

TEAM BRINGS HOME SIX AWARDS FROM BELGIUM

By Katharine Webster

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Alejandro Lopez, right, and other members of UML's Model U.N. team at an event for former U.S. Ambassador to Spain James Costos '85.

Economics major Alejandro Lopez joined his first Model United Nations team as a junior at Haverhill High School because his friends were doing it.

The Haverhill High team, started by history teacher and UMass Lowell alumnus Zachary Simmons '99, '00, was traveling to regional and national competitions, which sounded like fun.

"I didn't realize how much I would really like doing it, and how much I liked debating, and how much it was really beneficial for the future — public speaking skills, leadership skills, communication skills, the whole nine yards," Lopez says.

The following year, Lopez took his enthusiasm for Model U.N. to three Haverhill middle schools, helping them start teams and enlisting his friends to coach. He also applied to UMass Lowell because of the university team's strong reputation. Now a junior, he helps run the high school Model U.N. event put on by the campus team each spring.

"Some of the delegates I helped train while I was in high school come to the conference here and do well and win awards," he says. "It's really satisfying to see them continue with it, and it shows that it really did affect them in a positive way."

Lopez' involvement illustrates the regional impact of [UMass Lowell's Model U.N. team](#) and the Dean Bergeron International Relations Club (IRC) that sponsors it. Alumni have started Model U.N. clubs at area schools whose graduates often matriculate at UMass Lowell and join the team. It's a virtuous circle, and UMass Lowell is at the heart of it.

The Model U.N. team competed this spring in Leuven, Belgium, and brought home a slew of individual awards.

The IRC and Model U.N. team began in fall 1984, when history major Kathy Curtin asked Dean Bergeron, then a professor of history and political science, to help her assemble a team to compete in a Model U.N. at Harvard.

Bergeron agreed and, with help from his colleague Joyce Denning, a professor of political science, advised the student-run program for nearly three decades.



Model U.N. at UMass Lowell

Today, the program is a regional, national and international powerhouse that has won more than 100 individual awards and dozens of team awards, supported by the recently established Dean Bergeron and Joyce Denning Endowment Fund.

“The International Relations Club has helped raise our university’s reputation around the world,” Chancellor Jacquie Moloney said at the opening ceremonies for this spring’s high school Model U.N., hosted and run by the club at the Inn & Conference Center.

Most recently, UML’s team returned from the Model U.N. in Leuven, Belgium, with six of a possible 13 individual delegate awards from five committees, including three “best delegate” awards. (The Leuven Model U.N. does not have team awards.) About 200 college students from Europe, the Middle East and the United States participated.

“The secretary general couldn’t stop talking about how impressed he was with the students and their preparation, dedication and professionalism,” says Jason Carter ’04, ’06, an alumnus who advises the team and teaches a course in international relations that most club members take.

UMass Lowell’s team participates in the Model Arab League competition at Northeastern University each fall, and it also competes in a Model U.N. abroad every spring. Past destinations have included Scotland, Turkey, England, the Czech Republic, Toronto and Vancouver, Canada, Washington, D.C., and New York at the U.N. building.

“The support we get from the university administration is fantastic,” Carter says.



Photo by Tory Germann

Legacy and Community Impact

Greeley Peace Scholar Noy Thrupkaew talks to high school students at UML's Model U.N. about international human trafficking.

Alumni of UMass Lowell's program include MSNBC counterterrorism analyst Roger Cressey '87, who worked for the Clinton, Bush

and Obama administrations and with U.N. peacekeeping missions as a terrorism and security specialist. Other alumni have started Model U.N. teams at area schools, including history teacher Jana Brown '91, '93, who began a team at Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School in Haverhill.

"It teaches the students public speaking and negotiation skills, tolerance for others, respect for other people's views and an understanding of world issues," Brown says. "It's such an interactive way to learn about what's going on in the world."

Simmons looked to Brown for advice when he decided to start a Model U.N. program at Haverhill High. The two schools were soon competing against each other, and then Simmons began organizing larger high school events. When members of the UML International Relations Club decided they wanted to host a high school Model U.N. on campus in 2005, they went to Brown and Simmons for advice. This year, 11 schools and close to 200 high school students participated.

That enthusiasm, connection and mutual assistance is Emeritus Professor Dean Bergeron's legacy, Brown and Simmons say.

"We call it the Dean effect," says Simmons, who also has served on the board of the national Model U.N. "My students now run the middle school program started by Alejandro Lopez. The Dean Bergeron model is that it's all student-run."



Photo by Tory Germann

Model U.N. Helps Recruitment

High school senior Jennifer Schultz has participated in two UML high school Model U.N. conferences. She plans to attend the university next fall.

The strong Model U.N. program is also a recruitment asset for the university.

Jennifer Schultz, a senior at Innovation Academy Charter School in Tyngsboro, will start as an honors biomedical engineering student in the fall. She says her interaction with the university's Model U.N. team (she's attended UMass Lowell's high school competition the past two years) was definitely a draw. She hopes her engineering studies will allow her time to participate, because she plans a career helping biomedical companies find solutions for people in developing countries.

"Model U.N. teaches me a lot about how different governments work and relate to each other," Schultz says. "Globalization is so huge for our generation. It's important for us to understand how that works and be a part of it."