

STATEMENT
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69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women
Utah Valley University
“Inclusive Student Engaged Learning Model to Empower Mountain Women Globally”
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Good morning everyone, my name is Savannah Niemann and I am honored to speak here today. I am a student at Utah Valley University majoring in Environmental Studies. I would like to speak to you all today about the importance of having women's voices heard in mountainous regions, especially when it comes to environmental management. Women's voices are often ignored and they are involved in fewer management or decision-making roles than men are. In Utah, from 2018-2022 women made up only 38% of management or business occupations.

Including women's voices in environmental management, especially in mountainous regions, is crucial for sustainable and inclusive decision-making. Women in these areas are knowledgeable about local ecosystems, water management, and the community, making their perspectives essential for addressing climate change and resource conservation. The role of women in leadership can promote community-based solutions that prioritize both environmental and social well-being. Gender-inclusive policies help bridge inequalities and lead to more effective management of the environment. In my research on other mountainous regions, I found Sweden to be a strong example of sustainable development and women's rights. Regarding sustainability, Sweden has consistently ranked among the top countries in environmental performance, with policies emphasizing renewable energy, waste management, and carbon neutrality. They have also implemented policies that promote gender equality for women in education, the workplace, and politics.

As a student in the Earth Science department, sustainable development and equality are concepts heavily emphasized in our work. We must find better ways to improve women's workforce factors so they might have the opportunity to grow in the field. Approaches such as, more community engagement and events that showcase the wonderful diversity of careers in this field would be beneficial. More women can be reached in decision-making roles when we remove unconscious biases and instead focus on empowering women. Implementing more work-life balance programs and recruiting more qualified female candidates is also essential for inclusivity.

My involvement in UVU's service-learning activities has helped me become more connected to my community. As a member of the Utah International Mountain Forum, I have had the opportunity to participate in organizing coats for children, organizing books at our local library, and an environmental justice event. Outside of the UIMF, I have done service activities for the UVU sustainability community and the Foreign Affairs club.

The student-engaged learning model has acted as a crucial tool to solve real-world problems as a group, with a faculty leader, especially for non-traditional students that make up 80% of UVU enrollment. I know for myself that it has provided many wonderful opportunities that I am proud of, including speaking here today. I am asking for all marginalized communities to be treated with the same amount of respect and opportunities as my male colleagues in this field. Thank you.