



Inclusive Co-Curricular Educational Model for Implementation of Sustainable Development for Rural and Mountain Communities

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Abstract

Target 4.7 of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through education for sustainable development.

This paper discusses its implementation at Utah Valley University (UVU) through an inclusive co-curricular student engaged learning (SEL) model, which provides an opportunity for students to advocate for sustainable mountain development (SMD) in Utah and elsewhere. SEL encourages students to solve real-world problems as a group, with a faculty member serving as a mentor.

Utah International Mountain Forum UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU, is an extracurricular part of the model: it involves students, especially nontraditional or adult learners, in SMD activities beyond a single semester. Adult students enhance or change their careers while taking care of families. To overcome adult students' reluctance to engage in club activities, the model provides incentives, such as flexible activity schedules, integration of their experience into group efforts, and recognition at the United Nations level. Through the curricular programs, mentors build stronger ties with adult students and encourage them to join UIMF.

Since 2011, the model encourages students to contribute experiences, solicit funds, and gain recognition for SMD advocacy. Our assessment shows that students learn how to tie their own experiences to SMD, implement initiatives collaboratively, build partnerships on different levels, and then use accumulated knowledge for engagement in SMD activities beyond the semester.

Keywords: mountain communities, adult students, student engaged learning

Introduction

Sustainable Mountain Development as Part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

On 25 September 2015, United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015), its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169

targets. The agenda represents the most comprehensive roadmap for member states for eliminating poverty, reducing inequality, promoting gender equality and ensure protection of the environment, to name a few.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) # 6 and SDG #15 contain three targets, which address the importance of worlds mountains for the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (UN 2015): Target 6.6: “By 2030, protect and restore water related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes” (UN 2015: 18/35); Target 15.1: “By 2030, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements” (UN 2015: 24/35); Target 15.4: “By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development.” (UN 2015: 25/35)

“Covering 27 per cent of the world’s surface, mountains are key ecosystems that provide humanity with essential goods and services such as water, food, biodiversity and energy. Mountains are home to about 1.1 billion people who are among the world’s poorest: half of rural mountain dwellers face food insecurity (UNSG 2019:1/18).

The importance of sustainable development in mountain regions for the first time was recognized during the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Chapter 13 of the Agenda 21, the plan for action endorsed at the UNCED was entitled “Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD).” (Price, Kohler, 2013).

As a next step in recognizing world mountains at the global level, the United Nations declared 2002 as the International Year of Mountains (IYM). The IYM under the motto “We are all mountain people” provided an opportunity to raise awareness across the world on the importance of mountain regions and challenges which they experience. As a result of the IYM, 78 countries established national committees or structures to promote SMD, special mountain laws were passed in several mountain countries. Eight major global meetings associated with the IYM were held to address the needs of mountain communities, such as women, children, and indigenous people among others. (Price, 2004).

As one of the outcomes of the IYM, the Mountain Partnership (MP) was established as “a vibrant voluntary alliance of governments and organizations committed to working together with the common goal of achieving sustainable mountain development around the world.” (MP n.d.-a) The MP coordinates the SMD agenda globally through 423 members (as of 1 May 2021), including intergovernmental organizations, states, such as France, Italy, Nepal, Peru, and Switzerland among them, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), companies, and academic institutions. (MP n.d.-b). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO-UN) hosts a secretariat of the MP in its headquarters in Rome, Italy.

As a follow-up to IYM, the UNGA Resolution “International Year of Mountains (IYM), 2002” recommended interested institutions to: 1) Join the MP; 2) support, including financially, the programs resulting from the IYM; and 3) organize on 11 December, as UN International Mountain Day (IMD), events at all levels to highlight the importance of SMD (UN 2003).

The most recent step in highlighting the importance of the SMD for the international community, on 8 December 2021, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming 2022 as International Year of Sustainable Mountain development. “...Despite the progress that has been made in promoting the sustainable development of mountain regions and the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, the prevalence of poverty, food insecurity, social exclusion, environmental degradation and exposure to the risk of disasters is still increasing, particularly in developing countries, and access to safe and affordable drinking water and basic sanitation as well as to sustainable modern energy services continues to be limited.” It also invited “...all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and academia, to observe the International Year, as appropriate, in order to increase awareness of the importance of sustainable mountain development and the conservation and sustainable use of mountain ecosystems.” (UN 2021:2/2).

