

Opening Remarks
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Utah Valley University
Side Event
“Empowering Mountain Women Economically Through an Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning.”
March 20th, 2024

Welcome to the parallel event titled “Empowering Mountain Women Economically Through an Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning Model.” Our joint Utah Valley University (UVU) - Kyrgyz Republic team advocated for the mountain women by contributing to the side event on March 14, 2024, within the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.”

This event is part of the “United Nations Sustainable Development Goals” class and 14 students enrolled in it will report about their research focusing on different aspects of the mountain women advocacy and service projects. These activities are implemented as preparations for this parallel event, based on an inclusive Student-Engaged Learning (SEL) model. SEL encourages all students to work as a group to solve real-world problems, such as advocating for Sustainable Mountain Development, with faculty serving as mentors. More than 50 percent of the final grade for this class students earn through SEL.

Since 2011, the UVU SEL model has used student clubs as a simple educational tool available at any academic institution worldwide. They are also important for students learning outside of the classroom, providing opportunities to work interdependently, in groups, or through mentoring experiences led by faculty.

A unique aspect of SEL at UVU is the involvement of traditional and non-traditional students. Non-traditional students are 25 years old or older and usually avoid extracurricular activities. However, this model provides non-traditional students incentives such as flexible activity scheduling, involvement of families, and gaining recognition for their contributions. It is provided through the structure and functioning of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), a coalition of student clubs at UVU. Due to that, non-traditional students contribute to the model vital skills and experiences that their traditional peers do not have. Still, they tutor traditional students and help them expand their abilities and perspectives. This makes the model student-centric and activities student-driven.

Now, the speakers for this event come from many rural and mountain regions worldwide, who represent both non-traditional and traditional students who have participated in the SEL model and will present a synopsis of their research and experiences.