NGO/DPI Executive Committee's NGO Youth Delegate Program model (YDP)

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Dr. William Hunter, Director of International Outreach - Lehigh University for meeting with members of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee to share insights about the design of their highly successful NGO Youth Delegate Matching Program. The NGO/DPI Executive Committee launched the NGO pilot program at the 64th annual UN DPI NGO conference in Bonn Germany in 2011. This model was designed after gathering experiences, challenges, and successes of conducting the pilot program based on selected participating universities.

About the NGO/DPI Executive Committee

The NGO DPI Executive Committee is comprised of eighteen representatives elected by organizations officially associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI). It was founded to promote a closer working relationship between the UN and NGOs associated with UN DPI and acts as a liaison between the NGO community and DPI UN.

In partnership with the UN DPI, the Executive Committee organizes the annual UN DPI NGO Conference, at UN Headquarters or abroad, which increases public understanding of the United Nations critical efforts on issues of human rights, economic and social development, the environment, the rule of law and peace-building. This event is an important opportunity for NGOs to network and promote the efforts of their organizations.

The Executive Committee through its popular Communications Workshops organized in cooperation with DPI NGO Relations Section and other activities throughout the year also provides NGOs opportunities to become more knowledgeable about UN and NGO programmes as well as to how to make more effective use of their association with the UN DPI. The Executive Committee has appointed regional representatives as focal points of the NGO DPI Executive Committee in the regions to increase communication and partnerships with the regional NGOs. The Board meets monthly to oversee the activities undertaken by the Executive Committee and its subcommittees which carry out specific mandates. The Executive Committee welcomes the active participation of all DPI associated NGOs in our work! For more information: http://ngodpiexecom.org

INTRODUCTION

The NGO/DPI Executive Committee created this guidebook to assist UN DPI associated colleges and universities in developing a NGO Youth Delegate Program. This guidebook provides valuable information to both the university and the student participants. It lists the responsibilities and benefits for all participants: the university, the NGO and the student. This model provides an opportunity for DPI associated academic institutions and their students to partner with NGOs associated with UN Department of Public Information outside the New York Metropolitan area. These partnerships lead to genuine learning opportunities for students who serve as designated youth representatives at the United Nations. Some colleges and universities provide academic credit for this experience. The youth representative role is an unpaid position.
PURPOSE OF PROGRAM

The purpose of the program is to provide students with the opportunity to serve as the eyes and ears of NGOs outside the New York Metropolitan area. Students provide visibility for the NGO at the UN by attending briefings and networking with NGOs and UN officials.

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

The three interconnected members of the Youth Delegate Program are: the university, NGO, and student. The following sections outline the benefits and responsibilities for each member.

The university takes the responsibility for initiating the NGO contact.

The NGO takes responsibility for adding the student to their list of delegates. The process to add a new youth representative (18-24 years old) to an NGOs delegation requires the NGO to complete necessary UN paperwork by contacting UN DPI NGO Relations Section early August or September. This timing will enable a student to begin as a youth representative in October.

During part of September, the UN is closed to NGOs due to the annual opening of the General Assembly Session. From October- January NGOs are required to submit their Annual Review of activities. At this time, NGOs are able to add/change their designated NGO representatives.

This student experience is recommended for juniors, seniors or graduate students. They are expected to serve at least one academic year, and also train another youth representative. A student remaining within youth rep age range may continue serving a second year.

To achieve mutual benefits from the program arrangement, all parties must understand and carry out their individual responsibilities.

TIME FRAME

An experience -- preferably one year duration -- works well, because shorter durations do not give the student a sufficient range of experience in observing and participating in diverse activities at the UN. A student needs time to grasp adequately the organizational and political cultures of the UN and NGO community.

One difficulty in establishing the Youth Delegate Program is coordinating it with the academic calendar of the institution from which the youth representatives will be drawn. NGOs should be informed of the starting and ending dates of the school terms and, to the extent possible, synchronize the period of the experience with the university calendar. Universities usually have flexibility in allowing students to continue in internships before and after the official start/end of a term, but student availability is often tied to the school terms.