Partnership Between the State of Utah and the Kyrgyz Republic with Focus on the SMD Advocacy and Building a Parliamentary Model of Governance in Kyrgyzstan

Since 1999, the State of Utah and the Kyrgyz Republic built ties with each other by studying and sharing experiences of economic development as two mountain states, which are affected not only by traditional challenges from nature such as high altitude, harsh climate, environmental problems, but also the emerging ones like climate change and outmigration. As a driving force for their cooperation Utah Valley University (UVU) located in Orem, UT has partnered with the International University of Kyrgyzstan (IUK), located in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Republic. (Abdrisaev et al 2020-b)

UVU is the largest public university in the state of Utah, enrolling over 40,000 primarily undergraduate students. It was founded in 1941 as a technical school to serve mainly local communities in mountainous Utah. UVU today under its dual mission “allows students to continue within the same institution from Career and Technical Education (CTE) certificates and associate degrees to bachelor’s and master’s degrees” (UVU n.d.). Thirty percent of the UVU student body represent non-traditional or adult students. Eighty-one percent of UVU students work, seventeen percent require English remediation and seventeen percent support at least one child (Tuminez 2020). Adult students represent local rural and mountain communities. Adult students are designated as learners who experience social or educational disadvantages; have interests and values different from their traditional peers (Wyatt 2011). They represent 35-40% of the student population in the U.S. and Europe (Hittepole 2015; Hauschildt 2015).

IUK has 5,000 students. It was founded in 1993 (IUK n.d). It was one of the active contributors to the IYM activities, starting from the hosting the international conference “Mountain Research –

Challenges for the 21st Century,” in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Republic in 1996 during which a proposal was made that SMD should be the theme of one of the forthcoming years. IUK also contributed to the final event of the IYM, the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit which was held in the Kyrgyz Republic during 29 October – 1 November 2002. (Price, 2004).

IUK then studied the economic model in Utah which is considered as one of the best in the U.S. to do business, and how UVU contributes to it. UVU is the largest university in Utah, which primarily serves local communities in mountainous Utah by combining both community college, as well as baccalaureate and master’s degrees for students. (Abdrisaev, et al 2020-a).

UVU, in turn, was able to learn about IUK’s experiences with the United Nations (UN), its contribution to Kyrgyzstan’s co-sponsorship of the United Nations’ initiative to celebrate 2002 as the International Year of Mountains (IUM) and its involvement with the MP and FAO-UN. In addition, both academic institutions facilitated wide-range exchanges between the State of Utah and the Kyrgyz Republic.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic Mr. Askar Aitmatov visited State of Utah in 2003 and 2004 and Dr. Danielle Butler was appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic and served as the Honorary Consul of the Kyrgyz Republic in the State of Utah during 2003 - 2011.

As a highlight of the bilateral ties, Utah Governor Olene Walker led a delegation of the State of Utah during a visit to the Kyrgyz Republic in August 2003 for the celebration of the 2,200th Anniversary of Kyrgyz Statehood. In reciprocity, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic Askar Akaev traveled to Salt Lake City to discuss further plans of the partnership with the State of Utah with a focus on SMD in September 2004. On the way back to the Kyrgyz Republic, he visited the United Nations headquarters to discuss the results of the visit to Utah with the Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan. (OCAM 2020)

In 2006, UVU joined the Mountain Partnership (MP) under the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO-UN), the first North American university to do so. (MP n.d.-c). This allowed UVU jointly with IUK to promote especially the SMD agenda in the State of Utah, North America and globally, including in Kyrgyzstan.

