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University Relations

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International Club experiences debate and diplomacy at Model United Nations

Summary: The University of Minnesota, Morris International Club sent representatives to the Midwest Model United Nations in St. Louis, Missouri.

(March 23, 2009)-The University of Minnesota, Morris International Club sent five representatives to the Midwest Model United Nations (MMUN) in St. Louis, Missouri: Escillia Allen ’10, Minot, North Dakota, Michael Beach ’11, St. Paul, Patrick Chester ’09, Cass Lake, Natalie Johnson ’11, Wichita, Kansas, and Steve Rice ’10, Forestville, Wisconsin. For almost as long as there has been a peacekeeping United Nations (U.N.), there has been a Model United Nations. The organization simulates U.N. conferences allowing students to adopt a country and their beliefs. Delegations work to diplomatically invoke change that would be, realistically, in the best interest of their country. These delegations prepare for weeks, even months, in advance to aptly represent their nation and attend the conference with determination to pass resolutions.

The Morris students were chosen to represent the country of Iraq at the four-day conference in February 2009. They prepared by researching general information on Iraq as well as its specific standing on topics such as nuclear missile programs, social safety nets, worker equality, and humanitarian aid relief. At the conference, they mingled with delegations from schools across the Midwest and struggled to get resolutions passed that would benefit Iraq as well as for the greater good. Cumulatively, the General Assembly passed more than a dozen resolutions for the benefit of the global community.

Rice enjoyed the collaboration with other delegates and getting resolutions passed in committee. He states: “Working together with delegates from across the Midwest, I drafted a meaningful and effective resolution that directly addressed the humanitarian costs of land mines and cluster munitions. I also formed important connections and friendships that will last long after the final gavel. My work at the conference was challenging, fun, and all-together extraordinary.”

For Allen, working with other delegations fueled her passion for International Relations: “Model U.N. was a really positive experience that helped me learn more about politics and foreign policy—as well as the U.N. as an organization in a much more hands-on practice than can be offered in a textbook or lecture.”

Working closely with delegations for four days straight inspired lasting friendships, an aspect of the conference Johnson particularly enjoyed. “It was more than just debating the issues and getting resolutions passed,” she shares, “and more than role-playing and the important topics of our world today. It was what the U.N. is all about: bringing different people together to work together and make those bonds. It surpasses those differences and joins people together in one common goal: change for the better.”

Beach says of his experience, “MMUN was an eye opening experience in both working with other nations and college students from across the Midwest.”

The group left with a better understanding of diplomacy as well as an eagerness to do more. “MMUN was a great
experience and a high note with which to end my senior year,” states Chester ’09. “I hope more students get involved in the years to come and get to have the same great time I had.”

Photo: Steve Rice ’10, Forestville, Wisconsin, Natalie Johnson ’11, Wichita, Kansas, Patrick Chester ’09, Cass Lake, and Michael Beach ’11, St. Paul. Not pictured: Escillia Allen ’10, Minot, North Dakota

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