

**STATEMENT**  
**Matthew Erickson**  
**Utah Valley University**  
**70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Parallel Event**  
**Raising Justice Awareness of Mountain Women Through Student-Engaged Learning**  
**March 10, 2026**

Good Afternoon, my name is Matthew Erickson, I am a Political Science student at Utah Valley University (UVU). Throughout my education at UVU I have had the opportunity to learn more about the issues that mountain regions and women are facing today. These issues are prevalent in the state of Utah, and in mountain regions across the world, and I am honored to speak today about these issues and how they can be addressed through sustainable development policy.

Mountain regions are often underrepresented yet heavily exploited for their natural resources, while the profits rarely return to local communities. This lack of investment leads to shortages in essential services such as education, healthcare, transportation, and environmental protection, disproportionately affecting women. My research on Nepal shows that progress in sustainable development is closely linked to the expansion of women's rights. However, economic and political challenges often limit the implementation of these policies. Strengthening local leadership and multilateral cooperation can improve sustainable development efforts and better support women in mountain regions, especially as climate change, including glacial melt and changing snowfall, increases the vulnerability and isolation of these communities.

At UVU we have participated in the Student Engaged Learning (SEL) model which provides opportunities for traditional students, non-traditional students, and community members to participate in student-led opportunities to serve the community, educate on the issues mountain regions and women face globally, and gain valuable experience in those fields of study.

Through the SEL model students have participated in service-learning activities that provided opportunities for students and community members to make space for underrepresented voices like those of mountain women regarding our sustainable development goals. Collaborative classroom assignments, research on mountain states around the globe, community outreach, and policy forward analysis has allowed myself and others to directly engage with real world issues facing women in mountain regions.

The SEL model afforded me the opportunities to integrate research, service, and policy engagement and has equipped me with the skills to address complex issues such as sustainable mountain development. This also amplifies the voices of underrepresented groups such as women within these mountain regions. The SEL model aligns with achieving the UN's broad goals of equality and sustainable development and can be implemented in academic institutions from mountain regions worldwide. Thank you.