

# The Planning Perspective of GSLMUN

By: Meghna Kommu



GSLMUN

Due to the pandemic, the annual The Hague International Model United Nations (THIMUN) trip was canceled. Nathaniel Doty, Co-Secretary-General of the Upper Model United Nations (MUN) at the John Burroughs School, was “a little disappointed, but not surprised or mad.” The Upper MUN team was not discouraged, and “realized that THIMUN being canceled would allow [them] to focus [their] attention somewhere else,” according to Katie Holekamp, another Secretary-General at Burroughs. “[This] was an exciting possibility,” she says.

So, instead of THIMUN, the team decided to form their own MUN conference for their local community called the Greater St. Louis Model United Nations (GSLMUN), which took place on March 5th and 6th. The pivot from THIMUN to GSLMUN was “a natural progression of our mission as an MUN team,” according to Doty. “The idea [of our own local conference] has been percolating for years.” “I think it was somewhere in New York at the UN Youth Leadership Summit that the idea for an MUN conference based on

St. Louis issues that invited students from across the region first sprang up,” says Shannon Koropchak, the faculty sponsor for the conference. “When we presented the idea to students last April as a possibility we were really inspired by their enthusiasm.” “We recognized the importance of civic engagement and bridging the gap between the many different parts and schools of our city,” states Doty, who “thought that focusing on St. Louis issues could bring us all together and achieve greater buy-in from local students.”

And indeed it has. The student-initiated and student-led conference sparked the interest of six other local schools, with students ranging from middle school to high school. While the schools were only “a fraction of the dozens of local schools we contacted,” says Doty, the Upper MUN team is “hoping [their] successful conference this year will draw more students and schools in the coming years.” The team was still “very excited about this number [of schools] since this is the first year this conference has been put on,” says Holekamp.

Though the pivot from THIMUN to GSLMUN was pretty straightforward for the MUN team, the actual planning of the new conference required plenty of preparation. Although the team “generally knew how to prepare for someone else’s conference, but [they] were far less certain about creating [their] own event,” says Dr. Koropchak. The team started planning the conference back in August, beginning with emailing local public and private school representatives to gauge interest. “We struggled this year to get our message out to other schools to join the conference despite sending hundreds of emails to probably 50 schools in the STL area,” explains Dr. Koropchak. The team wanted to have many participants before they contacted the speakers, but soon realized that they needed the commitment of a speaker, who was Ms. Maxine Clarke, the founder of Build-a-Bear, to arouse more interest.

Once students from other schools became committed to the conference at the beginning of this year, “[the team] realized how much work was left to do to pull anything off” and “really stepped up in a big way in these past few months to create something meaningful,” says Doty. “We met every weekend on Saturday to work on and set tasks for the week,” says Holekamp. The sixteen members of the Upper MUN team split up into different roles to ensure a well-run and successful conference. “We had a communications team marketing our conference, a planning team working on the conference details, a team reaching out and coordinating with potential speakers, and a mentoring team, given that our conference used a new format and has many first-time delegates,” explains Doty. In addition, at the conference, the team has also split into a system of chairs, chat monitors, and support staff to make sure everything runs smoothly.

