

## **CSW 67 Concludes on a High Note**

On March 6th - 8th, Utah Valley University (UVU) Rotaractors traveled to the United Nations 67th Commission on the Status of Women to present in a parallel event. Rotaract is a student club that works with Rotary International to provide students service opportunities in their community. As a student club Rotaract provides opportunities for students like me to be involved in different activities through a Student Engaged Learning (SEL) model. SEL places focus on providing students hands-on experience in their field of study, and makes my education feel more practical since I can see how I may apply it after graduating. UVU Rotaract is a member of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU which advocates for sustainable mountain development in the State of Utah and globally.

Our first order of business today was a brief meeting with the president of the general assembly, His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi. I am truly thankful to Dr. Butler for making this meeting happen. Being able to meet such an influential figure and stand on the floor of the General Assembly Hall was such a unique experience I doubt I can ever forget it.



*CSW 67 Delegation speaking to President Kőrösi on the floor of the General Assembly*

After our meeting with the president, I learned that meeting people of influence and playing chess share some characteristics. When an opportunity presents itself, you need to seize it. Waiting for them to come to you will never get you anywhere. I had a similar experience leading up to CSW with the University President at UVU. President Tuminez is a woman originally from the Philippines. For my presentation at the parallel event, I was speaking about the Philippines, so I wanted to get her thoughts about education and its accessibility to women in her home country. I did find the opportunity to speak to president Tuminez, but it came at an inopportune time when she had much higher priorities around securing state funds for UVU, so the conversation amounted to nothing.

Speaking to President Kőrösi went considerably better. One of the areas of focus for CSW 67 that he had mentioned during the opening ceremony and our meeting with him was getting more women into STEM fields. This is an excellent goal and I hope that the work done at CSW 67 helps achieve this. However, I was interested in whether there was any concern about the presence of women in trade fields like electricians, plumbers, welders, etc...



*McKay Brooks speaking to President Kőrösi after his meeting with the delegation on the GA floor*

These fields are vital to all economies. I wish I had been more knowledgeable about the global situation around them when I met the president, but at least in the US my understanding is that we are seeing something of an oversaturation in STEM fields while large amounts of people working in trades are leaving the workforce. These are also fields where women are dramatically underrepresented, and I wanted to see if there were any efforts to help women break into them.

Unfortunately, President Kőrösi was unaware of this. Our short conversation led me to the conclusion that his priority is on helping women enter into upper and middle management positions in the tech sector. I can see how this would be beneficial to making STEM careers more equitable to women. When I was planning on pursuing a career in STEM, one of the things that was infuriating about the industry was the casually sexist attitudes that were present among so many of the people working in it. Women in management positions could be vital to fostering a more welcoming workplace culture for those entering at the bottom level. However, it did leave me with a moderately bittersweet impression of the focus of the Commission on the Status of Women.

President Kőrösi is only one person, and I cannot be aware of everything that was being discussed. However, I disagree with where the focus of some of the most influential people at this event seemed to be placed. Last year, I interned at my state legislature, and during this time I came to see a lot more value in lower level solutions. The more white collar jobs that were the focus here are important, but I hope it isn't coming at the expense of the blue collar jobs that are equally essential.

I can't say exactly how President Kőrösi took what I shared with him. I don't expect it to result in direct action on his end, but I hope it at least planted seeds. At the very least, I hope it leads to some more familiarity if someone raises the same issue with him in the future, and I'll get more than I could have ever asked for if it goes far enough to get him to look further into the issue. I came to politics because I want to make changes happen in any way I can, and this is a perfect example of the small ways I may be able to do just that.



*Shaking hands with President Kőrösi after our meeting*

After our meeting with President Kórosi it was time for the side event hosted by the Kyrgyz Republic. I was working on the technical side with Scott Thompson, Hendrix Bailey, and Handen Torsak. I was in the booth helping with the cameras and mic controls. One of the people employed by the UN to run technicals for these events graciously offered to serve as a community mentor to us while controlling the cameras and audio balancing. We were actually handling all the camera work, but it was thanks to his guidance that the cameras and audio balancing went off without a hitch, and perfectly showcased how SEL works in practice.

We met Dylan because of our efforts to ensure the side event would not experience the same technical difficulties we did during the side event. Part of the reason we experienced the problem we did was because we had no opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the room we were presenting in. For this reason we sent members of our delegation to examine the room for the side event. During this time, some of our members met Dylan and he taught them how to use the technology in the room. In addition, we decided to run everything through one computer. This solved the hardware issue that we experienced in the parallel event, and we had no issues with losing the connection between the computer and the projectors it was casting to.



*Hendrix Bailey receiving instruction on how to operate cameras for the Kyrgyz Republic Side Event*

After the side event, I connected with Allison Mengel from the American Association of University Women (AAUW). Her interest was expanding support for SEL at other universities in New York. Seeing the work that we've been doing as UIMF was a tangible example they could take back to the administration to demonstrate how beneficial this can be to student populations when properly implemented. I referred her to our website with all these write ups that they can use to build their case, and offered to give further insight if needed. I hope that she is successful in her efforts because I've seen the benefit SEL has been to my education and want more universities to give these opportunities to students.



*McKay Brooks and Allison Mengel after discussing how to support SEL at other universities*

Our last major activity for the day was meeting the deputy permanent representative from the United States to the United Nations, and other members of the permanent mission. One of Dr. Abdrisaev's former students had landed a job at the permanent mission, and set up a meeting for us after meeting him outside the UN headquarters.



*CSW 67 delegation meeting the Deputy Permanent Representative from the US to the UN*

There were two standout moments for me after meeting the Deputy PR. While he recognized the importance of engaging youth on issues, our delegation was able to show him how important it is to be inclusive to all across the age spectrum. When he found out that our delegation included people not traditionally considered to be youth, and how much we had managed to accomplish, he seemed genuinely impressed. I couldn't help but smile after we got his reaction. I have been floored by the work that our members have put in, and seeing other people recognize it was incredibly satisfying.



The second thing I found interesting was what the deputy PR thought about the current state of the UN. He was somewhat disheartened at the way that many states are willing to simply break its rules, and try manipulating the UN to their own advantage. While the international relations theorist in me who subscribes to the ideals of liberalism shared his disappointment, the one who follows realism was completely unsurprised. While international institutions foster cooperation between states, each one has no reason to cooperate unless it is furthering their own goals in some way. Especially in the case of more influential member states, it feels only reasonable that they would throw their weight around to make sure they are getting as much out of cooperation as possible.

The reason I think this stuck with me so much is because it was a real world example of something I had realized during the Intro to International Relations class I took last semester. No one theory behind IR is comprehensive. In order to best understand the way different states interact with each other, some understanding and application of all of them provides the best groundwork for analysis. It was a really cool experience to see the things I had learned in a class being applicable to real life.

I've already said that CSW 67 feels like it will be the crown jewel of my education at UVU. Not only was I able to experience SEL myself through this event, I was able to show others how powerful a tool it is. I am glad that UVU's resources gave me such an incredible opportunity, and I hope other universities out there will see its use and support it themselves.

***McKay Brooks, Rotaract Vice President***