BENEFITS TO THE UNIVERSITY

- Fosters relationships with local/global UN associated NGOs
- Contributes to internationalization efforts and makes classroom work more relevant
- Involves faculty across campus
- Contributes to producing globally minded students better prepared to thrive in a globally interdependent world
**BENEFITS TO THE STUDENT**

YDP is designed to provide the student with practical learning experience in order to enrich their personal development and to further their understanding of the UN and NGO communities. The work experience gained should give the student a realistic exposure of the challenges and the internal workings of the UN Agenda and how to promote and network with other students to make a better world.

*Networking Opportunities*

Students are fully integrated into the community network of NGOs and UN officials through participation in various meetings and events at the UN. These activities provide students with extensive exposure to a variety of key global issues impacting NGOs, member states and the UN. They are able to develop meaningful peer networks and partnerships within the NGO community.

*Knowledge Gained*

Students are afforded the opportunity to obtain a working knowledge of the United Nations and NGOs associated with the UN Department of Public Information. Students should take on extensive reading about the NGO he/she will serve. Students learn about UN policy/administration dichotomy and is further expanded by the realization that developing and administering effective UN policies requires a coordinated effort between UN agencies, member states and NGOs. Students are expected to learn how to advocate for their NGO at the UN and identify ways his/her skills and knowledge areas can enhance the NGO at the grassroots level. Faculty can help guide this process.

**UNIVERSITY RESPONSIBILITIES**

Colleges and universities are encouraged to contact DPI associated NGOs outside the NY area to gauge their interest in having a designated youth representative at the UN. If the NGO/DPI Executive Committee receives any requests from DPI associated NGOs interested in having a youth representative at the UN, this information will be made available to all interested DPI associated colleges or universities.

To begin creating an NGO Youth Delegate Program (YDP), it’s recommended the college or university take the following steps:

- Identify the point person responsible for approving the creation of an NGO Youth Delegate Program
- Appoint an administrator to assume the primary responsibility for getting the program started, establishing relationships with NGOs associated with UN Department of Public Information (DPI) and facilitate the matching of students with those NGOs looking for youth representatives to the UN
- Identify DPI associated NGOs that would be receptive to having a youth representative to the UN
- Decide what factors should be considered when determining which NGOs the school will partner with. These factors may include the reputation of the NGO; its history of involvement with the school, the UN and youth; its attendance of annual UN DPI NGO conferences; and its assignment of a point person that would communicate with their youth rep on regular basis
- Appoint an interested faculty member to oversee and act as an advisor to student participants to assist them in achieving the objectives of the YDP
- Determine the academic prerequisites needed for students to qualify
• Identify the minimum responsibilities of the YDP, i.e., to attend UN DPI briefings, events, meetings and serve on committees as possible on behalf of the NGO they represent

• Stimulate student interest in YDP through faculty, school newspapers, university website

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

If the student is designated officially by a DPI NGO, they will also be entitled to a UN affiliated grounds pass which is valid only at the UN in New York and will provide access to observe and attend meetings, briefings and events open to UN DPI associated NGOs and learn the fundamentals of representing an NGO to the UN, interacting with various NGO representatives, Mission youth delegates and UN officials, while also being exposed to understanding existing UN policies and procedures.

Before and during the assignment, where practicable, there should be a series of meetings attended by the student, the academic coordinator, and the NGO supervisor (via Skype) to discuss their mutual expectations of the youth delegate’s duties. Student assignments should involve diverse responsibilities and provide opportunities for interaction at the UN. The faculty/program coordinator should follow up to see that these assignments are completed satisfactorily.

The NGO Youth Delegate program suggests the following work assignments and responsibilities for the youth delegate:

• Establish regular communication with the NGO (via email, Skype etc. as needed)
• Represent the NGO at briefings and serve as an advocate for their particular area of concern
• Attend 3-4 DPI NGO briefings/a month
• Attend monthly meeting of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee Board and its Youth Subcommittee meetings
• Attend DPI’s NGO Youth Orientation Programme at UN Headquarters where NGO youth Representatives will be briefed on the various youth-related programmes at the UN, security and access to the UN premises
• Attend DPI’s NGO designated youth rep meetings to network with other youth reps
• Create a briefings summary and report to send to the NGO and faculty advisor outlining activities and meetings attended
• Network with other UN/NGO youth delegates
• Seek opportunities to expand the NGO’s voice and presence with other DPI/NGO members from around the world by participating in NGO workshops/panels or exhibitions at the United Nations or the annual DPI/NGO conference.
• Students have the option to attend the UN DPI/NGO Annual Conference (at own expense) and volunteer to serve on a subcommittee of the UN DPI NGO annual conference (as applicable)