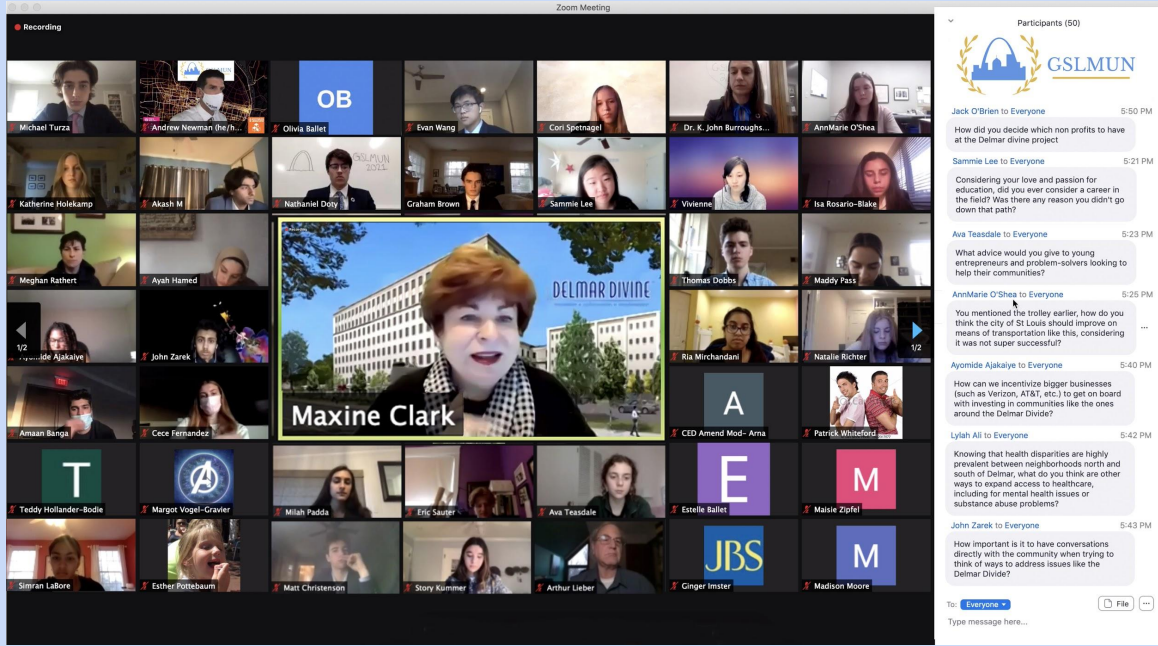
“While this year’s crazy circumstances certainly gave us the time and space to get this conference off the ground, we are realizing how important continuing this conference [was] to our community,” explains Doty. “We [saw] so many



positives come out of this, including an increased level of civic awareness and connections with students from other schools.” The conference was truly “a unique opportunity for Model UN students around the St. Louis area to be able to discuss St. Louis issues,” explains Holekamp. Although the Upper MUN team hopes to be able to return to THIMUN soon, the team is sure to “find a way to keep GSLMUN around in the coming years.” “We really enjoyed how this development process and conference brought so many new people into the MUN program, and we feel that the experiences in terms of mentoring, collaboration, research, program development, leadership and so much more are really wonderful to offer to students,” concludes Dr. Koropchak.

# Maxine Clark

By: Ava Teasdale



The keynote speaker for the first day of the GSLMUN conference was Ms. Maxine Clark, founder of Build-A-Bear Workshop and Delmar DivINE, a \$100 million real estate initiative on Delmar Boulevard. Ms. Clark offered insight and advice on solving Saint Louis issues to the nearly fifty people who listened to her speak over Zoom.

One of Ms. Clark's most recent project, the Delmar DivINE, directly relates to one of the conference's main topics: the Delmar Divide. Once the long-vacant hospital building's renovations are complete, Clark's mixed-use development will provide shared office space for local nonprofits across Saint Louis, as well as approximately 150 reasonably-priced apartments designed for a young and diverse group of professionals.

"We asked her to speak because she is directly working to fix the Delmar Divide

with her leadership, and we believe that she can provide valuable insights on one of our topics of debate," says Nathaniel Doty, a Secretary-General of GSLMUN.

Attendees first learned about the conception of Delmar DivINE. Ms. Clark noticed the eight-acre lot, previously St. Luke's Hospital, was for sale after she spontaneously took an alternate route driving home. After discussing the matter with a friend, Ms. Clark decided to purchase the building for renovation. "That's sometimes how things happen, you're in the right place at the right time," said Ms. Clark, whose entrepreneurial background inspired her to repurpose the building for nonprofit collaboration.

