

# ODU and UKK Join for Third at National Model United Nations

*26 March 2018:* Four ODU undergraduates were part of a joint delegation with the University of Kitakyushu that won a third place award at the National Model United Nations in New York, 18-22 March 2018.

The ODU group was led by Head Delegate Helen Sharpe. Also from ODU was Hana Barkett, Victor Melendez and James Thorpe. With the contingent from Kitakyushu, they represented the Principality of Monaco.

The largest of all intercollegiate simulation conferences, NMUN brought together over 2500 delegates from 96 universities, representing 114 country delegations. Because of hotel constraints and high demand, the following week the organizers did it again, hosting a second conference in New York. The conference stands out not just for its size, but also as the most international of conferences, with delegations from over thirty countries

Old Dominion was part of a joint delegation with students from our sister city counterpart in Japan, the University of Kitakyushu (UKK). This was their second model UN simulation ever.

The UKK program was created by Associate Professor Saito Sonoko. She studied model UN simulations during a sabbatical year at ODU, and a subsequent visit to Norfolk with other Kitakyushu faculty to observe the annual ODU Model United Nations Conference.

The Honorable Delegation (third place) Award did not take the ODU students completely by surprise. They devoted much of the previous month to preparing; writing position papers, studying their country assignment, the issues, rules of procedure and getting to know their Kitakyushu counterparts.

The highlight of the week was the opening ceremony, held in the actual UN General Assembly, the world's best known conference hall, designed by Oscar Niemeyer and made

famous by the speeches of hundreds of heads of state, presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers.

Hana Barkett, an ODU senior majoring in international studies, said that what impressed her most was 'the internationalism of the conference. It wasn't just Americans, but much more like the real UN.'

Not only was ODU working with its sister university in Japan, more than half the delegations were represented by foreign universities. Canada, France, Germany and Italy were most visible. Other delegations were represented by universities from included Brazil, China, Colombia, Kenya, Russia and many other countries.



ODU's delegation to NMUN 2018: from the left James Thorpe, Helen Sharpe, Hana Barkett, Victor Melendez and Faculty Director Aaron Karp.

Victor Melendez, a sophomore political science major stressed how much he had to struggle to accomplish anything. ‘They were very competitive. Everyone wanted their texts. You had to use all your negotiating skill to stay on a resolution.’

ODU’s Head Delegate, Helen Sharpe, a sophomore majoring in political science and international studies, said it was not much different from an actual UN committee. ‘The atmosphere was so tense, it was cut-throat. The delegates knew who to work with. Normally that wouldn’t be Monaco. But we worked with countries like France and the US, even Syria and North Korea. We were sponsors on many working papers. That allowed our voices to be heard.’

James Thorpe, a non-traditional ODU freshman, Army veteran and part-time fireman, said the role-playing was the most demanding part, ‘making our little country heard over the noise of a lot of large ones.’



*Front:* Mami Kizaki, Makoto Namba, Mayu Kawada, Ayano Nagata, Ayane Horinouchi. *Back:* Hana Barkett, James Thrope, Victor Melendez and Helen Sharpe.

The third place finish suggests they succeeded, despite the small size of their delegation and having a small country to portray. The achievement came partially from

preparation, and partially from activism at the conference.

Delegates need to know their brief, but they also are rewarded for activity; for always being on the speaking list, always volunteering for assignments, always developing their bloc, always working in the bloc to draft working papers, and later always working on amendments.



NMUN 2018 opening ceremony at the UN General Assembly

The ODU Model United Nations faculty director, Aaron Karp, senior lecture in political science, said ‘I am very proud of the way our students conducted themselves, and grateful for the experience to work with students from Kitakyushu. They were engaged, they learned and they achieved much more than we expected.’