I received the Enrichment Award from the Honors Department to attend the United Nations Association-USA Global Engagement Summit in New York City. The summit was held from 9:00am to 5:00pm on Feb. 23, 2018 at the United Nations Headquarters. The summit included many speakers and panelists but some of the highlights for me were Her Excellency Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations; Lia Cairone, Senior Policy Advisor at New York City Mayor’s Office of Sustainability; His Excellency Miroslav Lajcak, President of the UN General Assembly; Ruth Hassel-Thompson, Special Advisor for Policy and Community Affairs of New York State Homes and Community Renewal and former Senator; Gillian Sorensen, Board Member of the International Rescue Committee; and my favorite, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

All the speakers discussed a wide range of topics from the Sustainable Development Goals, to the refugee crisis, to human trafficking, to climate change. I have covered all these issues in my economics, anthropology, and international development courses. Hearing from people who are actively working toward the resolution of these issues showed me the application of my education to the fields in which I am interested. I learned about real steps toward policy change in the effort to eliminate human rights violations. As I am planning on pursuing a career in international development policy, this event was highly relevant for my education. Not only did it solidify the path in which I intend to follow for my career, but it helped me see how I can use my education at CSU in my graduate education (Master of Public Policy).

I have learned about the Sustainable Development Goals—their advantages and disadvantages—in many classes. At the summit, the goals served as a framework from which to
present ideas. I appreciated the recognition of the problem caused by the ambition that the goals undertake. However, His Excellency Miroslav Lajcak made a point about the remarkable fact that the goals are one of the few things that are agreed upon across nations in the UN. Because of this, they serve as an important framework for resolving global issues. In this light, the discussion at the summit actually lessened the emotional toll of my education. I have found throughout my education that I am often learning about the problems facing the global community which can invoke a lot of pessimism and heartbreak. But hearing from these speakers helped me remain more optimistic about our future and see the real change that can come out of collective work and energy around such a bold framework.

I also participated in a luncheon with corporate partners to the UN and engaged in great conversation around the aspects of companies that appeal young people (in terms of their interest in the social good). At the luncheon, I learned what other campuses and corporations around the US are doing to promote to objectives of the UN in their own communities and for their market.

Further, the campus chapter leadership training (Feb. 24, 2018) provided tools to help myself and our chapter president establish a strongly-rooted chapter at Colorado State University. One of goal of UNA-USA campus chapters (the youth network of UNA-USA is called GenUN) is to “empower a new generation of people in the U.S. to creatively amplify what they do in their daily lives to defend human rights as well as engage their decision-makers on human rights.” The presentation then outlined the ways in which this goal can progress through our campus chapters via fundraising, partnerships, and communication. Overall the summit was a highlight of my year, even my undergraduate career.

See photos below.