While the founding of the Build-A-Bear Workshop was more intuitive for Ms. Clark, getting donors and other



companies on board with Delmar DivINE proved more challenging. Once Ms. Clark raised enough money for the project, every internet company she asked refused to provide the widespread free internet access Ms. Clark wanted for Delmar DivINE. Her team at Delmar DivINE has since worked around the issue, and Ms. Clark told participants that the building will be an accessible hub for students and workers to spend time working and collaborating.

Collaboration is indeed the emphasis of Delmar DivINE's work. With such a fragmented web of nonprofits across the city, Delmar DivINE wants to provide a space for organizations to share resources and streamline their efforts. Public health, education, criminal justice, and immigration are all related, and Ms. Clark feels that treating those issues as related is most effective.



Ms. Clark also offered advice to the GSLMUN participants looking to bridge the division within Saint Louis: make friends with people both north and south of Delmar. For Ms. Clark, a diverse collection of friendships has immeasurable value. She encouraged participants to go out of their comfort zones and get to know people that are different from them. "It's really all about relationship-building, and that's what I did."

# Jeff Smith

By: Ava Teasdale



At the Greater St. Louis Model United Nations (GSLMUN) Conference, Dr. Jeff Smith, a former state senator, college professor, charter school founder, and progressive candidate for the US House in 2004, talked to MUN attendees about his experience in politics and the prison system. After serving a 366-day prison sentence due to seemingly minor campaign violations, Dr. Smith pivoted to work on education and prison reform in Saint Louis. Since his time at the Federal Correctional Institution, he wrote a book called *Mr. Smith Goes to Prison* and has become an outspoken critic of America's prison system.

“With his political experience, knowledge about pertinent local issues, and dedication to our local community, Mr. Smith is the perfect person to talk to our delegates about local politics,” says Nathaniel Doty, a Secretary-General of GSLMUN. “He has a really interesting story to tell, and hopefully his talk with the students will inspire them to work towards ending the inequalities and injustices that exist within the prison system,” says Katherine Holekamp, another Secretary-General of GSLMUN.

He told attendees about the start of his political career and his campaign for congress, in which he was very much the underdog. “It was an uphill battle, but I believed I was the best candidate for the job,” said Dr. Smith of his run for congress in 2004. Name identification, or lack thereof, made it hard for Smith to make major gains in the polls. At the time, Jeff Smith was running against Russ Carnahan, a big-name representative, and son of a political dynasty in Missouri. Dr. Smith, on the other hand, barely got a single percentage point in preliminary polling. “Pretty much, I was a total nobody,” added Dr. Smith.

Despite this, Dr. Smith was determined to come out on top. He spoke with dozens of voters and knocked on hundreds of doors, and eventually, he rose in the polls. “There’s only one thing every [candidate] has got the same amount of, and that’s time. So I was determined to use my time better than anybody else was.”

Dr. Smith found only one stain on Mr. Carnahan’s record: he had missed more votes than anyone else in the Missouri State House. Smith’s

campaign wanted to publicize this fact, and when a shady but well-to-do political outsider, Skip Ohlsen, offered to print postcards against Carnahan, his campaign agreed to work together to share the data. “I knew something was fishy about that, but I also believed I was the best candidate. That ultimately led me to making a terrible decision.”

In coordinating with a third party on the advertisement, Smith’s campaign illegally circumvented campaign finance laws, a move that would eventually land Dr. Smith in prison. “It’s okay to believe that you’re the best for the job,” advised Dr. Smith. “But beliefs turn into actions, and actions turn into habits, and habits become your values. And values are really your destiny. And in this case, it became my destiny.”

It wasn’t until five years later, after he was elected as state senator for Missouri’s 3rd district, that the federal government prosecuted Dr. Smith. Dr. Smith recalled the devastation he felt telling his loved ones his mistake. “Five years before, I had wanted to win so badly that in just a few moments I had completely thrown away everything I had spent my entire life trying to accomplish,” said Dr. Smith. Dr. Smith’s time in federal prison opened his eyes to the way the prison-industrial complex dehumanizes incarcerated individuals. “When you go to prison in this country you are stripped of your name and given a number, you are stripped of your clothes and given prison garb, but ultimately though, every day you are stripped of your dignity,” said Dr. Smith. His experience at the Manchester Federal Correctional Institution in rural Kentucky was a jarring experience that alerted him of the problems in America’s prison system. He told the MUN attendees of the psychological damage that prisoners deal with for the rest of their lives.



