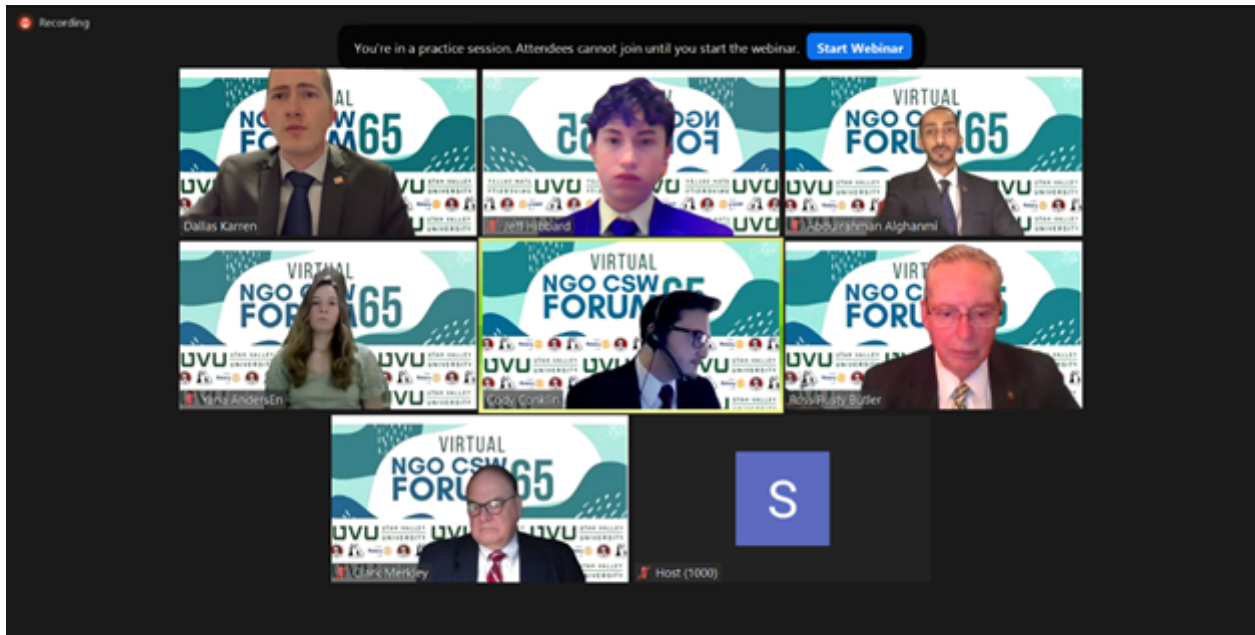


My Experiences at CSW65 with Mountain Women Empowerment Through the Student Engaged Learning Model



Members of the Utah Delegation Gathering Before the Start of the Meeting

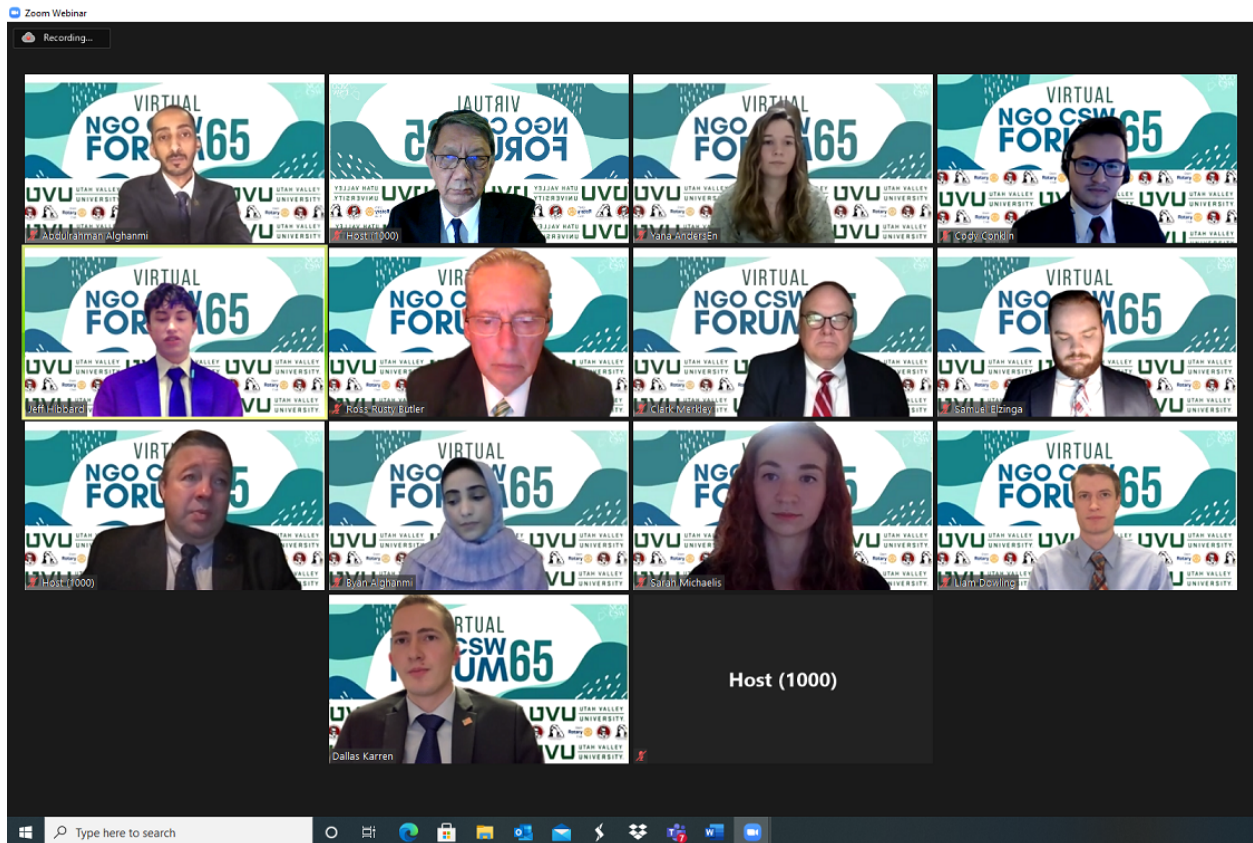
This year I had the privilege of participating in a parallel event at the United Nations' sixty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65). This parallel event took place on March 22, 2021, at 6 am MST. This parallel event was accomplished through the inclusive Student Engaged Learning (SEL) model in collaboration with the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences (RANS), the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF), and Orem Rotary. The UIMF is a coalition of student clubs at UVU which advocates for mountain women, girls, and families. Per the SEL model, preparation, logistics, agenda, and protocol for this event were all accomplished by students, both traditional and non-traditional. The SEL approach encourages students to gain professional skills while addressing real-world issues on local and international levels with faculty serving as mentors. By participating in this event, I felt like I now better

