

Students Make Waves at the IUCN World Conservation Congress

September 26, 2016

Students from the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University (Pace Law) took an active role at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress representing the school's Global Center for Environmental Legal Studies (the Center) in September. Amongst other responsibilities, and critical to influencing the work of the IUCN for the next four years, the students worked on motions considered by the Congress—each student researched, submitted comments, debated, and recommended how the Center vote on various motions. All accepted motions Pace Law students worked on were approved and adopted as resolutions by the IUCN Congress on September 6, 2016. These motions provide the IUCN congress fodder for creating international law by forging a consensus, and creating global precedent for nations to follow for global protection of the environment.

The students got real hands on experience in international environmental law, which will aid them in their future careers. “Attending the IUCN Congress offered me an unparalleled educational experience on the substance and scholarship of the latest international conservation initiatives, as well as a skill-set I can directly apply to a career in international environmental law,” said Jullee Kim, current LLM student and Pace Law's Graduate Global Environmental Law Fellow. Casandia Bellevue seconded that sentiment, “As a budding lawyer, observing the thought and precision that goes into crafting motions, and being involved in the very wording of a number of those motions, was incredible. To know that this will proceed to the United Nations for further consideration is equally an honor.”

Suzy Englot, who worked on ‘Motion 087 – Request for an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the principle of sustainable development in view of the needs of future generation’, feels the success of this motion highlights the excellence and necessity for international environmental programs at the Pace Law. She wrote on this topic during the United Nations Environmental Diplomacy Practicum, but never dreamed that she would be in Hawaii watching a motion on the topic, which she helped write, get adopted by the oldest and largest environmental organization in the world. “Pace Law enabled me to become part of the international law and policymaking process. I have witnessed firsthand how through hard work and dedication, theory can be put into practice,” Suzy commented. Held in conjunction with the IUCN Congress, the students also analyzed this issue of intergenerational climate justice and argued on behalf of the Arab League during the “Antonio A. Oposa, Jr. Intergenerational Moot Court” at the Supreme Court of the State of Hawai'i.

In light of a recent July 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of International Justice (The Republic of the Philippines vs. The People's Republic of China), Joseph Moravec, filed an emergency motion and subsequent appeal during the Members' Assembly to create a marine peace park in the South China Sea. He learned of this pressing environmental problem while participating in a workshop at the IUCN Congress Forum and worked with the Ecological Society of the Philippines to bring warranted attention to all members of the Congress.

The faculty and staff cannot be more proud of the delegation of students who worked on our behalf to support important international conservation goals, including efforts from multiple procedural avenues to bring energy within the purview of the IUCN programme. The solidarity and work ethic of the students shined through during a very busy two weeks, and made what seemed like an impossibility a reality. Sarah Cinquemani highlighted this when she said, "This experience taught me a lot about what a small group of law students are capable of doing in a room full of adults who don't always want to listen."