

STATEMENT
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Parallel Event
“Inclusive Student Engaged Learning Model to Empower Mountain Women Globally”
March 6th, 2023.

Good afternoon.

My name is Rachel Welker. I grew up in a small mountain community in northern Utah in the United States. Women across the globe and throughout history have played pivotal roles in growing their communities, promoting education, and expanding leadership initiatives. However, in some mountain communities, women’s civic engagement is sparse due to access to education that teaches them how to connect with and navigate their government structure. The Student Engaged Learning Model at Utah Valley University (UVU), or SEL, has opened the door to innovative approaches to working with government systems.

Recently, I co-hosted a visit for the Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United States and Canada with my peers. During meetings with the Ambassador, I learned more about the Kyrgyz Republic’s political theory. At the reception, we presented the Ambassador with a copy of the book, *“Kutadgu Bilig, the Wisdom of Royal Glory”* by Yusuf Khass Hajib, which discusses some of the earliest government structures and political theories in Central Asia. This copy of the famous manuscript published by Chicago University Press in 1982 allowed UVU to re-print it as part of academic exchanges and studies. Awareness of government structures, like those in the Kyrgyz Republic, has given me a stronger knowledge base on how communities are formed.

Other events and technological tools have helped me grow my knowledge of leadership structures. One of these events I volunteered at on UVU campus, *CampaignHer*, used breakout sessions to encourage personal confidence and teach skillsets for running local government campaigns. At the event, I was inspired by a panel of local women who offered ideas for serving their mountain community on a local level. Access to a technological tool, the Quill Project, has also helped me engage with some of the world’s foundational legal texts.

Today, at forums like this, we can invite women everywhere to join in conversations about their leadership structures and what tools have helped them stay civically engaged.

Thank you.