

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Student Among 110 Participants From 91 Countries At Volunteer Leaders Academy Event In Russia

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The International University Sports Federation (F.I.S.U.) Volunteer Leaders Academy (F.V.L.A.) gathered for the first time in Kazan, Russia, as a legacy of the Kazan 2013 Summer [Universiade](#) (an international multi-sport event), with 110 participants from 91 countries -- including the U.S. Virgin Islands -- whose aim was to inspire young representatives from university sport to be the “leaders of tomorrow”.

That's according to a release issued on Saturday by the organizing committee in Russia, and disseminated through participants. The event was held from July 2 to July 8.

On day four of the event, delegates learned about volunteer management at global events. The day's events started with a guest lecture from International Olympic Committee (I.O.C.) expert Jenny Mann.

Now Head of Sport Partnerships and Coordination at the IOC, Ms. Mann discussed her own volunteering past, as well as the practicalities of making an event successful.

"Even as an elite junior athlete, I wasn't just interested in athletics," the former Australian triple jump champion said. "I was hoping to compete at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, but I got injured. I wanted to be part of the Games in my home country, so I paid my own way and volunteered in Sydney for ten weeks."

"You can sit in an office and write every event need and have the best plan, but none of that matters unless you have the right people on the ground," she said. "When I worked at the World Duathlon Championships, I would tell everyone the day before the event to put down the technical manuals and just know how you deal with the issues that arise, and who you would escalate them to. It's more about the network of people than the actual run sheets."

Hearing Mann's remarks resonated with Gerald Bellot, who represented the U.S. Virgin Islands in the academy's inaugural year. Mr. Bellot looks forward to taking what was learned through the Academy in Kazan and bringing it back to his community at the University of the Virgin Islands.

"I enjoyed hearing about Jenny's journey, I feel like I'm in a similar position right now," Mr. Bellot said. He was sidelined by a knee injury last basketball season at UVI and has since been finding opportunities off the court. "It's not every day you get to learn from such credible, successful people. It's always a blessing to be around relentless workers, it helps create a contagious culture."

Ms. Mann also emphasized the importance of recognizing volunteers and their talents, as well providing opportunities for development.

"We need to demonstrate the benefits of volunteering and maximize these for those that contribute. Volunteers are getting training and getting experience and this is great for the organizing committee, but it must also be beneficial for the volunteers as well," she said.

Later in the day, a separate session on the management of volunteers at major events was co-led by Nataša Janković, a member of the Serbian Olympic Committee, and Tatiana Nikulina, who is part of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Local Organising Committee in Russia, according to the release.

For Mr. Bellot, this insight will be helpful with continuing to help build culture through sports and entrepreneurship at UVI this 2017-2018 school year.

"Last school year was great for building a foundation for this year and letting people see that I can lead on and off the basketball court. This year I have more experience and an amazing group of people around me who are just as determined to succeed," he said. "I can't wait to see how the mindset and network I developed with international leaders translates to my community in the Virgin Islands."

The first FISU Volunteer Leaders Academy 2017 international forum was hosted by the Volga State Academy of Sport and Tourism and concluded on July 8.

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