

The Model Arctic Council: A UAF-UArctic Initiative

University of Alaska Fairbanks's (UAF's) membership in UArctic has been essential for the development of the Model Arctic Council (MAC) initiative. MAC is an opportunity in which graduate and undergraduate students from universities throughout the circumpolar north and beyond come together to simulate the roles of delegates to the Arctic Council to learn about the Council, Arctic affairs, and Indigenous issues.

In 2015, UAF faculty Mary Ehrlander and Brandon Boylan, with support from faculty from other UArctic institutions, submitted a MAC Thematic Network (TN) proposal to UArctic to establish an ongoing MAC program and facilitate the organization of the first fully international MAC program at UAF in March 2016. The vision is that a UArctic institution in the country currently chairing the Arctic Council hosts a fully international MAC. For example, the United States chaired the Arctic Council from 2015 to 2017, and UAF hosted the MAC program in 2016. Meanwhile, a UArctic institution can also host a regional MAC. For example, Dartmouth College hosted a MAC in which students from Canada and the United States participated in June 2017.

The goals of the MAC initiative are 1) to develop students' knowledge of the Arctic as a region, circumpolar politics, and northern Indigenous peoples; 2) to increase students' understanding of Arctic Council objectives and processes; 3) to prepare students to assume leadership roles in the circumpolar north; and 4) to further student and faculty collaboration within the UArctic.

The Model Arctic Council at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in March 2016

The MAC 2016 at UAF was a component of the Arctic Science Summit Week, a conference that brought researchers and policy makers from throughout the world to the University of Alaska Fairbanks to advance research on the Arctic. The MAC program immediately preceded a meeting of the Arctic Council's Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) in Fairbanks. Organizers chose this timing with an eye towards engaging Arctic Council officials in the program and presenting the MAC participants' final Declaration to the SAOs at the program's culmination.

Sixty-five students representing fourteen birth countries and thirty-two universities participated in MAC 2016. Students acted in their assigned roles as Member State, Permanent Participant, or Observer delegates to the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) working group or the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG); or as Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) or Ministers of the Arctic Council Member States. Students simulated working group meetings, followed by SAO meetings and finally a Ministerial meeting.

Ehrlander and Boylan published a peer-reviewed article on the value of simulation pedagogy in *International Studies Perspectives* in spring 2017. Drawing from a debriefing session, two student participant surveys, and their own observations, they found simulation pedagogy to be effective in teaching about the Arctic region, the Arctic Council, and Indigenous and other cultures. Student participants reported learning more through the MAC experience than they felt they would have in a conventional classroom. Having to perform in the roles of Arctic Council delegates forced participants to internalize their states' or groups' positions more than they would have in conventional classroom settings. The authors concluded "the novelty of the program, the work on

Arctic Council priorities, and the remarkable cultural diversity of the students heightened the learning experience.”¹

The article can be found here:

<https://academic.oup.com/isp/article-abstract/doi/10.1093/isp/ekx005/3742134/The-Model-Arctic-Council-Educating-Postsecondary>

The Model Arctic Council at Dartmouth College in June 2017

Dartmouth College’s “Arctic Science Diplomacy and Leadership Workshop & Model Arctic Council” program represented the first *regional* Model Arctic Council sponsored through the UArctic Model Arctic Council Thematic Network. It grew from the Thematic Network (TN) leads’ vision of regional MACs occurring between the biennial fully international Model Arctic Council programs that rotate throughout the Arctic with the chairship of the Arctic Council.

Melody Brown Burkins and Leah Sarson of the John Sloan Dickey Center for International Understanding at Dartmouth College collaborated with Mary Ehrlander, Brandon Boylan, and Troy Bouffard at the University of Alaska Fairbanks to plan a weeklong program on Arctic science diplomacy for Canadian and U.S. students.

Twenty-five graduate and undergraduate students from various universities, mostly in Canada and the United States, participated. The program included orientation exercises; lectures by Arctic scholars, Arctic Council practitioners, and other civic leaders; a negotiations workshop; and the two and a half days of the Model Arctic Council. The MAC addressed the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Working Group’s work on operationalizing the One Health project, which addresses ecological, animal, and human health-related impacts of climate change holistically.

The program taught about the Arctic and the role of science diplomacy in meeting challenges and opportunities in the region and in fostering leadership capacities and global awareness in participants. The program offered an interactive, multi-modal learning environment that engaged Arctic Council practitioners and other civic leaders and that provided a high level of authenticity in the Model Arctic Council portion of the program. Students greatly appreciated the hands-on negotiation workshop prior to the Model Arctic Council that prepared them for working towards consensus during the simulated Arctic Council meetings.

For more information on this program, please visit: <http://dickey.dartmouth.edu/global-engagement/conferences-initiatives/science-and-diplomacy-arctic>

Boylan, Ehrlander, and Bouffard are currently writing an article that evaluates the MAC 2017 at Dartmouth, focusing on the value of multi-modal, including simulation, and interdisciplinary methods of teaching, as well as the value of engaging practitioners in simulations to achieve a level

¹ Mary F. Ehrlander and Brandon M. Boylan, "The Model Arctic Council: Educating Postsecondary Students on Arctic Issues and Governance through Simulation," *International Studies Perspectives* (2017).

of experiential learning. They are using data from a debriefing, participant surveys, a focus group, and their own observations.

The Model Arctic Council at the University of Lapland in October 2018

The University of Lapland will host the next fully international Model Arctic Council October 24-27, 2018 in conjunction with an SAO meeting in Rovaniemi. The program organizers are currently designing the program.