

**Advocating for Justice for Mountain Women at the  
70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women;**

United Nations Virtual Parallel Event - Utah Valley University

At 10:30am on March 10, 2026, student members of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), alongside students enrolled in the POLS 3640 United Nations Sustainable Development course, presented statements to the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women through a virtual parallel event titled ‘Raising Justice Awareness of Mountain Women Through Student-Engaged Learning.’ Student statements were developed through Student Engaged Learning (SEL) at Utah Valley University (UVU), and advocated for the explicit inclusion of mountain women and girls in the final outcome document of the CSW70—which has never expressly recognized the abovementioned demographic.

Student leaders Natalia Figueroa, Aemish Brock, and Louyoko Nianza among others, worked collaboratively, with support from faculty mentor Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, to manage and execute the event, helping bring together a diverse array of student voices to take action and turn theory into practice.



***Abigail (Abbie) Fisher Presenting Their Statement at the CSW70 via Livestream***

As a member of the UIMF and student presenter at the CSW70 parallel event, I was afforded a unique opportunity to advocate for mountain women and girls, a population with which I also personally identify. Having been raised near the base of a mountain canyon in Spanish Fork, Utah, my lived-experiences with gentrification, green governance gaps, and renewable energy expansion directly informed my interest in the research I conducted and presented to the CSW70.

The origins of my initial work emerged from research on green governance and the expansion of renewable and clean energy in China, with particular consideration for rural mountain communities in the country's western regions. In examining the rapid growth of primarily photovoltaic energy farms in areas inhabited and managed by ethnic and rural minority populations I identified governance gaps that produced a wide range of tertiary outcomes affecting environmental conditions, public health, political representation, and economic security within mountain communities.

In refining this research for this event, I shifted my focus toward the lived experiences of mountain women through a comparative analysis of communities in Utah and China. This approach revealed that distinct governance systems can generate notably similar environmental and sustainable development outcomes for mountain women, even across highly different cultural and political contexts. However, my research also exposed a critical gap: the data infrastructure necessary to understand the complex interactions among green governance, mountain-specific challenges, and the lived realities of mountain women and girls remains largely absent. Addressing these issues requires targeted research, yet such work is difficult to conduct without localized, region-specific frameworks capable of capturing the social, environmental, and economic dynamics unique to resident mountain communities. Such

frameworks remain fragmented and incohesive in China, and highly limited or non-existent in Utah.

These gaps, as discussed in my statement, can be actionably addressed by engagements such as the student presentations at the CSW70, outcomes of a Student Engaged Learning (SEL) model. SEL can advance sustainable development outcomes for mountain women by fostering authentic community engagement that moves beyond theory to directly engage with mountain women as lived-experience leaders, allows students the agency to focus research and action on this often underrepresented group, and expands access to research-based resources, networks of all interested stakeholders policymakers and peers, and connections to academic and advocacy platforms.

Having contributed to the hosting of this event I experienced first-hand the benefit of student-engaged learning and its role in allowing students to connect concept with action. Despite the barriers that arose, such as technical difficulties, I alongside my peers were able to employ our skills in leadership, problem-solving, communication, and analysis to adapt to the needs at hand. The most valuable skill building experiences of my involvement related to drafting and iterating my statement, and solving in the moment challenges in collaboration with other students.



*Student Presenters of the CSW70 Parallel Event - Raising Justice Awareness of Mountain Women Through Student-Engaged Learning*

As student leaders, our involvement in initiatives such as this remind us of our agency in driving change through research, civic engagement, and service; and underline the unique opportunities that each of us possess to learn from and act on our lived-experiences to create equitable, sustainable, inclusive, and just governance for all.

**By Abigail (Abbie) Fisher, Vice President of Academics and student member of the Utah International Mountain Forum at Utah Valley University; Written March 16th 2026**