

ROB SMITH: GREAT LESSONS OF STUDENT ENGAGED LEARNING AT THE UNITED NATIONS

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Rob Smith at the United Nations

The trip to the United Nations (UN) to participate at the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women during March 19-21, 2018 was an incredible experience both for my peers and for me. We had the opportunity to go with our group from the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University (UVU) and present at the UN. As a student, I have had opportunities to present, but being able to present at the United Nations was something I would have never imagined I would get the chance to do while being a student at UVU. Aside from being a member of the club, I am also the Student Body President at UVU. I had the privilege of presenting about UVU and more specifically, its Engaged Learning Model. The Engaged Learning Model that the university has is what has made it possible for our club to go to the UN and present. Many of the students from our group presented on research they have done specifically around sustainability and

development in mountainous regions. I was honored to be able to present on how and why these students are able to get involved and work on projects like these. The Engaged Learning Model at UVU is geared around giving students opportunities outside of the classroom to engage in real world experiences. The model allows for us to not only be able to do the research that had been done, but to also take it and present to the local, regional, and even global audiences like in this case, through the UN to continue our initiatives.



Rob Smith (third from the left) during a side event presentation on March 19, 2018

Each day we presented, we gave a chance for people to ask us questions. On the day we presented at a parallel event on March 20, 2018, we were asked by people in the audience how they could take back what they learned from our presentation and implement it in their own way where they are from. It was amazing to see how the work we had done was something that other people wanted to be a part of and asked for help from the UIMF to make these implementations. It was a testament to the great students, faculty, and staff that are at UVU and have put so much time and effort into this project. It was a tremendous experience to represent both UVU as the Student Body President and as a member of the UIMF.

The first of day of our trip to the United Nations was very interesting and fascinating for me. First of all, it was my first time in New York City. It was amazing to see the energy of the city, especially around the UN Building. When we went into the UN Building, it was truly amazing

to see the diversity within it. There were people from all around the world speaking many different languages and representing their own countries and people. It was a humbling experience for me to be able to be at the UN with all of these people. One of the things that I loved about it the most was that all of these people were here working for something good. Although we each come from different places and the needs of our countries and people are different, people are there to work towards a better life for others. They are striving to bring peace and bring forth initiatives like sustainable development that can make better not only their own country, but the entire world.



Rob Smith with his son Thomas and wife Kati at Madison Square Garden

My experience at the UN was also a great networking opportunity. I was able to get to connect with professors and staff members from UVU who I had never had the privilege of knowing. They were there to encourage me and give great feedback on my presentations as well as listen to me and hear my goals and aspirations and offer up advice that they have from their immense life and career experiences. They were also able to share some of their own experiences that gave me reasons to think about as I move forward with my goals. We also had the wonderful opportunity to meet with and talk with people from around the world. Ambassadors of different countries accredited at the UN, UN Staff, and many others were there. I had the chance to talk with a few of them and hear their stories and what they do. When I was able to talk with them, it opened my eyes to how many opportunities are out there from around the world. Opportunities like this, especially for a student, are so valuable. We learn so much when we get these opportunities to network with and learn from so many different people with such diverse backgrounds. It helps us open our eyes to the rest of the world and provides us with tremendous opportunities.

Rob Smith, Utah Valley University Student Body President