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Southland College Prep Juniors Serve as Delegates University of Michigan Mock UN Conference

RIGHTON PARK, ILL-January 23, 2015-- "Memorable." "One- of- a- kind."
"An amazing experience."

These were some of the reviews a group of 23 social studies Southland College Prep juniors gave to the 28th Model [United Nations](#) Conference where they joined more than 500 high school students from the Midwest for a weekend at the [University of Michigan](#) earlier this month.

"Model UN helped me open my eyes to new cultures and to the reality of college life," said Emily Aguirre, 16, of Park Forest.

"I learned that an issue can't be solved in a day. You have to really work together to solve an issue," said Tim Barnes, 16, of Matteson.

Darian Evans, 16, of Richton Park, said, "The highlight for me was meeting new people and learning about other cultures. I found out how big the world really is."

Southland's participants in the Model UN Conference represented delegates from Pakistan, Hungary, Madagascar, and Kazakhstan.

The three-day Conference, managed entirely by University of Michigan student volunteers, is designed to help high school students experience, negotiate and learn about real and current international issues. During the conference, the Southland delegates worked with other high school students from all across the Midwest to frame, discuss and adopt resolutions that addressed real world issues on behalf of the countries they represented.

"If Southland College Prep is to prepare its students to be global learners and eventually global competitors, we first must provide some real experiences. With the unprecedented rapid pace of globalization and the complexities of international politics, this annual trip to the Model UN Conference is a superb opportunity to put classroom learning and interactions to the test on a much larger stage," said Dr. Blondean Davis, Southland's CEO.

"Our students had to prepare well beforehand. They researched their delegation's stance on key issues and were prepared to defend those positions. They also had to have a good grasp of parliamentary procedure and understand how best to work in a group to reach consensus and resolve issues," explained Sarah Berkey, a Social Studies teacher who together with Sherry Grutzius, an English faculty member, accompanied the Southland team to the Model UN Conference.

"Model UN is a wonderful example of how we as educators can change lives and world views on a small scale," said Grutzius.

"The UN conference isn't just about adjusting to lengthy sessions over a three-day weekend, grappling with international issues and learning to think analytically. This experience is about expanding the students' views well beyond their own school and their circle of family and friends," she said.

"For many of Southland's students, the Model UN Conference was all about 'firsts,'" noted Berkey. "Their first overnight trip with other students, their first political competitive exchange with others, even their first time ice skating," she explained.

Background Southland College Prep Charter High School, Richton Park, Illinois

Southland College Prep Charter High School, opened in August of 2010, is the only public charter secondary school to serve Chicago suburbs. Southland's enrollment is capped at 500 students by the Illinois State Board of Education. It operates under the supervision of the Illinois State Charter School Commission.

Admission to Southland is on a non-discriminatory basis with respect to race, ethnicity, disability and religious preference.

Enrollment is non-selective and students enter a well publicized annual public Lottery to earn one of the 500 seats at Southland.

The only tests for admission are successful completion of elementary school and residence in District 227's four elementary school districts which include: Country Club Hills, Flossmoor, Hazel Crest, Homewood, Matteson, Olympia Fields, Park Forest, Richton Park and Tinley Park.

Southland College Prep Charter High School is focused on preparing all of its graduates to enter and to earn a bachelor's degree from a four-year college or university.

Southland College Prep operates on a European school model nine-hour school day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. five days a week. The college prep curriculum is rigorous with a strong emphasis on math, science, technology, language and fine arts.

Students earn 32 credit hours; ten more than are typically required of traditional high school graduates.