“We do not do much of the things that other countries do to try to ensure that it’s not a revolving door for people coming to prison,” said Dr. Smith, who pointed to the rehabilitation-focused prison systems in places like Norway and Denmark. The United States’ comparatively high re-incarceration rates are, in Dr. Smith’s opinion, largely because of the prison system’s criminogenic setup. For example: although prisoners must pay for their basic supplies and toiletries, Dr. Smith’s prison job paid only 2.5 cents per hour. Though common in the US’ prisons, this practice prohibits prisoners from getting basic supplies and contacting loved ones, things researchers know are key for rehabilitation.

“In almost every respect, I was privileged in comparison to 99.9% of people who come out of prison,” said Dr. Smith of his re-entry into the real world. Indeed, the former state senator had savings, a home, a Ph.D., and over 300 letters of clemency, but still had a hard time finding a decent job after his release. “Imagine how hard it is for so many other people coming out of prison without such advantages,” added Dr. Smith.

Dr. Smith worked for a Saint Louis nonprofit and as a professor in New York City before returning to St Louis to work for Concordance Academy of Leadership, a nonprofit that helps incarcerated individuals re-enter their communities. He advocates for more humanely operated prisons, meaning incarcerated people can upgrade their skills, get remedial or advanced education, address mental health challenges, and stay in touch with loved ones. “None of us are safe, especially in a region that has significant public safety challenges, because the prison doesn’t do very much to rehabilitate people in the prison system,” Smith adds.



# Airport Privatization

By: Meghna Kommu

The GSLMUN conference was split into two forums, the Commission of Health, Education, and Welfare (CHEW) and the Commission of Economic Development (CED). In the CED, the main topic focus was on airport privatization in St. Louis, an issue on whether or not the Lambert-St. Louis International Airport should have “sources of private capital that could stimulate airport development and increase an airport’s ability to run efficiently and competitively while remaining financially stable, given lesser dependence on local or state governments” and to pay off the \$639 million debt of the airport. The topic paper also mentioned considering some of the profit-sharing arrangements for non-airport purposes.

Delegates of the conference represented presidents, aldermen, councilmen, and mayors of the greater St. Louis area. Many of these delegates had Zooms or phone calls with the leader that they were representing to get a better understanding of the positions that they should take on the issue. Their tasks before the conference were to come up with a few clauses that answered whether they should privatize the Lambert Airport of St. Louis or not.

During the opening speeches and moderated caucus, numerous ideas were presented and rebutted. Eva Kappas, who represented the President of the Board of Aldermen in St. Louis, proposed that airports should become public companies and “partner with a private business,” allowing the airport to be “bought partially” so that both parties of the airport and the company receive fifty-fifty stock, allowing compromise and the advancement of paying off the debts. Esther Pottebaum, who represented the St. Louis County Head of Police, proposed for airport privatization to lessen the high crime rates in St. Louis, considering that seventy police officers work in airports, so making the airport private would allow the private businesses to “hire and train other security guards that could replace the police officers,” allowing the airport police officers to combat city crime. Estelle Ballet, who represented the Council Woman from District 4, wanted no privatization, concerned that there was a chance for failure and that there was “no need to privatize