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

To qualify, students must be between 18 to 24 years old in order to serve as designated youth representative for an NGO associated with UN Department of Public Information. Students should be especially detail oriented, conscientious, responsible, self-motivated with an ability to work unsupervised. It is strongly suggested that students are recommended to the delegate program by faculty who ideally will serve as their advisor for this experience too. It’s best to identify the students at least one term before they start, so they can prepare in advance their study schedule. Students should plan to have Thursdays free because a majority of DPI NGO related events are scheduled on Thursdays at the UN.

The following steps are suggested as the process for picking student participants:
• Student must complete a Delegate Application to administration on campus for review. The Application requires resume and essay and student should meet the suggested qualifications including GPA, Thursday availability, etc.

• Delegate applications are reviewed and candidates selected. Once student(s) are selected, the faculty and school takes ownership of the student placed with the NGO.

• The primary responsibility for evaluating the adequacy of the placement of the student should rest with the designated academic faculty and/or program administrator, in conjunction with the NGO administrator. The placement process should to some extent mimic the job application process. Both the student and the NGO should have the right to refuse a placement.

• Important key factor for making this work is based on the interest and commitment of the student.

**Introductions**

Once student and NGO match are determined, it is recommended that the school coordinates a phone call between the faculty advisor, program administrator, student and NGO point person via Skype. The goals of the call are to make introductions; to give the NGO an opportunity to share their mission/expectations; to outline NGO and student responsibilities; and ask questions of the student and NGO to make sure it’s a “fit.”

The NGO should be asked if there are specific tasks they want in addition to the minimum duties stated. Unstated expectations on behalf of the NGO can cause misunderstanding and frustration for both the student and NGO. When a student is placed, there should be a formal understanding among the NGO, the university, and the student, including a clear understanding of the obligations and responsibilities of all parties. While not necessary, we recommend that a brief, formal memo of understanding be developed that outlines the responsibilities of the university, the NGO, and the student.

Once the NGO agrees to designate the student as their youth representative, the NGO is required to write a letter on NGO letterhead, signed by the NGO president, asking to add the student as their designated youth representative. The NGO can email the letter as an attachment to UN Department of Public Information at: undpingo@un.org

**Getting UN DPI NGO Badge**

Once the UN approves the youth designation, the NGO will be notified and sent a designation form that must be completed. The student must bring the form to the UN DPI Resource Center for approval/stamping, and then he/she proceeds to the UN Pass and ID office with the form. The student must drop off the form and get a photo taken to receive the official UN badge. The student should bring an official ID with them (US license or passport) when completing this process.

**SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS**

The program model has been most effective in meeting its goals when the faculty advisor has found the time to meet with students weekly to discuss their experiences; review UN events/meetings the student will attend; and ensures that program responsibilities are met. The School takes full responsibility for the student at the UN.

The suggested communication reporting structure between the School, the NGO and the student is the following:
Both the NGO and the academic/program coordinator should supervise the intern. The NGO should designate a youth delegate supervisor (YDS). There should be as much contact with the student as necessary by both the NGO YDS and the faculty/academic coordinator. **Youth delegates should not be left on their own.**

Although the NGO youth rep is expected to handle real work assignments, it should be remembered by all supervisory personnel that the major reason for the YDP is to provide a learning experience. If possible, the experience should be carefully integrated into the student's overall academic program. The experience is, first and foremost, an educational experience.

The faculty advisor, YDP & NGO supervisors ideally should function as educators in their dealings with the student. In particular, supervisors should be conscious of their educator role and should assume responsibility for mentoring the student. University and academic advisor will determine if this non-paid opportunity will count as an academic internship experience for credit or required for his/her program. Each student can arrange for academic supervision from a faculty sponsor. Faculty are responsible for ensuring that the work experience provides appropriate learning opportunities for helping to establish the learning agreement, and for determining a grade.

Informal mentoring could take place during and beyond the NGO youth delegate program year. Students are encouraged to arrange Skype sessions with the NGO YDS to discuss and share first-hand knowledge gained from attending meetings, networking connections, projects helpful to the NGO. Students are also encouraged to set up informational sessions with other organizations and officials that would be helpful to the NGO. Students and NGOs must be informed that students should not be asked for funds or to fundraise on behalf of their NGO.

