initiative.

I was fortunate to be raised in a household in Utah where education was highly valued. With my father's extensive experience as an educator and administrator and my mother's dedication to extending learning opportunities for me and my siblings beyond the classroom, they have both played an integral role in shaping my educational journey. Growing up in Utah, I was never fully aware of some of the challenges mountain communities experience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these rural communities were disproportionately affected by limited healthcare access, economic suffering, and a technological divide. My father shared with me an inspiring initiative undertaken by his school district to support rural communities in need. Recognizing the lack of technology and internet access in many of these areas, especially as children were required to stay home from school, the district took action. They deployed buses equipped with satellite dishes along with providing laptops to these communities, ensuring that students had the tools necessary to continue their education remotely. While this effort represents just one facet of the challenges faced by mountain communities in Utah, it also serves as a shining example of positive action and support in times of adversity. It also causes me to ask a question how mountain communities around the world dealt with the same problem.

The UIMF has not been alone in our efforts to aid these rural, mountainous communities. We have been significantly blessed by partnering with the Utah Orem-Lindon Rotary and UVU's Rotaractors. I would also like to thank the Bishkek Rotary Club and Bishkek Nomad Rotaractors of the Kyrgyz Republic for their continued partnership and dedication to our goals of jointly advocating for mountain communities.

My time at UVU as a political science major, especially in my work and research with public policy has taught me the value of engaged learning. Successful students make successful

contributors to society. I have noticed a declining trend in the world's value for education, especially women in education. Teaching women their value and helping them to be involved in solving the problems of the future, will exponentially increase the output of our time and energy in education. I believe UVU's SEL educational initiative is a perfect example of empowering women everywhere. It is teaching students here that their efforts and voice matter. It's teaching them that they have the power to change their lives and live in a world that they are proud of.

Thank you!