As a result, the State of Utah and UVU were visited by envoys of the Kyrgyz Republic accredited to the United States and United Nations such as: 1) The Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United States and Canada, Her Excellency (H.E.) Zamira Sydykova during March 8th-10th, 2007. She participated at the international Conference “Women of the Mountains” co-hosted by UVU together with the Kyrgyz National Center for Development of Mountain Regions (WOMC 2007); 2) The Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United States and Canada, H.E. Zamira Sydykova during September 15-18, 2007. VIP-guest during the visit met with Utah government leaders and UVU administrators and made a presentation to the students and faculty of UVU about the role of Kyrgyzstan in the Central Asian region; 3) The Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Nations, H.E. Talaibek Kydyrov, on March 21-22, 2013 as a

keynote speaker at the conference, titled “Climate Change and Violence: How Heating the Planet Creates Conflict and Death.” In addition, VIP guest participated at the essays contest for Utah high school students on water issues; (UVU 2013-a) 4) The Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United States of America and Canada, H.E. Muktar Djumaliev, on 3 June 2013. Ambassador Djumaliev lectured on the topic of the political reforms in Kyrgyzstan. (UIMF 2013-a; UVU 2013-b).

Utah Legislators contributed to building a Parliamentary model of governance in Kyrgyzstan by hosting: 1) On February 3rd-5th, 2007 the Speaker of the Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) of the Kyrgyz Republic, H.E. Marat Sultanov, who visited State of Utah and UVU by an invitation from President of the Utah State Senate John Valentine. During the visit the two men agreed to pursue a number of events directed to the strengthening of relations between legislators of Kyrgyzstan and Utah; 2) The delegation of the four members of the Kyrgyz Parliament from Ata-Meken party led by Omurbek Tekebaev, who discussed strengthening bilateral ties aimed at deepening reforms in Kyrgyzstan, educational exchanges, and sustainable mountain development; 3) Mr. Kurmanbek Dyikanbayev member of the Kyrgyz Parliament from and Bishkek city’s court adviser, Sultangazy Kasymov during March 4-13, 2013. During the visit guests discussed the Kyrgyz parliamentary model of governance at the UVU Center for Constitutional Studies. (UIMF 2013-b).

In reciprocity, a joint delegation of representatives from the Rocky Mountain region states visited Kyrgyzstan on October 1-5, 2007. The delegation was led by Utah State Senate President, John Valentine and included Montana Senate Majority Leader, Carol Williams. The delegation met with Kyrgyz government officials, and representatives of several NGOs, among others.

After joining the MP, UVU jointly with IUK decided to co-host under the MP umbrella the international Women of the Mountains Conferences (WOMC) as their major initiative to promote SMD in the State of Utah and North America. This project has implemented the UNGA (2003) recommendation to support, including financially, the programs resulting from the IYM. The first WOMC was held in Orem, UT in March 2007. (Rudaz 2007) As a forum to continue efforts of the 2002 “Celebrating Mountain Women” a conference was held in Bhutan. Conference organizers raised the funds to host it elsewhere. WOMCs agenda concentrated on six issues such as: 1) Transmitting Family Values, Heritage & Culture; 2) health of Women & Children; 3) education of Women & Children; 4) economic Issues of Women & Children; 5) human Trafficking and Exploitation; and 6) leadership for Women.

The first WOMC in 2007 provided an academic forum with involvement of officials from the UN, FAO-UN, the World Bank, United States (U.S.) Department of State, envoys, from four mountain states, accredited to the UN and U.S., scholars from almost all states of the Rocky Mountains region of North America including four regional MP members as well as 17 mountain states worldwide. The Kyrgyz side was represented by its Ambassador to the United States and Canada in addition to the IUK President. The conference was highlighted in the UNSG (2007:9) as contributing to “...improvement of mountain women’s status globally;” and in the UNSG (2009:12) as a forum facilitating “...creation of a regional network on gender and SMD”.

Methodology

Student Clubs as a Core for Inclusive Co-Curricular Engaged Learning Model for the SMD Advocacy

Since 2011 SMD advocacy activities at UVU are pursued mainly as student-driven initiatives inline with an Elective Community Engagement classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching which UVU received in 2008 and in 2015. The classification has been the leading framework for institutional assessment and recognition of community engagement in U.S. higher education and student engaged learning (SEL) for the past 14 years (BU n.d.). They also used previously implemented, by faculty, SMD-focused activities as guiding their priorities and providing templates for their future advocacy of SMD efforts. Continued partnership with faculty and students from the Kyrgyz Republic was also an essential part of their activities.