**EVALUATION**

Evaluation should be a continuous, ongoing aspect of the NGO youth delegate program. The evaluation should consider monthly submissions from the student sent to the NGO supervisor (including faculty advisor) that keeps the NGO updated on the work of their designated youth delegate at the UN, as well as feedback from the NGO. This feedback is important not only to the student, but also to the office or faculty advisor overseeing the NGO youth delegate program to ensure that the program is meeting the expectations of all concerned.

It’s suggested that youth delegates submit self-evaluations of their experiences at the end of their participation. Both NGO supervisor and student’s statements should include evaluations of the program’s effectiveness. This should aid the faculty advisor/program coordinator in determining which NGOs have provided (or not provided) desirable supervision and learning experiences. It may also be desirable to require that students submit an additional evaluation six months or a year after their internships have ended. This will provide a means of assessing the long-term impact of the program experience.
APPENDIX

Youth Delegate Application -Example

NGO Delegate Program Letter of Agreement of Responsibilities -Example
YOUTH DELEGATE APPLICATION

Program Summary

(college/university) seeks to match high-achieving university students with NGOs associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information seeking representation at United Nations Headquarters, New York. Students will serve as fully-accredited representatives on behalf of the NGO.

Delegate Position Description:*  

As an NGO Youth Delegate, you will:

- Familiarize yourself with the NGO
- Establish regular communication with the NGO
- Serve as a lobbyist for the NGO’s particular area of concern
- Attend weekly briefings at UN headquarters
- Write briefings summary, reporting to the NGO on the meetings attended
- Meet with ambassadors and other UN representatives that would be applicable to your NGO cause
- Attend monthly meetings with other youth delegates

*Some previous Delegates have earned academic credit for the experience. Arrangements for credit must be made directly by interested students with their academic institution.

You can expect your NGO to:

- Complete all the necessary UN paperwork to list you as a delegate
- Provide you with the educational tools and information necessary to represent the NGO

Qualifications

- Minimum 3.2 GPA
- Available at least 4 sessions (Thursdays) per month [all day]
- Fluency in another language (recommended – not mandatory)
- A keen interest in international activities and proven ability to work independently
- Must be available to serve for the entire academic year

Application Details:

Essay: Attach an explanation [no longer than one page] stating why you are interested in and qualified to represent one of the listed NGOs.

Resume: Attach a current resume and (2) letters of reference from advisor or faculty
Youth Delegate Application

Name ____________________________

Address ____________________________

City___________ State _________ Zip code __________

Cell telephone number _________________

Email address __________________________

University/ College_______________________

Address ________________________________

City _________________ State___________ Zip Code

Class Status [year] _____________

GPA ______

Major ______________________________

Languages and level of proficiency __________________________________________

_______________________________________

_______________________________________

_______________________________________

If you have a preference for an NGO from a certain region write it below:

Due to the volume of applicants, delegates will be contacted only if they are chosen.
Dear (NGO),

On behalf of (college or university), I would like to thank you for your positive response to our representation offer. (Student name) is very excited to begin this endeavor on your behalf, and looks forward to raising your NGO’s visibility at the UN headquarters.

As part of this partnership, beginning on or about (date), your youth representative will offer to:

- Represent you as your UN delegate
- Take on extensive reading on and become familiar with your NGO
- Establish regular communication with you (via email and phone, as needed)
- Serve as a liaison to the UN for your particular area of concern
- Attend weekly briefings/events (about 5 meetings per month)
- Write briefings summaries, reporting to your NGO on the meetings he/she attended
- Meet with ambassadors and other UN representatives that would be applicable to your cause

As part of this partnership, your NGO should be willing to:

- Denote the student as your NGO delegate and complete all the necessary UN paperwork
- Provide the student representative with information necessary to represent your organization at the United Nations

There will be no cost to you or your NGO. We would, however, request a recommendation letter for our student, assuming he/she completes the role in a satisfactory manner.

If you agree to the terms listed above, please sign and date on the lines below.

____________________________________       ______________
Signature                                      Date

If you have any additions that you feel are necessary, or concerns/comments please let me know.

Sincerely,

(university YDP coordinator)