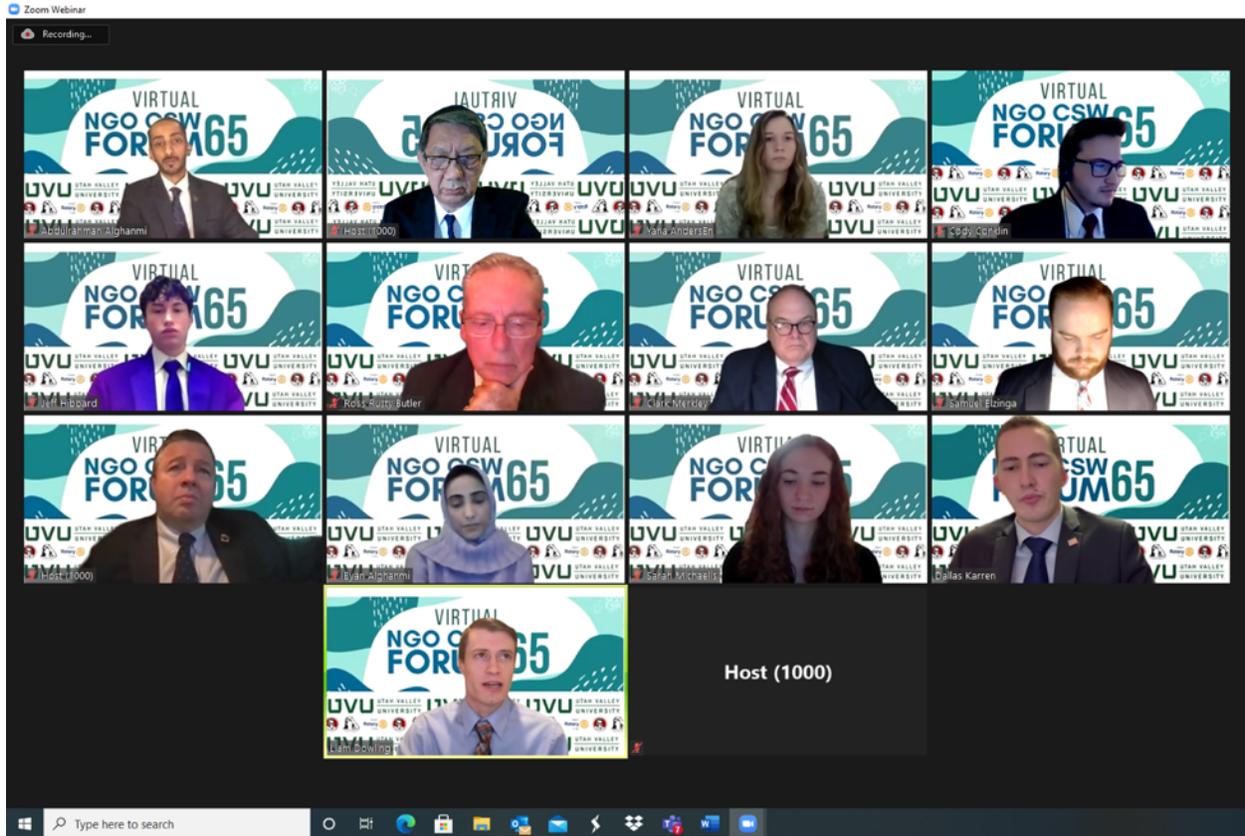


My experience with Speaking Through the Student Engaged Learning at CSW65



Presenters at the parallel event on March 22, 2021

Speaking at the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women parallel event “*Mountain Women Empowerment Through the Inclusive Student-Engaged Learning Model*” on March 22, 2021, has been the highlight of my senior semester at Utah Valley University. I am truly honored to add my voice in support of mountain women alongside my peers. Preparing my statement was initially overwhelming, however, through regular meetings with Dr. Abdrisaev and with feedback from my peers, I was able to craft a message I was proud of, and that highlighted my contribution to the Sustainable Mountain Development (SMD) agenda—my research focused on Georgia’s mountain communities who are gripped by pervasive poverty and unemployment and face modern threats such as climate change.



Liam Dowling speaking at the event

Leading up to our parallel event, I participated in two UN workshops and observed past work of the UIMF hosting International Mountain Day for the 11th time at UVU and in commemorating World Polio Day. Participating in the UN workshops, where hundreds of youth from around the world gathered virtually to learn from one another and work to improve women's status worldwide, was truly inspiring for me. I carried that inspiration with me as I saw the work my peers were doing and had already done to promote sustainable mountain development as a tool for improving the lives of women, girls, and families in some of the most marginalized communities in the world. I was most excited by the UIMF's 2016 work hosting a delegation from the Republic of Georgia. During the visit, Georgian Ambassador to the UN, Kaha Innaze, unveiled the Georgian Art exhibition at Utah's Springville Museum of Art, which houses the most extensive 20th century Russian and Soviet collection of art in the western

United States. I was struck by how our organization was able to capitalize on the event by highlighting the similarities between Georgia and Utah and all mountain communities. Utah serves as one of the best examples globally for SMD. There are always opportunities for mountain communities to reach out to one another, build a bridge for knowledge sharing, and express mutual respect and admiration for culture.

As I watched my peers present their statements, I felt a strong sense of pride in working with such a driven group of students. I am blown away by my peers' hard work and dedication as they strove tirelessly to organize and coordinate our event. They are truly inspiring individuals and give me hope for the future because I know they will continue fighting for justice and equality wherever they end up. I look forward to finishing my last semester at UVU as a member of the UIMF. Mountain women are among the poorest and most neglected globally, and our student group is working to bring local and international recognition to the challenges facing them. The professional skills and knowledge that we have all gained through the student-engaged learning model will serve us well in our chosen occupations. Through the Student Engaged Learning model, I am contributing to this goal of raising awareness for sustainable mountain development for mountain communities, especially mountain women and girls, through my research focused on the root causes of poverty in mountainous Georgia and finding solutions through regional, scenario-based land-use options and increased economic and educational opportunities for rural mountain communities. I hope to continue building bridges between mountain communities and continue the work already done, strengthening the relationship between the State of Utah and the Republic of Georgia.

Liam Dowling, UIMF Member