Through SEL also known as experiential, service, or problem-based learning students can learn to exchange knowledge and resources with communities elsewhere. It provides for them in particular: Intellectual development; basic skills acquisition; moral and ethical development; social and civic responsibility; career preparation; multicultural understanding; and personal growth (Berger et al 2014).

SEL is based on four principles:

- a) Students are provided with problems to study;
- b) They study problems as a group;
- c) They have teachers as facilitators for self-learning; and
- d) They carry the responsibility for self-learning (Burch 2000).

The SEL model was implemented through student clubs as an extracurricular activity existing at UVU campus. One of the reasons for that was the fact that SMD activities often last longer than one semester and therefore are difficult to implement through academic programs. (Abdrisaev and others 2020-a).

Student clubs allow for the implementation of four SEL principles. They are important for student learning outside of the classroom, providing them opportunities to work interdependently, in groups, through mentoring experiences led by faculty (Foubert and Urbanski 2006; Logan 2008). They also encourage students to raise funds due to the club requirements to self-fund activities. (Abdrisaev and others 2020-a).

The developed-at-UVU SEL education model ensured inclusivity of student engagement in SMD advocacy by recruiting students across the campus because of a matching with the dual mission of the academic institution and professional interests of majority of them, and by incentivizing

adult students to join their traditional peers in SMD activities. It was comprised from a student clubs coalition, as its core extracurricular part with support provided by academic programs. (Abdrisaev and others 2020-a).

Structure of the Inclusive Co-Curricular SEL Model

The inclusive co-curricular SEL model is comprised from the:

- 1) Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU as extracurricular core; and
- 2) Academic program providing support to UIMF (Abdrisaev and others 2020-a).

As per advice of Wyatt (2011) to encourage involvement of non-traditional students in activities, this model allows them to join at any time, any of the clubs of the coalition and contribute their own experiences while pursuing SMD activities (Timpson et al 2013).

Extracurricular Part of the SEL Model

While UVU (2019:6) defines a club as “A student group with a common interest or goal,” which matches with the first SEL principle about identifying a problem for students to learn, the main goal of the coalition is (UIMF n.d:1), “[R]aising awareness of mountain [including in the State of Utah] sustainability topics; ...bring the public into contact with international guests and foreign dignitaries; andbringing communities together to recognize their shared mountainous heritage.”

The second principle of SEL was implemented based on UVU (2019:6) requirement that clubs have “...at least six members as enrolled UVU students, ... [and] a president who is a full-time UVU student.” The president of the Club/ UIMF facilitates, in the presence of the advisor, weekly group meetings to discuss implementation of activities based on a task list, which provides a scaffolding for individual student learning (Timpson et al 2013:34). Adult students as mature and experienced individuals are able to contribute to projects based on their experiences/ interests in UIMF activities for SMD advocacy and facilitate a group learning. (Abdrisaev and others 2020-a).

The implementation of the third principle of SEL was based on the UVU (2019:10) requirement that, “A Club Mentor is someone who will support, offer advice, and give help when asked or needed....” As a result, adult students could facilitate group learning and teach their peers skills to accomplish required assignments. Faculty members usually assists clubs Presidents to tie activities with the guiding lines of the MP. All group correspondences to *implement SMD-related activities only* are copied to the advisor as feedback about group learning experiences.

President(s) of UIMF/clubs or project leader (s) coordinate students’ efforts to fulfill the fourth SEL principle by finishing the task list assignments. For a full implementation of the activity, the UIMF/club president, or the non-traditional student as an initiative leader with the advisors’

counsel, ensures the submissions of: a) Essays by students about finished assignments to be posted at designed by the students' UIMF web-site; b) Their own reports about how the activity benefits the MP with gaining a proper recognition from them. (Abdrisaev and others 2020-a).

The UIMF/club president, or an adult student as the initiative leader, ensures the submissions of a report about the accomplished activity to the UVU club's office to receive funds, as per requirement of UVU (2019:6), that "Registered student clubs are at a minimum funded by member dues and additional funding from the inter-club executive council."

