

# **João Vitor PetterUVU Students Host World Health Organization Officer for World Polio Day**

On October 23, 2025, political science students at Utah Valley University had the opportunity to host an event in observation of World Polio Day in junction with Utah Valley University Rotaractors Partnership with Orem-Lindon Rotary Club. At attendance, via video conference, keynote speaker Mr. Oliver Rosenbauer, Communications Officer, Global Polio Eradications Initiative, World Health Organization, gave a highly informative presentation on the subject and answered questions from participants.



*Figure 1- Participants asking Mr. Rosenbauer questions during the Q&A session*

Regarding the presentation, Mr. Rosenbauer exposed the importance of eradicating infectious diseases such as polio. He explained the importance of the issue and highlighted the need for eradication, he mentioned that although only two countries in the world are endemic with polio today (Pakistan and Afghanistan), the risk of outbreaks elsewhere continues to be a threat to public health even in developed countries, he said “no country is immune of reinfection.” One of the most powerful moments of the presentation happened when Mr. Rosenbauer explained that the biggest hurdle to a polio-free world is politics. Mr. Rosenbauer when recalling an experience from months ago where there was a polio outbreak in the Gaza Strip, in which the WHO was able to go into the war-torn area and vaccinated children, he said: “if you can do it in Gaza, you can do it everywhere.” It is such a powerful call on civilians and political leaders to put the health and well-being of children as a first priority. In summary, the presentation was an enlightening experience for both students and community members to become more aware of the issue and how they can help further support the cause of polio eradication.

Furthermore, the event served as the midterm examination for students enrolled in the *Comparative Politics of Central Asia* course, under the mentorship of Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev.

Students developed and led all procedure aspects of the event from technical support to advertising. Students were able to deeply engage with hands on experiences on event hosting, development, and planning. This approach supports Utah Valley University's effort for the Student Engaged Learning Model, with focus on giving future professionals opportunities to further develop hard and soft skills in various areas of expertise while in the university. For instance, students were able to develop groups with leaders assigned to each sector, all under the mentorship and supervision of Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, who was able to advise efficiently providing years of experience in the world of diplomacy and high-level meetings.



*Figure 2 - Attendees at the event pose for group photo after Rosenbauer's presentation*

As for my participation, I had the chance of assisting in both pre and post event protocol procedures under the direction of Natalia Figueroa, Foreign Affairs Club President at UVU. I collaborated with her in the event by providing logistical assistance.

**João Vitor Petter, Political Science student at Utah Valley University**