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Southland College Prep Juniors Put AP Comparative Politics Course to Work at University of Michigan's 29th Annual Model UN Conference

Village of Richton Park

RICHTON PARK, IL. February 4, 2016 - "A memorable experience." "Helped sharpen debate and public speaking skills." "Learned about conflict resolution and myself."

These were some of the reviews a group of 23 social studies Southland College Prep juniors gave to the 29th Model United Nations Conference where they joined more than 500 high school students from the Midwest for a recent weekend at the University of Michigan.

The three-day Conference, managed entirely by University of Michigan student volunteers, is designed to help high school students experience, negotiate and learn about real and current international issues. During the conference, the Southland delegates worked with other high school students from all across the Midwest to frame, discuss and adopt resolutions that addressed real world issues on behalf of the countries they represented.

"We represented Bolivia, the United Kingdom, Kuwait and South Sudan," said Sarah Berkey, a Southland social studies teacher who together with Sherry Grutzius, of the English faculty, served as moderators for Southland College Prep's participation in the UN Conference.

"We also had students who sat on the Doha Development Committee, Security Council, the Disarmament and International Security Commission and the Social Cultural and Humanitarian Committee.

"Southland Students also discussed issues such as the conflict in Syria, the plight of refugees, illicit small arms trade and how to protect minority rights in Myanmar.

"Two of the most exciting committees were the historical groups, one student sat on the Board of the British East India Company in the 18th century and two others served on the Joint Committee that reenacted events leading to wars between Scotland, Ireland and Wales in the 16th century. The historical committees were a blast-- filled with intrigue, spies and assassinations," Berkey explained.

"If Southland College Prep is to prepare its students to be global learners and eventually global competitors, we first must provide some real experiences. With the unprecedented rapid pace of globalization and the complexities of international politics, this annual trip to the Model UN Conference is a superb opportunity to put classroom learning and interactions to the test on a much larger stage," said Dr. Blondean Davis, Southland's CEO.



Andre McClerklin was a delegate from South Sudan to the Special Political and Decolonization committee tasked to solve issues of civil war and political unrest in the world. “This experience helped me grow as a speaker, because I had to debate most of the time.

Ivan Nesbitt, who served as a delegate from Bolivia to the Disarmament and International Security Committee charged with attempting to remove illicit small arms trade and creating a nuclear weapon- free zone in the Middle East, stated that the University of Michigan UN conference was “a great overall experience.”

“The most challenging issue we faced was to create the nuclear weapon- free zone, especially when Israel and North Korea would not comply,” he said.

Maya Alao represented Bolivia on the Human Rights Council whose charge was the protection and promotion of all human rights around the world.

She noted that the best part of the UN conference experience was having the opportunity to debate real world issues. “The high point was having un-moderated caucuses, because I was able to get out of my shell and work together with new people.”

Chyna Sanders represented the United Kingdom on the Human Rights Council.

“Something new I experienced was the language of politics. I realize that it's all about wording and problems can get very complicated, but you have to fully understand the issue itself and every approach. Also, there is great specificity in conferences to avoid as many loopholes as possible,” she said.

John Anderson played the role of “Governor” of The Bombay Presidency who was challenged to respond to crises while maintaining the historical stance of the British East India Company in a simulation exercise.

“I had an opportunity to work on such issues as trade, alliances and secession from Great Britain which placed us in a position of being involved in a war.

“The experience of working with a group of dedicated people to respond to crises, helped me to become an even more effective communicator,” he said.

Brianna Carpenter, represented the United Kingdom on the Doha committee, whose charge is to correct and prevent restrictions and distortions in world agriculture.



“We grappled with agricultural subsidies and intellectual property rights,” she said. “The best part of the committee experience was the development of a ‘working paper.’ It was interesting to see how countries with different policies could come together to create one resolution that fits all,” she said.

Erica Satchell, represented Bolivia on the Doha Development group. She found the committee experience of sitting on un-moderated caucuses that developed ‘working papers’ to be a high point.

arah Locke, played the role of Archibald Campbell, Marquis of Argyll on the Scottish Joint Committee. Her group’s challenge was “to change the history of the War of the Three Kingdoms (Scotland, Ireland, England) and to use what elements we could to win the war.”

Noelle Robinson represented South Sudan on the Disarmament and International Security Committee whose charge was to create new policies and resolutions that impacted countries on national security, arms trading, natural resources and nuclear weapons.

“I found that the best part of the committee experience was when debates became intense and delegates were fighting for different policies that benefited their country.”

This experience taught me how to improve my communication and problem solving skills, she said.

Jeremiah Price represented the United Kingdom on the Disarmament and International Security Committee.

“We worked on the issues of illicit small arms trade and a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East. The illicit small arms trade was the most interesting, for many good ideas were proposed and we had to decide which were the best and most beneficial to all nations,” he said.

“Twenty years ago, I left the law to become a teacher,” Grutzius explained.

“Teaching is my passion, my purpose and my living legacy. Model UN is an example of how we as educators can change lives and world views on a small scale – for me, Southland’s participation in Model UN is one of the best parts of being a teacher.

“Model UN It is not just about the sessions, international issues and analytical thinking but it is about expanding the students’ views beyond their small school and circle of family and friends.

“In addition to expanding and extending their global view from the classrooms of Global Studies, Global Literature and AP Comparative Politics, the conference expanded students’



social experiences and interactions with others outside their small, safe world. They met others from Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin who were initially competitors, but quickly became friends. They were exposed to the kinds of “strangers” that they will meet in college and very quickly learned that their new-found friends are a lot like them. This cultural and intellectual exchange also demonstrated that our students have all the tools to compete, voice their views and have success along with all the other students in the Midwest and far beyond,” she said.

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