Curricular Part of the SEL Model

Academic programs contribute to the developed model by allowing for faculty during classes to build ties with students-especially adult learners and then raise student interest in SMD advocacy. It is achieved by inviting UIMF members to speak before their peers and by providing incentives for students' involvement with clubs (Timpson et al 2013). As a result, students can gain extra-credit points for becoming a member of the coalition; for writing and posting online reflective essays not only as contributors but also as observers of the SMD activities hosted by other UIMF members. (Abdrisaev and others 2020-a)

A three-credit course "Globalization and SMD," is the only academic course related to the SMD agenda. It provides incentives, especially for adult students' involvement in the UIMF activities the students as an enhancement of their education (Wyatt 2011). It is taught during spring semesters only. While the course curricula provide students an opportunity to learn theories and practices of SMD, it also teaches them practical skills to contribute to UIMF activities, and become club leaders, among other things. Each student also writes a research paper about different aspects of sustainable development in Utah or in mountain nations globally for the undergraduate student-run and reviewed journal "Youth and the Mountains" (YATM n.d.).

Results

UIMF Members Hosting the Chair of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) and Permanent Representative of Peru to OAS, His Excellency Harold Forsyth

The hosting by UIMF members of the Chair of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) and Permanent Representative of Peru to OAS, His Excellency Harold Forsyth on 3 March 2022 at UVU provides an example of the developed SEL model ability to engage students in SMD advocacy.

The visit of the dignitary to UVU's campus was organized by the UVU Office for Global Engagement. Ambassador Harold Forsyth lectured on the topic of "New Threats to Democracy in the Americas" before students largely from UVU National Security Studies program on Thursday, March 3 at 10:00am in the Library Auditorium at UVU.

A meeting of the UIMF members took place after the main lecture of Ambassador Harold Forsyth during 11:30 am -12:15pm. It was organized based on the procedure when students first make presentations advocating for SMD and their personal contributions to it and then the guest reflects on issues addressed by them. As an established tradition with the UVU Office for Global Engagement, UIMF members use this approach in hosting envoys of foreign states accredited at the United States or the United Nations and other VIP-guests including from the Kyrgyz Republic, beginning in 2013 (Abdrisaev and others 2020-a).

In their short presentations, about 3-4 minutes long, students usually address three central points: 1) The importance for the states represented by the visiting UVU dignitary to ensure that mountain communities will be in the focus of their governmental programs on sustainable development; 2) One of the ways to ensure sustainable development for mountain communities could be the implementation of SEL models in local universities and; 3) Inclusive involvement of students in those educational models and especially non-traditional students which could help local communities learn how to sustain themselves through a group educational efforts and then to help others; and they need to learn how to tie those points to their own initiatives or projects.

Dallas Karren, current President of the UIMF and a non-traditional student moderated the event in which UIMF members made presentations before Ambassador Harold Forsyth. Alitha Thompson, UIMF Vice-President, a non-traditional student and mother of 5 children spoke about UIMF accomplishments in SMD advocacy since its founding in 2011 and presented the VIP guest a folder with copies of the official United Nations documents recognizing students from UVU for their contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with focus on mountain communities; also, 2013, 2016, and 2019 reports of the UN Secretary-General on sustainable mountain development and written statements co-sponsored by the Russian Academy of Natural Science and the Utah China Friendship Improvement Sharing Hands Development and Commerce, nongovernmental organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. In addition, it included 2018 and 2019 congressional records with statements of US Congressman John Curtis and US Congressman Ben McAdams.

Six other UIMF students spoke about the essence of the SEL method at UVU with the special role of non-traditional students and how SEL allowed them to study and compare status and challenges faced by mountain communities in the State of Utah, as well as India, Pakistan, and Slovenia. They also informed the guest foreign dignitary about challenges with sustainable development for mountain communities in Peru due to climate change, and how the state of Utah addresses similar challenges by developing special programs assisting local communities and families both at the state and federal levels. As one of the students shared his research results about the important role which women-leaders play in the lives of mountain communities in Yemen and in the State of Wyoming in the United States, a second student presented the impact on the lives of mountain communities in Guatemala resulting from the power of drug cartels.