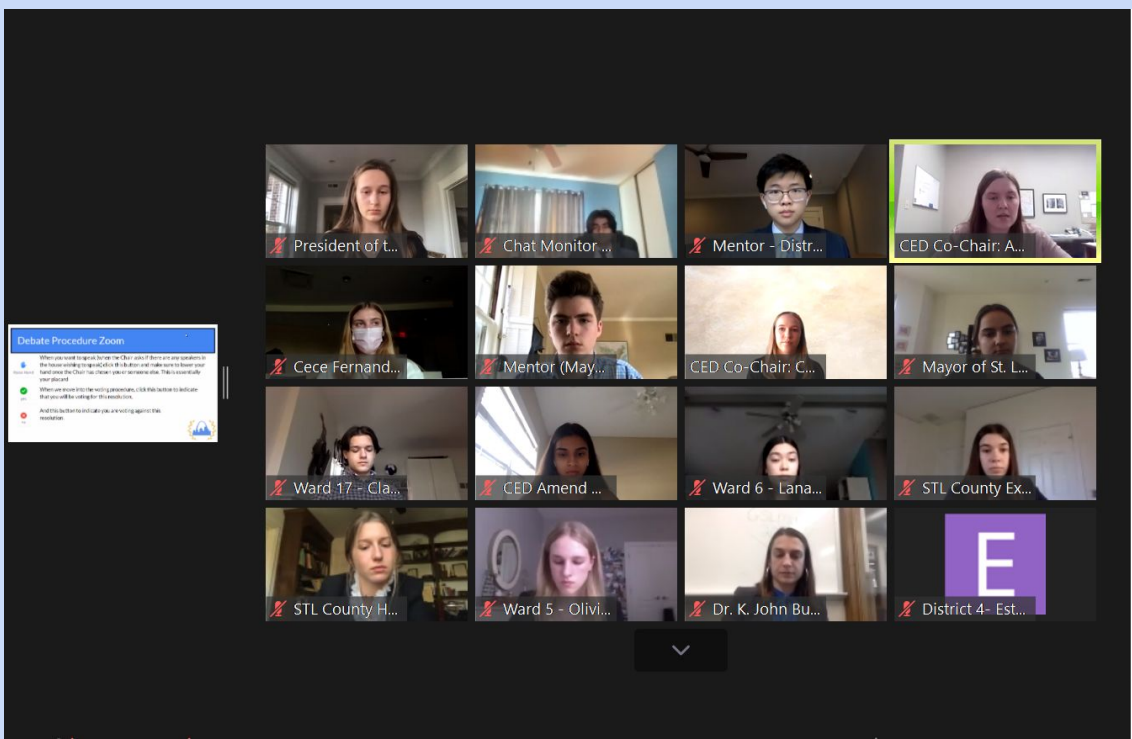


for a temporary influx of cash,” considering that in a few years the cash from the payment of the airport from a private business wouldn’t have made too much of a valuable difference for the development of the city of St. Louis.

In the unmoderated caucus, delegates could go into the breakout room of their choice, one of them being for airport privatization and one room being against. In the thirty-minute time period that they had, delegates could collaborate and form alliances in their breakout room to make one big resolution that included and made a compromise with all their ideas.

In the breakout room that was for airport privatization, delegates proposed for “the city charter to create the private corporation *St Louis Airport Management Services* (STAMS), which has the right to invest on behalf of the City of St. Louis with the express goal of generating supplementary revenue for the City of St. Louis that will go into the general tax collection fund to be used for City purposes” and “act as a conduit for the Airport Authority and a pre-approved private investor to operate the airport.” STAMS would be a public company in which investors can buy stock in. A pre-approved private investor must give a payment of at least \$1.5 billion dollars for 49% of the *St Louis Airport Management Services* (STAMS); the money would be used to fund airport development and further distributed to the City of St. Louis for communal use. The debt of the Lambert Airport would be paid by both the private investor and STAMS.

In the breakout room that was against privatization, delegates proposed for St. Louis to “not reactivate its consideration of full airport



privatization, due to the limited success in other airports, and the importance of Lambert International Airport to St Louis’ profits and the greater community.” In this group’s opinion, the temporary money from private businesses would not be helpful in the long-run in improving Lambert Airport and the city of St. Louis. Instead of privatizing the airport, delegates proposed for the Board of Aldermen to take 60%, or \$208 million, of the “public safety” police budget and use it for airport rejuvenation and also for the improvement of infrastructure, community improvement, social services, etc. To help with debt, surrounding county governments, as well as regionally-based corporations and businesses, are given the opportunity to acquire a stake in the ownership and management of Lambert International Airport instead of a private investor.

