

Thursday, April 23, 2009

Model EU team makes a strong showing at conference

By **Katie Land**, news editor

Politically-conscious Oakland University students garnered seven awards at the 17th annual Midwest Model European Union this April.

This year, Oakland brought 14 students from Paul Kubicek's European Politics course. Split into two teams, they represented Germany and Slovakia in debates with more than 200 students from 12 schools and five states.

The team representing Germany was awarded best delegation and the Slovakian delegation placed third out of 26. Individual honors went to Michael McGuiness for Best Head of Government, Nathan Mills for Best Minister of the Environment and Nargiz Nesimova for Best Minister of Foreign Affairs. Jason Bauer placed second in the European Commission and Bradley Horton placed third among Ministers of the Environment.

"I think these awards speak to the encouragement and preparation given to us by Dr. Kubicek," said Mills, who felt surprised to earn his award. "It feels good to know that the hard work and effort we put into our preparation resulted in the awards we received."

Schools represent countries within the EU and each student plays the particular role of a government or European Union member, according to Kubicek, professor of political science and department chair. Students sit on committees that simulate the workings of the EU and argue various political issues.

Groups are divided up in sessions based on their roles, so the ministers of economics meet in a session to discuss economic issues, ministers of foreign policy meet on foreign policy, heads of government meet to discuss the overall direction of the EU, and so on, Kubicek said.

"The purpose of the program is to give students a hands-on understanding of how the EU works. Students debate proposals and issues that replicate real-life issues. They are expected to understand various positions of the countries within the EU, as well as understand the possibilities and limits of the EU as an organization that tries to work for common positions," he continued.

Mills joined hoping that it would be an interesting experience and offer a chance to compete against other students and build new friendships.

"I think the experience more than delivered on my expectations," he said. "I came out of it with a better understanding of divisions within European Politics and how to work things out in large committee meetings with everyone having different agendas. I was able to network with students from other universities, as well as get to know my fellow classmates better."

Students prepared by covering EU issues in class and participating in practice sessions to become familiar with the rules of procedure and to form an idea about how to debate the merits of proposals and defend a country's position, Kubicek said. Students must also produce a paper that includes sample proposals to demonstrate their competence in some of the issues they are likely to discuss.

"To be voted best delegation was a great affirmation of how hard we worked throughout the semester, but even without the award, to be able to discuss European politics intelligently with other college students was an award in and of itself," Davis said.

This background research and overall experience also makes a distinguished addition to a resume, according to Nesimova.

"It looks good on your law school applications and really sets the stage for you regarding politics and law. The Model EU is also beneficial to your overall knowledge of politics and Europe," Nesimova said, adding that all the awards were proof of their quality program. "It shows OU means business."

The Model EU is an optional component of the European Politics course and builds upon in-class discussion of the EU. However, with Model United Nations, a new two-credit class, students will go to conferences in Cleveland and Toronto, Kubicek said.

For more information on this and other political science courses, visit <http://www2.oakland.edu/polisci/> or contact Paul Kubicek at kubicek@oakland.edu.



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SUMMARY

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