While Ambassador Harold Forsyth had about 10-15 minutes left to respond to students, he was visibly surprised by the meeting and the host of issues related to mountain communities raised by students. He admitted that in his capacity as a top envoy of the mountainous nation of Peru at

the OAS he never paid attention to issues and challenges which face mountain people. As one of the outcomes, he promised to raise these issues with other envoys at the OAS who represent mountain states and to create a special caucus.

On behalf of the UIMF members Dallas Karren presented to Ambassador Harold Forsyth a special gift. The meeting was recorded by one of the UIMF members. The UIMF president submitted a report to the UVU Clubs office to win \$100 for future SMD advocacy activities.

The task list prepared by Dallas Karren with the advice from the faculty mentor included assignments divided in four groups: secretariat; logistics, speakers, and media (UIMF 2022-a). UIMF members selected assignments based on their preferences and skills three weeks before the VIP guest visit, and under the leadership of Dallas Karren they followed through on a weekly basis. During class on Sustainable Mountain Development 15-20 minutes have been dedicated to the preparations for the visit under the leadership of Alitha Thompson. In addition to presenters, five other UIMF members also contributed to preparations and hosting of the event.

Posts about UIMF members hosting Ambassador Harold Forsyth contain a leading essay written by Dallas Karren, UIMF President; copies of official United Nations documents presented to a VIP-guest; statements of all students; a link to the video of the meeting; and a task list and student reflective essays. (UIMF 2022-b)

Student Evaluation and Recognition in the Developed SEL Model.

As per Abdrisaev and others (2020), since 2011, a website (Utah International Mountain Forum | Utah Valley University (uvu.edu) informs readers about UIMF activities with a focus on SMD advocacy in the State of Utah and elsewhere. By posting such information as copies of agendas, task lists, posters, brochures, links to media, student reflective essays, etc. the website provides; a) feedback and a measure of student learning; b) templates for future activities; c) references for student recognition; and d) institutional memory of the activities. The website was designed and is maintained by students.

More than 370 posts about SMD activities on the UIMF website during November 2011 – February 2022 or 3.7 activities per month on average, demonstrate both a variety of initiatives, experiences, as well as fundraising initiatives contributed to SMD advocacy by students, including non-traditional learners, and a sustained interest from students for involvement in extracurricular activities with UIMF. Among more than 800 reflective essays posted on the website during that time about one third of them offer lessons learned by students to host and contribute in protocol, logistics, analysis, and to observe activities of their peers and raise their own and other communities' awareness in SMD. (Abdrisaev and others 2020-a)

Posts reflect student's advocacy activities for SMD contributed through such UN experiential learning initiatives as (*Datta 2014*):

1). The UN Academic Impact (UNAI), an initiative of the UN Department of Global Communications, which comprises more than 1300 academic institutions globally with focus to support the principles of the UN (UN n.d.) through scholarships and research. Since 2017, when UVU joined UNAI, the SEL model presents one of the main initiatives which university contributes to the implementation of the UNAI mission.

2). Model United Nations (MUN). The MUN involves students in UN activities by simulating UN bodies such as the Security Council, the General Assembly, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), etc. (Feldman 2016). Although MUN and the developed model are based on SEL, the latter initiative, in comparison with the former one, engages students in implementing rather than simulating SMD elsewhere, including at the forums of the UN ECOSOC on sustainable development. Moreover, UIMF members advocated for SMD during the MUN conferences.

3). Internships at the UN. Through the SEL model students gained experiences and recognition from the MP for SMD advocacy, which allowed them both to apply and compete for internships at different institutions of the UN. After becoming interns, they continue to advocate for SMD at the UN and gain more recognition for their efforts.

4). The UN International Mountain Day (IMD) observation. This educational activity was proposed by Abdrisaev and others (2020) to be added among the three mentioned above UN experiential learning initiatives. IMD as a UN activity and proper recognition for its observation is held mainly at university campuses. The IMD is affordable and beneficial especially for adult learners, many of whom are not able to visit the UN due to time or financial constraints. It could serve also as a template to develop similar models for other International Day observations established by the UN.

More than 80 posts at the website present activities in the areas of political, educational and cultural exchanges between UIMF members with different institutions and individuals from the Kyrgyz Republic.

