

DAY 3 FOR UIMF AT CSW62: MATTHEW RANDS – STUDENT ENGAGED LEARNING THROUGH NETWORKING

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Members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student led clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU), worked vigorously at the United Nations 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62), in New York from March 19th to March 21st, 2018. During their three-day presence there, students learned valuable lessons in how to better frame their efforts in promoting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #5 on gender, with an emphasis on mountain women in order to secure placement of their major recommendations in the final CSW document.



Morning Briefing for NGOs during CSW62

From March 19-20, 2018, we were able to gain valuable learning experiences on UN advocacy processes through hosting a side and parallel event. We already expected major outcomes by studying procedures, regulations, and making practical preparations to both events for more than one year. But many new lessons came as we attended the daily Morning

Briefing held by NGO CSW/NY for NGOs participating at the CSW62 at the UN headquarters on Wednesday, March 21st. NGO CSW62 Forum organized 440 parallel events during two weeks of activities of the CSW62 which included our parallel event on Tuesday, March 20, 2018. During briefing, three individuals representing UNWomen and CSW62 NGO/NY informed the participants of around 100 people representing NGOs from around the world, including our group about major activities at CSW62 and negotiations about the content of the final document of the forum. Many of the NGOs were concerned about the negotiations for the final CSW document. Mrs. Lopa Banerjee from UNWomen spoke on how vital civil society is in helping the member states to pass legislation and assured that NGOs related to women would help influence the final document.



UIMF members during the Morning Briefing for CSW62 NGOs

In the Q&A portion of the meeting, our student members gained new experiences of how to address co-chairs of the briefing, to being pro-active and use the event to find answers on their important questions. The UIMF team made efforts for several months and were able to convince the secretariat of CSWNGO to include in the Zero Draft (the final document) of CSW62 language concerning the importance of focusing more attention from the international community on mountain women, and how student engaged learning initiatives could contribute to those efforts as UVU demonstrated during more than 10 years by hosting the international Women of the Mountains Conferences in the State of Utah and overseas. As we checked the updated draft of the CSW document before the briefing, our proposed language

was no longer included. The response was that member states had objections in listing groups based on geography in the final document. They would prefer to reference women across the world instead of specific groups. This tactic of avoiding lists does not discredit the importance of a group, but rather avoids unnecessary stress during negotiations in fear of excluding other groups. At the same time, our second question about the importance for CSW62 and the UN to pay attention to non-traditional students as an important group of contributors to the implementation of SDG#5 on gender attracted attention from many NGO members attending the meeting. They were interested in the idea that: any type of student from universities around the world, not only the youth can carve out a path in advocating for the implementation of the SDGs.



(Right to left) Matthew Rands, President, UIMF with Masako Hiramatsu, Business & Professional Women NGO, Japan and Tomoe Hayashi, Tokyo President, NPO Corporation National Federation BPW Japan during morning briefing

Both before and after the meeting, students of the UIMF greeted representatives of other NGOs and created connections. These contacts will come in handy as UIMF members look to create an even larger coalition in coming 63rd session of the Commissions on the Status of Women to prove how students play a vital role in advocating SDG #5 on gender equality.



From left to right: Mrs. Wendy Jyang, Derek Garfield, Matthew Rands, Mr. Richard Jordan, Dylan Genes

After the briefing, we explored one such new and important contact during a subsequent informal meeting with Mr. Richard Jordan, who has been involved in activities at the UN headquarters for 39 years. He was in addition to numerous activities included in his bio one of the 5 original co-founding editors of the Earth Negotiations Bulletin as well as Director of UN Operations for the Royal Academy of Science Intl. Trust.

Derek Garfield, Dylan Genes and myself, as leaders of UIMF were able to find answers to many of our questions, learned how to overcome challenges that we faced this year in the future, and successfully insert desired language about mountain women in the final CSW document next year. Mr. Jordan advised for example to use as a reference the “Future We Want,” the final document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 (RIO+20), which has one paragraph dedicated to the mountains. In addition, he suggested to use the High Level Political Forum 2018 (HLPF) to reach out to the different diplomatic missions and advocate through Student Engaged Learning the empowerment of rural women globally, especially women in mountainous areas. Mr. Jordan also mentioned strategies he personally used to acquire information and speak to Ambassadors when needed and offered students what he called a gold mine of information regarding UN processes, which he offered to be stored at UVU. This suggestion will help to both attract

future students to advocate in their promotion of the SDGs and educate current UIMF members in the different routes available in advocating at the UN: one such option would be to make the UIMF an NGO with ECOSOC status, which would allow future students the opportunity to go the UN and have the tools to advocate more effectively on a global level.

As a student, I had the opportunity to see exactly how UVU's engaged learning model works. It is a model that if replicated, will benefit countries that have adopted it in their universities. I believe that students are among the most energetic, motivated, and service oriented in the world. Students will be able to help promote the implementation of SDGs by participating directly in the advocacy process.

The Utah International Mountain Forum members will be much better prepared now with materials needed such as an E-course from the FAO-UN and publications and experiences shared by Mr. Jordan. In future events, students will be able to continue to promote through the UVU student engaged learning model the implementation of SDGs, particularly goal #5 regarding gender equality especially with focus on mountain women.

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