

Statement

**Parallel event “Student Engaged Learning to empower mountain women and girls”
63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women
Megan Davis, member, Utah International Mountain Forum,
a coalition of student clubs at Utah Valley University**

My name is Megan Davis and I am from a small town known as Nephi, UT. I would first like to recognize two of our sponsors that helped us get here today, Mr. Brent Davis and Central Valley Medical Center. Thank you for the support.

Mountain women face many challenges throughout the world and Utah Valley University and the Utah International Mountain Forum in particular have worked together to advocate for and empower these communities, both in Utah and around the world since 2007. In 2007, UVU hosted the first Women of the Mountains Conference (WOMC) in Orem Utah. It was an effort to continue the traditions of celebrating mountain women established in Bhutan in 2002 during the International Year of the Mountains under the United Nations. WOMCs also discussed the role that mountain women can have on building sustainable societies. The WOMCs also provided UVU an opportunity to represent Utah, the best model state of sustainable mountain development, as one of the first states in the United States to allow women’s suffrage and also highlight Ms. Reva Beck Bosone, the first woman from Utah to get elected to the U.S. Congress who also served as an official observer at the UN Conference in San Francisco, California in 1945.

The conference was co-founded by powerful mountain women such as Elena Bonner, a prominent human-rights activist and widow of Nobel Laureate Andrey Sakharov; Dr. Jane Pratt, executive director of the Mountain Institute in Washington, D.C.; the Honorable Judy Martz, first female governor of the State of Montana; the Honorable Olene Walker, first female governor of the State of Utah who also worked to preserve Utah’s wilderness, improve the education system, and create affordable housing; and Dr. Danielle Butler, the Honorary Consul of the Kyrgyz Republic in the State of Utah. Dr. Danielle Butler passed away recently on March 7th and my peers and I express our deep appreciation for her tireless support both to the WOMCs and student engaged learning at UVU until the last moments of her life.

Although UVU co-hosted WOMCs in 2011 and 2013, the fourth WOMC in 2015 was highlighted in the UN Secretary General’s report on Sustainable Mountain Development as being hosted for the first time by UIMF members on their own: students advocated for mountain women issues as a group with faculty serving them as mentors.

Today those traditions to promote mountain women causes through student engagement are continued in Utah by Mrs. Jackie Biskupski, the current mayor of Salt Lake City, who played a pivotal role in bringing the upcoming United Nations Civil Society (UNSC) Conference in August to Salt Lake City as the first UN CS Conference hosted on U.S. soil outside of New York City, and in which UVU will make their own contribution through its first female president Mrs. Astrid Tuminez.

These great initiatives have inspired many women and girls like myself in Utah to improve lives of their communities. Through the Utah International Mountain Forum at Utah Valley University, I personally have gained professional experience by utilizing the engaged learning model to engage with other students to advocate for mountain women by bringing to our campus many UN Ambassadors to speak on SMD; to host International Mountain Day Celebrations at Utah Valley University, and now to bring with my colleagues a youth voice to CSW63 to advocate for SMD. In my own communities in Utah, I have also participated in many service projects such as creating humanitarian kits for local homeless shelters, food packages with Tabitha's Way, a nonprofit designed to help less fortunate families in Utah county, and hosted a Sub for Santa fundraiser to give money to local families who need help during the holiday seasons.

As a young mountain woman who has been given many opportunities to make my own impact on the world, I believe that all women in the world, mountain civilians or not, can make a difference too by starting at their own personal and community levels. Women are strong and powerful and have proven through the course of history that we too can make a powerful impact on all levels. I now will leave you with one of my favorite poems by Rupi Kaur, "I stand on the sacrifices of a million women before me thinking, *what can I do to make this mountain taller so the women after me can see farther.*" Let us mountain women advocates stand together and build up a community so strong that it changes the world for the better.