

Statement

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67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Parallel Event

Empowering Mountain Women through Inclusive Student-engaged Learning Educational Initiative

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Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Rusden Scott, a student of global politics at Utah Valley University (UVU), an environmental activist, and an artist whose work is in part inspired by the mountain landscapes of Utah.

It is my great honor to speak today on the importance of women-led contributions through student-engaged learning (SEL) in developing local and community strategies for the challenges presented to mountain regions by climate change. This model empowers students to inclusively work as a group to address real-world problems with faculty serving as a mentor.

Mountain environments are some of the most fragile and vulnerable in the world, yet they are constantly overlooked despite already experiencing profound effects due to climate change.

In my home state of Utah, decades of unsustainable water practices have pushed our beloved Great Salt Lake to the verge of disappearance -- a catastrophic loss of natural, economic, and cultural capital that would affect both local communities and the entire North American continent.

Fortunately, through SEL, community leaders, especially women, have developed advocacy campaigns to save the Great Salt Lake. Recently, we hosted the Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the US and Canada at UVU and discussed issues affecting mountain communities in Utah and Kyrgyzstan. Last year, 18 of my peers and I, from UIMF and Osh Technological University in Osh, Kyrgyzstan advocated for mountain women at a parallel event during the CSW66. Through SEL, we addressed the effects of climate change on mountain communities--including my advocacy for the Great Salt Lake. As a non-traditional student, I have learned from Camilla Stark, a visual artist and my wife, on how to be centered around sustainability and stewardship. Through public art displays, she joins many other women for mountain advocacy.

Investing in women through the SEL model is not only richly rewarding in terms of sustainable development and global environmental benefits, but also improves the well-being and sustainable practices of the communities they live in.

Thank you.