

**Thomas Mogensen**  
**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, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Thomas Mogensen, and I am a student at Utah Valley University (UVU). The empowerment of women in mountain communities is crucial for us to defend and encourage. Every woman is important, from islands to the mountains, and today I will focus on the mountain women in Switzerland and the great model they have been for me.

While I am a Utah native, my family and I have had the privilege to grow up in schools in Switzerland. I was also blessed with a Swiss grandmother named Heidi. She lived and climbed in the Swiss Alps near Zürich. She taught my three siblings and me the importance of the mountains, keeping the environment clean, and respecting my environment. She taught us how to create a sustainable environment, like when she taught us to pick up the litter of others that wasn't disposed of properly. Her example to me is why we need to empower mountain women across the world to learn sustainable practices. Through one woman, you can teach a family, as my grandma Heidi did.

I was also able to gain more personal experiences of mountain culture and heritage in Switzerland through my missionary work for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints during 2018-2020. These two years let me deeply understand the culture, traditions, and way of life of mountain communities and families. It helped me understand just how important the women are in Switzerland and the impact they bring towards creating a healthy sustainable economy and land.

At Utah Valley University I've had the opportunity to experience through this United Nations Sustainable Development Goals class the Student Engaged Learning model (SEL). SEL helps students solve issues together, with teachers as their mentors. Most importantly, it also gives traditional, and non-traditional students an area to work together. As a non-traditional student who has a family and works part-time, I'm given so many opportunities to improve my education. Such opportunities include this class hosting a multitude of dignitaries to learn from. Everything from logistics to media coverage was handled by the students in hosting these dignitaries. This model lets me share my experiences and knowledge with younger, traditional students while still giving me a very practical and hands-on experience. The result of this is a student-focused and student-driven educational initiative.

This student-engaged learning model is a simple and effective tool that can easily be incorporated into any community, including rural and mountain areas.

I urge everyone to implement it.