

Jacob Alan Burnthorn
Utah Valley University student
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Parallel event
“Empowering Mountain Women Economically Through an Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning.”
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Good morning, everyone, it is my privilege to speak today as a Political Science student of Utah Valley University in support of communities, families, and women, especially in mountain areas around the world. As part of my academic studies, I will be addressing the importance of non-traditional students in empowering women and nations.

Mountain nations face many challenges, not least among them difficulty in developing robust economic industries and political institutions. The reasons for this challenge are many, including harsh natural conditions, but I will be focusing today on one particular issue: the emigration of highly educated individuals away from their home nations. Education is a core aspect of promoting sustainable development goals and holds the promise of significantly increasing standards of living in nations that invest in it. However, much of this effort bears little fruit when those individuals who have been invested decide it is in their interest to apply that education elsewhere and leave.

However, there is a large subset of people within education who have greater ties to their communities. These are people with greater barriers to emigrating, who are more deeply involved with those around them. I am talking about non-traditional students. Bringing focus to those students who are older, with families and jobs in their communities, and additional experience in the area can offer a unique benefit within the classroom. But they also hold the potential of being less susceptible to brain drain, with greater motivations to remain in their communities and apply those skills to help those around them. This is something that I have experienced first-hand. When I first moved to Utah, I had every intention of moving away once I had my degree. But as I’ve lived here and grown older, I’ve developed deep connections here, even joining the Utah National Guard. This is something that hadn’t happened earlier in my life. And it is these connections that convince me of the need to give back to this wonderful community.

UVU is a strong proponent of utilizing the student-engaged learning model as a method to support and assist non-traditional students. By fostering participation in extracurricular academics, it provides more opportunities for non-traditional students to both apply and share their unique experiences. It also provides the opportunity for these experiences to happen outside the normal academic schedule, bringing both flexibility and breadth of experience to those with outside obligations that may otherwise prevent such growth.

I hope that I have brought a new perspective to this issue, and urge continued support for the many programs that UVU has fostered and developed to address the issues facing mountain nations all over the world.