ODU MODEL UN SOCIETY HOSTING 35TH ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL CONFERENCE

More than 1,000 students from 53 schools have registered for this month's Old Dominion University Model UN Society high school conference, the largest in many years.

Scheduled for Feb. 16-19, the 35th annual conference will meet at the Sheraton Waterside Hotel, taking over much of downtown Norfolk for the event.

An intense role-playing simulation, Model UN features participants representing more than 100 United Nations countries, from Albania to Zimbabwe. They deliberate for three days, trying to agree on solutions to controversial issues in nine major international arenas. Simulations start with major General Assembly committees, and include crisis simulations in the Security Council and regional organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the African Union (AU).

ODU President John Broderick will open the conference when it convenes the morning of Friday, Feb. 17, followed by a welcome from conference Secretary-General Christopher "Luke" Watson, a junior economics major at the university. The featured speaker is Abdelhamid Abdeljaber, a former UN official and keynote speaker at the ODU conference since 1991, now at Rutgers University.

To help celebrate the ODU Model UN's 35th anniversary, the university Alumni Association will host a reunion for past conference secretaries-general, society presidents and other officers.

Attending the event will be alumni from at least 15 states, as well as all three previous directors of the program: Jerome Bookin-Weiner, founding director, 1977-87; ODU Professor Emerita Christine Drake, director, 1988-93; and Maria Fornella, the longest-serving director and currently lecturer of political science and geography, 1994-2008.
Speakers at the reunion will include Charles Wilson, dean of the ODU College of Arts and Letters.

The Model United Nations Society is ODU's window on the United Nations and international activism. The society's mission is to promote global, multicultural education and leadership experience through experiential learning, stressing student participation in simulation conferences and courses.

The society represents the university at Model UN, European Union, NATO and crisis simulation conferences around the country. Membership is open to students from all colleges and disciplines at the university. More information is available on the society's Web page, [http://al.odu.edu/mun/](http://al.odu.edu/mun/).

Abdeljaber, keynote speaker for the ODU conference, worked for the United Nations for 25 years as an international civil servant, mostly in political affairs and news and media. His UN service included assignments and missions in Afghanistan, Botswana, the former Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Eritrea, Iraq, Italy, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Pakistan, South Africa, Switzerland, Tunisia, UAE and others.

Among his assignments was service on the United Nations team that handled the issue of Libyan involvement in the Lockerbie bombing (1992-99), as well as repeated assignments to Iraq and to Pakistan-Afghanistan. He was among the first UN staff to arrive in Kabul after the Taliban withdrew in November 2001.

Abdeljaber is a columnist at the Pan-Arab-London-based daily Al-Quds al-Arabi. He is a radio and TV commentator for Arab and non-Arab radio and satellite stations, including Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya, Al-Ikhbariya and the BBC. In 2010 he published "That Unforgettable Day," an Arabic tribute to his friends and colleagues killed in the 2003 bombing of UN offices in Baghdad, reviewed in English at [www.siyam.info](http://www.siyam.info).

He currently is a professor of political science and Middle Eastern studies at Rutgers, where he teaches courses on Arab Media, Islam and Democracy, Contemporary Politics in the Middle East, Middle East Art and Culture, Modern Arab Society and United Nations and the Middle East. Since 2007, he has been a senior consultant and media trainer at the Center for Development Communication, a Washington-based media-training center.

[Return to InsideODU](#)