

History: The NCCA, the NMUN, and the World in which They Operate

Compiled by S. Killen, Strategic Planning Committee Co-Chair, Spring 2010

The National Model United Nations Conference (NMUN) traces its origins to 1923 as a simulation of the League of Nations. The program adopted its current format in 1946, after the creation of the United Nations. The NCCA sought U.S. 501c(3) status and incorporated as an educational non-profit organization in 1968 to ensure the long-term success of the NMUN program. The United Nations Department of Public Information formally recognizes NCCA as a registered Non-Governmental Organization.

In 1945, the horrors of two World Wars and memories of the Great Depression created a situation in which common international agreement arose on the need for institutional and legal protections for an increasingly interdependent world. The creation of the United Nations and associated developments in international economics and law were the most comprehensive and coordinated changes to the framework of international society in history. Arguably, even during the Cold War, the United Nations provided a non-violent outlet for the geopolitical wrangling characteristic of that time. Global proxy wars and veto wars in the Security Council notwithstanding, the UN provided a forum for the nations of the world to air disputes, even when the possibility for concerted international action was unlikely.

The end of the Cold War led to celebratory visions of a future that had been held in abeyance for 40 years. Hopes ran high that the international community would cooperate to attend not just to concerns about international peace and security but also to the other aspirations announced in the UN Charter: the fundamental nature of human rights; the equality of individuals in large and small nations; the maintenance of respect for international treaties and other laws; and social progress and a better standard of living for all. Even so, the 1990s were marked by genocide in Rwanda, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the break-up of sovereign states, and the rise of violence in the name of self-determination. Since the terrorist attacks in the United States and elsewhere on and after September 11, 2001, post-Cold War triumphalism has passed into renewed questioning of the value of international institutions and laws in a dangerous, self-interested world.

The United Nations has become one of the most recognizable symbols of the post-World War II era. Post-Cold War challenges and the deepening and quickening interconnectedness that are characteristic of the globalizing process have prompted questions about whether the United Nations can function effectively in today's world. Nevertheless, the foundation of sovereign states on which the international system rests is not likely to disappear any time soon, and any changes to the institutional organization of international affairs will be based on the perceived constraints or failures of the UN and its related organizations. The students of today will face these challenges tomorrow, some as foreign policy professionals but all as individuals with a stake in the future of international society.

The NCCA's NMUN programs are experiential education programs in which participating groups of students are organized as delegations and are assigned to play the role of member states of the United Nations. Like literature or history, experiential education programs of all sorts require students to draw on their reservoirs of empathy to see the world through the eyes of others. Participants in NMUN programs must learn the history of their assigned state, the history of the United Nations, the committee structure and rules of the United Nations, and the current perspective on global affairs espoused by their assigned state to occupy the role of diplomats effectively.

NCCA annually hosts over 5,000 college and university students at NMUN-NY, which is the largest, and one of the most prestigious, college Model United Nations programs in the world. NCCA began co-sponsoring NMUN-DC, an annual program in Washington, DC, in 2007. NCCA has hosted NMUN conferences in Xi'an China (2008) and Quito, Ecuador (2010), and will host the upcoming NMUN-Europe in the Czech Republic in October 2010. The strong, enduring relationship between the NCCA and the UN benefits students. NCCA programs in New York take place partly at the UN. The rules of procedure used at NMUN programs were adapted from actual UN rules by the NCCA in conjunction with the UN Institute

for Training and Research (UNITAR). Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan served as the keynote speaker at the NMUN in New York in 1999. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon served as the keynote speaker at the NMUN in New York in 2008. Keynote speakers in 2010 included Susan E. Rice, US Ambassador to the UN.

The NCCA developed the National High School Model UN conference (NHS MUN) in 1974, which was spun-off into a separate entity in 1979. In the 1990s, the NCCA created the Southern Regional Model United Nations program (SRMUN), which was spun-off into a separate entity in 1993. The NCCA's principal NMUN program in New York City has grown significantly over the past decade. Participation in the early 1990s numbered approximately 1,200 college and university students. Participation had more than doubled by 2001 to 2,500 students. Unanticipated and rapid growth in participation led the NCCA to undertake a first strategic planning process in 1997. The initial focus was on managing growth to avoid compromising the quality of the educational experience for participants. The NCCA also desired to diversify its participant base. The NCCA updated its strategic plan in 2004, continuing to focus on growth management and diversity, but also attending to improving corporate governance and creating tools to measure programmatic and operational performance.

In 2007, the NCCA, anticipating continued increasing NMUN growth, hosted one NMUN-NY conference at two separate venues. The NCCA also entered into partnership with the Osgood Center for International Studies in Washington, DC, to host the first NMUN-DC. That year, NMUN programs in New York and Washington, DC, hosted over 4,000 students. Participation increased in 2008 to 4,700 students in New York, Washington, DC, and Xi'an, China. In 2009, the NCCA hosted almost 5,300 students from around the world at multiple NMUN programs. The 2010 NMUN-NY, alone, hosted over 5,000 college and university students; hundreds more are expected to participate in Washington, DC, and in Europe in Fall 2010.

The NCCA decided to revisit strategic planning in 2008 for four reasons: 1) continued increasing interest in its programs; 2) the organization's strong financial situation, and its improved corporate governance policies and practices; 3) a desire to revisit goals set in 2004 and to measure progress toward those goals; and 4) recognition of the opportunity for the NCCA to build actively on a strong organizational structure and to meet participants' interest.

Intentions and Priorities of the National Collegiate Conference Association

Strategic Intent

The NCCA wants to serve more people and is open to new ideas and new opportunities. Active expansion rather than responsiveness to circumstances will motivate NCCA activities. Three important points stand out.

- The NCCA offers, and will continue to focus on offering, experiential simulations of the United Nations. The NCCA will contemplate simulations of other international organizations (e.g., APEC, OAS) in conjunction with partners. The NCCA recognizes that its mission does not preclude non-experiential programs on global affairs in the future.
- The organization primarily focuses on current college and university students who attend NCCA programs as part of a Model UN club or a class. The NCCA also serves educational institutions, faculty, and volunteers, but they are not the NCCA's primary focus. NCCA will orient its future activities towards current college and university students but recognizes that its mission does not preclude creating programs to educate groups not in college.
- The NCCA will be accountable for: 1) increasing awareness of global issues among participants; 2) personal growth among program participants; and 3) preparing participants to be better global citizens. The NCCA will define these points so that each is measurable.