

## **Sophie Minot, OR – 2024**

I have been thinking about the richness of this week for the past month since USSYP ended and there is no way I could encompass it in this short little essay. I'll try to sum up the best parts.

1) I loved the bus rides, waiting for events to start and the meals, really any time I got to have a focused conversation with another delegate or Military Mentor. I heard about software writing for Dove (the toiletries company!), gambling in Nevada, formulating veggie-milk protein, siblings going to Stanford and Yale, parents from all over the world, favorite dishes, best friends, and mutual awe for the program that brought us together.

2) Seeing the remarkable thought processes, creativity and enthusiasm of my fellow delegates in action during the foreign crisis simulation and all the Q&A sessions. It was beyond cool to collaborate and learn from this set of extraordinarily accomplished people.

3) The wisdom the speakers shared with us. "You never know when, or who, is watching you" - Sonceria Ann Berry, Secretary of the US Senate. We got to hear these words of advice on Monday morning in the Kennedy Caucus Room. On Friday, the same exact sentiment was repeated by General Charles Brown, Jr. the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. From what I can tell, this advice couldn't be truer. During swim practice my coach likes to remind us, you are here, you've committed your time to this so you might as well give it everything you've got. If you are going to spend your time on something, why wouldn't you push yourself to do the best you can? In swimming, your hard work is rewarded by pride in doing your best, better PRs, medals and recognition. It sounds like, in government, your hard work is rewarded when someone happens to see you. But General Charles Brown, Jr. said you shouldn't just wait around and go with the flow. You need to listen, but you also need to determine what you want and then you have to make that known. Don't be afraid to speak up. On Tuesday, Naz Durakoğlu, Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Legislative Affairs said that for her, random events and saying yes to each opportunity had gotten her to where she is today. In combination, these stories made me realize my life plan will be constantly evolving and my goals will certainly change, but I certainly need to work hard wherever I am. So when Brian Kamoie quoted Mary Oliver, "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" my answer was, I will work hard, keep my eyes peeled, and give my full effort to each opportunity.

In conclusion, this program changed everything for me. Now when I say hi and introduce myself to someone, I bring the same enthusiasm I learned from the other delegates in D.C. and when I imagine success, I imagine being in a room, having dinner, or just coffee, with all of them again.