During the debate the next day, both sides fluently and persuasively presented their resolutions, and both sides effectively rebutted and spoke against the opposing side’s resolutions. The delegates who were against airport privatization presented first, followed by speeches against their resolution. In the end, the majority of delegates voted against this resolution, so the resolution against airport privatization was not passed. The delegates who were for airport privatization went

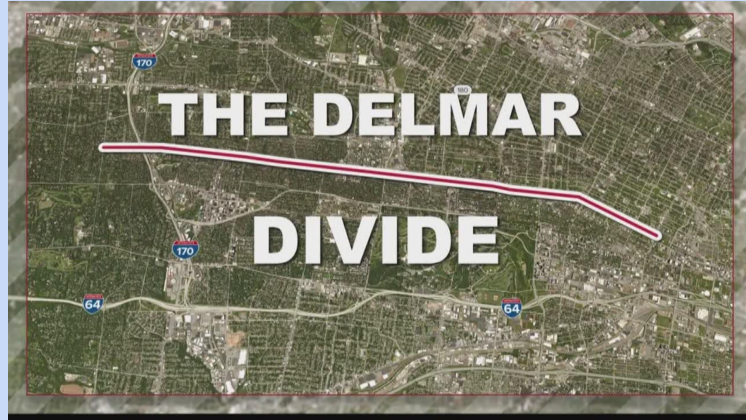
next, followed by a cross-examination from delegates that were against privatization. Delegates voted for this resolution for privatization with the striking of one minor amendment clause, and the resolution soon passed with a unanimous vote.

Overall, the delegates had done commendable work on the writing and presentations of their resolutions and their performances during the debate and should be proud of themselves for their effective collaborations and progress that they have made over the past few days. Through the conference, the delegates were able to learn and comprehend the issues of their own communities. “I liked the focus on local issues, encouraging students to take action outside of the conference on the topics they formed opinions about,” says Kappas. “I would actually prefer to go to conferences focussing on local and state issues in future years because it provides an opportunity to see how you can have a much more direct impact on your community than you would have to talk about global nuclear weapons or something more removed.”



# The Delmar Divide

By: Ayah Hamed



In the forum for Commission of Health, Education, and Welfare (CHEW), the issue of the Delmar Divide was discussed. The beginning of the Divide dates back to a 1916 law promoting racial segregation. Even though this law was overturned almost thirty years later, the Divide is still apparent in today's communities as the Southside of Delmar is flourishing with modern technology, high-quality education, and many other positive aspects, whereas the North is dramatically struggling to catch up with its next-door neighbor. Roughly 44% of the Northern population lacks internet access, and almost 60% are hesitant to receive the Covid-19 vaccine.

In the middle school session, younger students such as Jack O'Brien, the alderman for Ward 17, understands how "important it is to create programs to stop the separation of the North and South." Alongside O'Brien, Alexander Doty, the County Executive, hopes to "solve the great problems of the region ... by working together."

During the unmoderated caucus, a time where delegates work on resolutions, a variety of ideas were proposed such as developing infrastructure in impoverished areas, providing public transportation, expanding technological resources, and making a safer and healthier environment. Ayomide Ajakaiye, the Circuit Attorney of the forum, brought her background knowledge to the table. "I saw a lot of statistics that said students living in high crime areas don't do well on tests," said Ajakaiye.

She suggested that "police and architects work together to help revitalize the community." In this partnership, necessary action will be taken such as "creating weatherized homes, schools, ... additional public parks and green public spaces" as well as "an increase in surveillance cameras in areas with higher crime." In support of this, Doty also mentioned the importance of providing relief to stressful mothers. In low-income areas, women are shown to receive only six weeks of paid maternity leave. Expressing their concern, the delegates strove to create "the legalization of mandatory paid leave for parents." They even provided a specific time frame of one month before delivery and six months after. Typically, topics such as these are ignored; however, in regards to the Delmar Divide, the delegates realized it is an important issue that needs to be addressed.



