

## My Participation at the UVU Diplomatic Conference



On November 4, 2019, UVU welcomed International Trade Specialists to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Diplomatic Conference. I had the opportunity to attend and volunteer for the conference due the student engaged learning model efforts of the UVU Office of Global Engagement to involve students in their activities with foreign dignitaries. Due to my interest to the Middle East, I provided a protocol for the Honorary Consul of Morocco to the State of Utah, Mr. Keith W. Martin, PhD, who advised me on a research project I am conducting, which examines the sustainable development of mountain communities in Morocco and the greater Maghreb, and the efforts business, government, and other actors have played to implement sustainable development and increase quality of life for these underserved communities. Mr. Martin was generous in his time and wisdom and connected me with prominent Moroccan academics who specialize in these subjects.

I also assisted with logistics in a room of breakout session for diplomats from Canada, The Czech Republic, Australia, and Finland. Each country representative presented on the various aspects of trade that have an impact on the US, and more specifically on Utah.

Mr. Stéphane Lessard, Consul General of Canada in Denver emphasized the importance of trade for their economic success. As a small national population of 36 million, they do not have enough of an internal market to sustain their economic growth without substantial international trade. The United States and Canada have an extensive integrated economy in energy, defense, infrastructure, and even sports. Canada is also the top purchaser of US exports and the second largest foreign investor. Overall more than \$721 billion in two-way trade for goods and services goes between the two countries. In Utah specifically, more than \$3.7 billion in two-way trade of goods, with an estimated impact of more than 35,000 jobs in Utah alone. Mr. Lessard also emphasized the strong ties between the Utah and Canada, for example the welcoming of other, the natural sensibilities, and the natural partner the two have become in issues that matter to Utahns.

Ms. Odette Hampton, Deputy Consul General of Australia spoke about the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of Australians. Many innovations come from Australia, for example WIFI, google maps, plastic money, and potentially even blockchain. The country is also at the forefront of cybersecurity innovation, something which Australia hopes to collaborate with the US and open avenues that do not have such restrictive bureaucratic measures in order to help combat cyber problems in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As Ms. Hampton mentioned, Australia has innovated so much that it did not feel economic recession during the Global Financial Crisis. Additionally, the importance of Australia on the world economy is evident in its being the 14<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world, despite have a much smaller population.

Ambassador of The Czech Republic to the United States, Mr. E. Hynek Kmonicek spoke on the unique situation his country has been placed. The Czech Republic is relatively young in the world market economy as a former USSR satellite state. The VIP-guest stressed that the Czech Republic is a strong believer in no trade wars and no tariffs, highlighting the success unrestricted trade with the EU has had on the Czech economy: one such example being that 1.5 million cars are made for the European market, and that 80% of the government's budget is created through trade with the EU. This success is shown in the low unemployment rate of 1.9% (with only 10.5 million citizens). The Czech economy has increased its focus on innovation in nanotechnology and other technological pursuits to stay visible in the world economy.



*Ms. Zsuzsa James, Consul General of Finland speaks while Ambassador of Czech Republic to the United States, Mr. E. Hynek Kmonicek listen to her presentation on Finnish entrepreneurial spirit during the conference*

Ms. Zsuzsa James, Consul General of Finland spoke last. An expert in the gaming industry, she emphasized the role the Finnish government and community play in fostering innovation and collaboration. This transparency, collaboration, and reliability allows the small nation of 5 million to produce successful games and other modern technology and services. Ms. James highlighted the Finnish concept “Sisu,” which is an idea that shows the “second wind of mental toughness after the individual has reached the limits of their...capacities.”

Overall these various dignitaries showed us the unique and important role individual nations and their economic policies have on the collaboration in the world and US economy. UVU’s Office of Global Engagement hosting of the conference underscores the critical role the institution plays in creating a workforce for the modern, globalized world.

*Jon Downs, UVU student*