Posts also reflect student fundraising efforts through participation at club rushes, hosting tables at UVU campus, fundraising campaigns, and applying for grants. Since 2007, both UVU and UIMF members were able to raise about \$250,000 in total for SMD advocacy. (Abdrisaev and others 2020-a).

Posts on the UIMF website serve as references for news at MP media outlets about its accomplished SMD activities. Since 2011, UVU and UIMF have been recognized 82 times (or 10 times per year) in the MP and FAO-UN news websites and 57 times (or more than seven times yearly) in the monthly MP newsletter “Peak-to peak.” (Abdrisaev and others 2020-a)

Since 2015, UIMF was recognized in MPs annual reports on SMD, and as a highlight was featured twice in the United Nations Secretary Generals reports on SMD, the only student club coalition worldwide to receive such recognition (FAO-UN 2016a; FAO-UN 2019; UNSG 2016; UNSG

2019). Since 2016, the model and UIMF were highlighted by the UN ECOSOC (2016, 2017, 2018).

As a rule, recommendation letters provided for UIMF members' professional advancement, include relevant links to UIMF, MP website and UN documents.

Originality

The developed inclusive co-curricular SEL model encourages both traditional and non-traditional students to advocate for SMD in the State of Utah, North America and worldwide. They learn new professional skills, gain networking opportunities and recognition from the United Nations for contributing their own experiences, initiatives, and financial resources to the SMD implementation. As a result, the model implements Target 4.7 of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (UN 2015) which states: "By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality...." (UN 2015:17/35). The model does this by interaction with mountain targets 6.6; 15.1 and 15.4. UVU is the only academic institution among the 450 MP members globally which uses SEL for SMD advocacy.

Research Limitations/Implications

The developed SEL model has engaged in an inclusive way traditional and non-traditional students in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with an emphasis on mountain communities. Non-traditional students as representatives of local communities today present more than thirty percent of the student body in the United States, Europe, and the Western world. Considering that traditional and non-traditional students have different values and interests, it will be important to conduct further study about mitigating the impact of their differences and disagreements on the implementation of SMD activities through a group effort. In addition, further research needs to be done to study the impact of a wider role of academic programs in developing the SEL model in comparison with the current approach when they serve as a supplement to the activities implemented through a student clubs coalition as its extracurricular core.

Summary and Conclusion

This paper studied experiences at Utah Valley University in advocating the SMD agenda in the State of Utah, North America and worldwide. It is achieved through an inclusive co-curricular SEL model: the model extracurricular core is the UIMF, a coalition of student clubs at UVU; the curricular part of the model provides support for the extracurricular component by recruiting more UIMF members. As an example of successful advocacy for SMD are the written analyses of student's experiences in gaining professional skills by hosting the Chair of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) and Permanent Representative of Peru to OAS, His Excellency Harold Forsyth.

As research demonstrates, the effectiveness of such a model are ensured by the following:

- The use of previously faculty implemented SMD-focused activities as guiding student priorities and providing templates for their future advocacy of SMD efforts.
- Continued partnership with faculty and students from the Kyrgyz Republic as an essential part of their learning activities and building professional ties.
- Inclusiveness of the model by creating incentives for non-traditional students to join their traditional peers in efforts to gain new skills, connections, and recognition from the MP by contributing own experiences, projects, and funds for the SMD advocacy.
- The use of student clubs is effective extracurricular educational tools to implement SMD activities that go beyond a regular semester. In addition, the requirement that student clubs should self-fund activities stimulate both traditional and non-traditional students to raise funds for their future SMD initiatives and advocacy campaign.
- The club's requirement for faculty to mentor, not to micromanage students enables the president of the UIMF/clubs to take on maximum responsibilities for implementing SMD activities. Non-traditional students play an important role as project leaders due to their diverse experiences, knowledge, maturity and responsibility.
- A database of comprehensive information about implemented SMD activities can help evaluate students' learning and contribution, as well as ensure institutional memory.

The SEL model empowers both traditional and non-traditional students with professional skills and knowledge through group learning and implementation of the SMD agenda. It is especially important for non-traditional student as representatives of local and mountain communities. As a result, they are becoming full-fledged contributors to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and then contribute practically to the implementation of three mountain targets in their own communities.

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