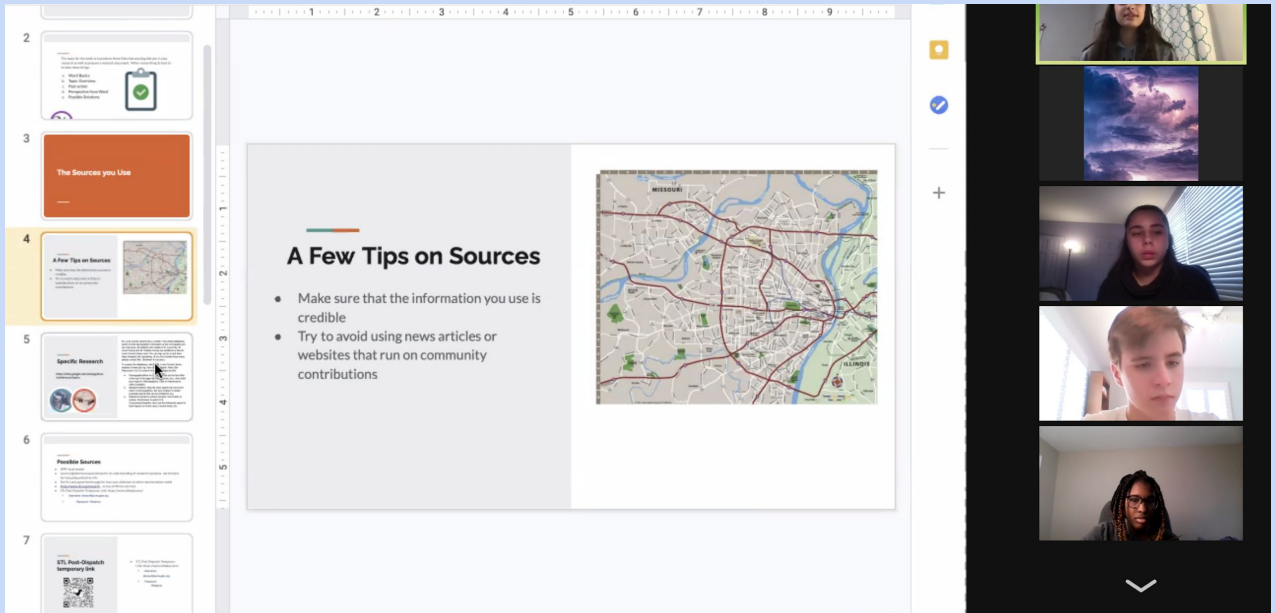
When thinking about other effective solutions, Hana Ilahi, the Council Woman from District 5, expressed that “using public-private partnerships would benefit the issue.” As the pandemic continues, internet access is one of the most important resources a person needs, as almost everything has gone virtual; however, in North Delmar just under half of the population lacks access to stable connectivity. Not only would these partnerships help provide families with an internet connection, but textbooks, masks, and other educational resources would be supplied as well. As the development of the resolution progressed, Doty urged everyone to think about “Covid-19 and the importance of equity in the pandemic.” Ilahi agreed and further spoke about resolving “the mistreatment towards minorities” in the medical field.

Together, the delegates suggested the distribution of Personal Protective Equipment, federal loans, and Covid-19 vaccines as a way to get closer to the equity people need. They discussed solutions about the hesitancy many African Americans in the area express towards the vaccine and in turn hope to use sacrilegious places and small businesses to help spread positive communication about the inoculation.

As the time to vote on the resolution approached, all of the participants in the forum voted yes in favor of passing the resolution. All in all, the delegates did an exemplary job thinking about the issue through multiple angles, such as further developing the education system, healthcare system, police force system, and establishing partnerships.

