

Dr. Jay DeSart
Department Chair of UVU's History & Political Science
67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women
Side event “*Advocating for mountain women and girls’ education through student-engaged learning.*”
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It is my special pleasure to represent the Department of History and Political Science at Utah Valley University (UVU) during this side event. I thank the Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic, Ambassador Aida Kasymalieva and RosaLaura Romeo from the Mountain Partnership for providing an opportunity for our students to implement an inclusive co-curricular Student Engaged Learning (SEL) model in action here at the United Nations. I am glad to also greet Dr. Baldomero Lago, Chief International Officer of the UVU Office for Global Engagement and his predecessor, Dr. Rusty Butler, with whom our department jointly collaborates on this educational initiative since it began. SEL, also known as problem-based learning, encourages students to resolve certain practical issues as a team during or outside class while the teacher mentors them.

Our team is led by the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU and UVU Rotaract, which is under the umbrella of the UIMF as a student club of Rotary International, an NGO accredited under the UN. Since 2011, UIMF has been the extracurricular core of the model because of the challenges in planning these UN activities, which could last longer than a regular semester. A distinct feature of our model is that it encourages both traditional and non-traditional students to work together. Non-traditional students are older than 25 and balance their education with family and job responsibilities. Students jointly handled everything for this visit starting from raising funds, to logistics, to protocol, to developing an agenda, and learning how to engage the permanent missions of states accredited at the UN like our two hosts. Students also have invited us to contribute to their presentations and activities.

During the fall semester every year since 2010, UIMF members rehearse their UN activities by observing the International Mountain Day. This is the sixth session of the Commission in which the UVU student delegates host either a side or a parallel event and are highlighted in written statements by NGOs accredited under UN. We propose for future our joint events at the UN to gain a similar backing to the model from the Rotary International and involvement of Rotaractors from the Group of Friends of Mountainous Countries. As a result, we could jointly make education a central part of the of the 2023–2027 "Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions", approved by the UNGA in the resolution A/RES/77/172 at the initiative of the Kyrgyz Republic.

I would like to acknowledge the leading role in implementing this model by my colleague, Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, who has tirelessly served as UIMF mentor since 2011, and now implements the visit within his class Political Science 3410 on Globalization and Sustainable Development. At the same time, this initiative enjoys support and contributions from our colleagues including Dr. Hong Pang, who is here with us, Dr. Geoffrey Cockerham and Dr. Lynn England. Each of them encouraged and mentored their students to speak about their programs during this event. I have also to thank my predecessors as department and program chairs who provided unwavering support to the model over the years, such as Dr. Alexander Stecker, Dr. Keith Snedegar, Dr. Kat Brown and Dr. David Connelly. I also extend special thanks to the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Steven Clark and his predecessor, Dr. David Yells.