

Acadia's Model UN makes an impact at its first National Conference

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Front: Unidentified delegate. Back: Sebastian Farkas (Head of Recruitment), Christopher Vanderburgh (President), Kyle Thompson-Clement (Vice-President), Colin Mitchell (Treasurer), Mallory Kroll and Jacinda Solomon.

Six members of Acadia University's Model United Nations Association (AMUNA) travelled to New York City to take part in the National Model United Nations (NMUN) Conference from March 25-29. NMUN attracts participants from more than 130 UN Member States to its conferences to address current global issues. The New York Conference is one of the most prestigious as it culminates at UN Headquarters and draws thousands of students each year. It is Acadia's first appearance at the conference.

The trip spanned five days and included 12 different sessions where students simulate real world situations that the UN would encounter. Students, referred to as delegates, are organized into committees and

assigned countries to represent prior to their arrival. Before the conference, they research and prepare positions for their assigned countries on a variety of topics, outlined in a position paper.

At the conference, the delegates assemble in their committees to debate and discuss their positions by lobbying and negotiating to pass resolutions. Delegates are judged on their performances by factors such as the number of speeches they give, the quality of their formal and informal sessions, their ability to lead, compromise and negotiate, and their position papers. At the end of the conference, awards are given to the best-performing delegates.

Third year Politics (Honours) student Colin Mitchell received an Outstanding Position Paper award for Belgium within the Peacebuilding Commission. He was the only member of the Acadia team to win an award. "One of the most humbling experiences of the trip was during the Closing Ceremonies when they asked all of the winners of outstanding position papers to stand up in the UN General Assembly Hall," he said. "I was one of about 40 people to stand in a room of 2,500. Being applauded in that hall is a very humbling experience. It really puts things into perspective and makes you want to do better."

While in New York, the group had the chance to visit the Canadian Permanent Mission to the United Nations, thanks to Acadia Alumnus Michael Bonser ('99) who serves there as Minister Counsellor and Political Coordinator. Here, the students were able to speak with staff members and learn about Canada's role in the UN. "We had the chance to ask them questions and gain a better understanding of not just Canada's role in the UN, but also our delegate countries'."

AMUNA, spent the year preparing for the conference by holding mini simulations on campus. Additionally, they spent extensive amounts of time researching their countries current positions on the various committees and their respective histories, examining everything from rhetoric to votes and upcoming events.

Four of the six members attending the conference had also been involved in POLS 3173, a third year Model United Nations Simulation course taught by Dr. Can Mutlu. The course enhances students' knowledge of international diplomacy, and how the United Nations system functions, including its procedures, the art of diplomacy, and resolution and position paper drafting. Mitchell says the experiences in this class were critical in preparing AMUNA for the conference. "Four of the six people who went to the conference, including myself, took the Model UN course. Dr. Mutlu definitely helped us refine our debating and research skills."

But Mitchell also notes that campus experiences outside of the classroom were crucial to their success. "I think what makes our delegates so good is that we are fearless. Acadia fosters an environment where you're taught to be fearless and go outside of your comfort zone. To do better."

AMUNA wishes to express tremendous thanks to the members of the Acadia community who made the trip possible, including the Politics Department and Politics Alumni, the Acadia Students' Union, the Alumni Fund, and individual alumni donors: John Rogers ('79), Hon. James MacPherson ('71) and Gladys MacPherson ('71), Karen Hutt ('89), Janet Hoyt ('81), Grant Stonehouse ('77) and Pamela Stonehouse ('81), Hon. Jamie Campbell ('79), and Dr. Monroe Eagles ('79).

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