# GSLMUN: Middle School

By: Ayah Hamed

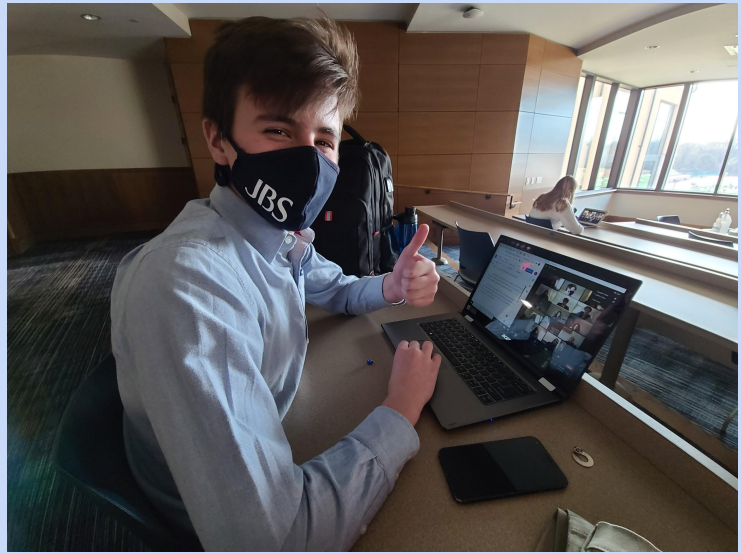


Although many things have changed due to the unanticipated Covid-19 pandemic, some aspects of student life continue virtually, and Model United Nations' work educating young people is no exception. In a typical year, middle and high schoolers from all over the world would come together and engage in a United Nations-style debate over global issues. However, at the moment, this was not possible due to people attempting to stay safe and prevent transmission of Covid-19. Even though this may be the case, the John Burroughs School is still dedicated to helping the younger generations stay engaged by hosting a virtual the GSLMUN conference inviting students from all over the St. Louis area to participate in discussions regarding local issues such as airport privatization and the Delmar Divide.

Leading up to the summit, Burroughs hosted weekly "mentoring sessions," which Nathaniel Doty, Co-chair of the conference, suggests "was essential to getting everyone conference-ready," considering this was the first MUN-style conference that many of the middle-schoolers would be attending. During these meetings, members of the Upper MUN team provided middle schoolers with useful information and tips that would help them succeed as MUN delegates such as where to find helpful articles, what websites should be avoided, how many operative clauses are best, and so much more. Students were able to learn and grow as MUN delegates through the mentoring sessions, and their progress was indeed evident considering their thoughtful and meaningful debate at the conference.



Mentors stayed welcoming and supportive for the middle schoolers even throughout the conference. Doty kept reassuring the younger participants, “We are here for you!” and indeed they were. The leaders never deprived the voices of the younger students as they allowed them to go rogue and work independently from the older participants. In discussions, students were thoughtful and enthusiastic about the new ideas their peers proposed for the Delmar divide issue, such as improvements of relief programs, transportation, equal rights in the healthcare system, and public-private partnerships. While working on their resolution, Story Kummer, a member from District 1, reminded her peers about the mentoring sessions when the mentors “put in one of their slideshow presentations that it’s not always the best to put a lot of sub-sub clauses,” emphasizing the importance of the meetings and how much they resonated with the middle schoolers.



At the end of the unmoderated caucus, when everyone came together, Doty asked the students how the session was, and the responses were overwhelmingly positive. Story Kummer, a member of District 1, thoroughly “enjoyed the conference” and had “a great experience.” Ayomide Ajakaiye, circuit attorney of the middle school forum, shares, “I loved that everyone had a voice in the conversation ... and people brought their unique opinions.” As portrayed through the conference, it is evident the Upper MUN team strives to give younger students the voice they need---a voice that can work with others and help create resolutions for global issues. Even though life can be unpredictable, one thing will always remain certain: JBS MUN will always ensure that students have a space to be themselves and help the world become a better place.