understand professional protocol and preparation, especially in regards to politics and high-level United Nations events.



Jeff Hibbard Presenting Research Regarding Nepali Women

In preparation for this event, I was able to work with fellow students, engage in local service-fundraising, and conduct personal research regarding mountain women and communities, which are some of the poorest and most neglected demographics on the national and international levels. Working with fellow students was a great experience and taught me valuable skills in working with others to accomplish a common goal. Orem Rotary, which conducts service projects on local levels, had a charity fundraiser in February. I was able to contribute by selling some oranges.



Jeff Hibbard Presenting with Entire Delegation in the Audience

Finally, I am conducting research regarding deforestation in Nepal with a special emphasis on how Nepali women are affected and the vital role they play in sustainable mountain development (SEL). Nepal is one of the world's most mountainous countries and has lost much of its forest cover over the last several decades. Nepali women's burdens have become heavier in many areas as a result. Because phenomena like deforestation are closely related to climate change I have also been able to research how Nepali women and communities are being affected in this regard. Climate change is influencing mountain areas at a more severe level than other places in the world. Everyday tasks like collecting water and firewood in Nepal which are often the responsibility of women have become more time-consuming. As changing climate conditions have made activities like agriculture more challenging to engage in, many men have migrated

out of the country to look for work. This has left Nepali women with more responsibility and work at home. All these things discourage women from other pursuits like education.

Regardless of the challenges Nepali and mountain women across the globe face, they are irreplaceable to their communities. Studies show that Nepali women know how to ensure the land stays productive, maintain clean communities, bring in tourists, and engage in entrepreneurial ventures. They are also essential in mitigating the ongoing effects of climate change. I was able to present this information and advocate for Nepali women on the highest gender forum of the United Nations. This experience has also given me skills to continue doing so in the future.

The responsibilities of conducting opening and closing remarks, presenting each speaker, heading the organization of the event, and delegating other responsibilities were all carried out by Dallas Karren, Vice President of UIMF. The event had a wide range of students who contributed including President of UIMF Samuel Elzinga, President of UVU's Rotaract Club Yana Anderson, international students from Saudi Arabia: Abdulrahman Alghanmi and Byan Alghanmi: recent graduate Sarah Michaelis; Cody Conklin; and Liam Dowling. Other representatives were also able to participate. These included the Chief International Officer at UVU Dr. Lago, the Main United Nations representative for the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences Dr. Butler, and Orem Rotary Representative Mr. Merkely. The event ran smoothly despite being held virtually.

Aside from learning much from conducting research and participating in this event, I was also able to learn a lot from my fellow delegates. Many shared their personal experiences living in mountain communities in Utah and elsewhere. I found this insightful. By sharing global mountain experiences, approaches to sustainable development can be better formulated. It was

also great to hear about other people's research and service regarding mountain communities. A wide array of mountain issues, as well as the importance of mountain areas, were brought to the attention of a wider audience at this parallel event.

Other work that UVU and UIMF have done regarding the promotion of sustainable mountain development and how students implemented them was also presented. All speakers, myself included, highlighted the UIMF's annual celebration of International Mountain Day, hosting of the Fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference in 2015, and its addition to the UN Secretary General's report on SMD in 2016.

Overall, participating in this event and the planning that went into was a valuable experience. I hope to use the skills I learned to help me in future academic and professional pursuits. I also hope to be able to continue to advocate for mountain women and communities globally.

Jeff Hibbard, Foreign Affairs Club Vice President