UNH Students Take Home Three Awards at Model UN Conference

Team engages with international diplomats at New York City event

Tuesday, May 14, 2024

Twenty UNH students had the opportunity to rub elbows with international ambassadors and gain hands-on practice in political diplomacy during a trip to New York City for the National Model UN Conference this spring.

The UNH contingent made the trek to New York from March 24 to 28, participating with almost 5,000 students from around the world. UNH represented the Russian Federation in the conference’s political simulation, addressing contemporary issues such as conflict and food security, the role of science and technology in international security and the promotion of sustainable tourism.

Two UNH students – Dylan Collins and Patrick Marcoux – took home “Outstanding Delegate” awards for their contributions during the conference, and the entire team – which features representatives from several UNH colleges – was selected as a “Distinguished Delegation.”

The conference exposes students to public speaking, technical writing, diplomacy, conflict resolution and engagement with students from close to 100 other countries and cultures.
“This was more than just a competition and more than just awareness about the UN or awareness about Russia. The students learn so many things – they learn professional writing, they have to work on consensus building, professionalism, how to push your position in a way that is convincing and also accommodating of other perspectives,” says Alynna Lyon, professor of political science and faculty advisor to the UNH Model UN team. “I love that they get to experience this active, highly engaged learning, in terms of substance but also because of the skill sets they learn that are available to them for the rest of their lives.”

UNH students have been attending the Model UN conference for about 20 years. Each year the group receives an assigned country and uses the time leading up to the conference to prepare for the simulation, which focuses on the same committees and topics that the actual UN is working on.

This year UNH received Russia as an assigned country, which was a particularly interesting and challenging task, Lyon says. Students do extensive research, poring over government documents and examining the geostrategic “lay of the land,” before writing a position paper ahead of the conference.

“These are real-world situations; they aren’t made up. It’s essential for there to be authentic representation,” Lyon says. “It was a real privilege and honor to represent a country with so much gravitas and that plays the pivotal role Russia plays right now. It was a real acknowledgement of the credibility the UNH team has earned.”

The assignment provided students with a rare and memorable opportunity to interact with international diplomats. They got to spend part of a day with a delegation from the Russian embassy – a day that provided an up-close look at the sensitive and timely nature of the job, as the appointment was bumped back at the last minute due to the Russian delegation needing time to work on an issue related to the conflict in Gaza.

Once the meeting commenced, though, the UNH students spent extensive time with the delegation and got to ask questions related to their work at the Model UN conference, querying the Russian group on things like its position on cyberwarfare, for instance.

Following the meeting, the students spent time working in their assigned committees, writing resolutions and trying to get them passed. “They work really hard on diplomatic solutions to these real global conflicts,” Lyon says.

At the closing ceremony, the UNH team watched from the seats the Russian federation sits in, listening to speeches from a variety of global diplomats.

The New York visit capped a busy year for the Model UN group that included a trip for a smaller group of eight students to Germany last November as part of the organization’s annual international conference. There the UNH team represented South Africa and had the opportunity to visit a concentration camp and eat breakfast on a daily basis with a Holocaust survivor who was staying in the same hotel as the team members.

For Lyon, the conferences provide a “transformative” educational opportunity for the students, who learn critical skills, develop important professional traits and get to explore places – and cultures – they may not have yet been exposed to.

The lasting impact, she says, is significant.

“One of the kind of immeasurable things, I think, is that there is a lot of hope and optimism and agency that comes from sitting down with 300 people from around the world and working on critical issues facing society,” Lyon says. “Students really feel empowered but in a productive and institutional format.”

WRITTEN BY:
Keith Testa (/unhtoday/contributor/keith-testa) | UNH Marketing | keith.testa@unh.edu (mailto:keith.testa@unh.edu)
UNH Students Take Home Three Awards at Model UN Conference | UNH Today

[Links to UNH Today and UNH Marketing]

Email us: unhtoday.editor@unh.edu (mailto:unhtoday.editor@unh.edu), unh.today@unh.edu

MANAGE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION  CONTACT US

LinkedIn (https://www.linkedin.com/edu/university-of-new-hampshire)
Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/uofnh)
Twitter (http://twitter.com/UofNH)
YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/unhvideo)
Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/uofnh/)
LinkedIn University of New Hampshire (https://www.linkedin.com/edu/university-of-new-hampshire-18850)

UNH Today  •  UNH Main Directory: 603-862-1234
Copyright © 2024  •  TTY Users: 7-1-1 or 800-735-2964 (Relay NH)
USNH Privacy Policies (http://www.usnh.edu/legal/privacy.shtml)  •  USNH Terms of Use (http://www.usnh.edu/legal/tou.shtml)  •  ADA Acknowledgement (http://www.unh.edu/about/ada.html)