

**Stephan Atkinson**  
**68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Parallel event**  
***“Empowering Mountain Women Economically Through an Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning.”***  
**March 20, 2024**

Good morning,

My name is Stephan Atkinson, and I am the President of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF) at Utah Valley University, I stand before you to share our vision and accomplishments, deeply rooted in the principles of sustainable mountain development (SMD) and the transformative power of Student Engaged Learning (SEL). Our journey, guided by the innovative SEL model, illustrates the profound impact of merging academic dedication with tangible community action. We, as students, are not only advocates for our environment and communities but are also pioneering a learning model we believe should be adopted globally. Our work, significantly enhanced by the leadership of Paul Summer from the Bountiful Club and Keith Morgan of the Orem Lindon Rotary, has led to vital contributions to the Navajo Nation and the Kanosh Piutes. From delivering essential supplies to Red Mesa and Halchita to the comprehensive renovation of community centers and the future development of playgrounds, our initiatives reflect our unwavering commitment to service and impact.

Through SEL, we have had the extraordinary opportunity to host distinguished figures such as His Excellency Baktybek Amanbaev and His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi. These engagements have not only enriched our advocacy efforts but have also garnered international recognition for our cause. The praise from Ambassador Kőrösi during his visit is a testament to the global resonance of our work, emphasizing the importance of our continued efforts in sustainable mountain development.

As a non-traditional student attending my third Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), I have been privileged to witness the evolution of global advocacy and the instrumental role UVU plays in this arena.

The introduction of a global politics minor, supported by esteemed faculty members such as Dr. Jay DeSart and former ambassador Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, marks a significant milestone in preparing the next generation of leaders in global policy and international relations.

At this pivotal moment, I wish to extend our deepest gratitude to UVU's History and Political Science department. Their support has been the bedrock of our achievements, providing the academic rigor and resources essential for navigating the challenges of global and local advocacy. The department's dedication to fostering an environment of inquiry and active engagement has been crucial in shaping us into advocates and leaders who are prepared to make a difference on the world stage.

Our successes, fueled by partnerships, academic support, and a shared vision for a sustainable and just future, underscore the transformative potential of student-led initiatives. As we advance, we are reminded of the critical role of collaboration, perseverance, and unwavering commitment to the communities we serve. In closing, I thank each one of you for your support and solidarity. Your belief in our mission drives us forward, and together, we will continue to champion the causes that matter most.

Thank you for standing with us in this vital mission, as we advocate for the adoption of the SEL model globally, ensuring that students everywhere can contribute meaningfully to the world's most pressing challenges.

