



ODUMUN News

ODUMUN President Katie Keith wins the 2023 Neufeld Leader of the Year

It should not have been a surprise.

Everybody sitting at the MUN table in the Blue Room on 18 April was delighted when ODU President Brian Hemphill announced that the winner of the 2023 *Ellen Neufeldt Leader of the Year Award* was Model UN President Katie Keith.



You got it! At the Annual SEES Awards Banquet, 18 April 2023

Katie was ready to graduate three weeks later with her major in Political Science and minors in Geography and Environmental Studies. She has been active with the Model UN throughout her four years at ODU, including election for two consecutive years of service as President of the Model UN Society. She represented ODU on delegations to conferences across the United States, with major country and crisis assignments in events featuring Ivy League and Big Ten competition. She chairs major bodies at ODUMUNC.

Katie Keith's presidential leadership got the Model UN through two pandemic years,

2020-21. These were two years of furious adaptation to on-line activity. Even when everything else was closed—classrooms, hotels, restaurants and borders—ODU remained an international competitor and provider. Katie's leadership was the model for the Model UN activism under adversity.



ODUMUNC President 2021-22 and 2022-23, Katie Keith, received the 2023 Neufeld Leadership Award from ODU Provost Austin Agho and President Brian Hemphill. *Photo: Chuck Thomas.*

Then in autumn 2022 she reversed course, guiding the MUN as it returned to in-person activity. Under her leadership, the MUN expanded membership among incoming students, many of whom had forgotten the entire point of extracurricular activity. She led the membership, re-learning forgotten skills. It was an essential transition, difficult when we discovered how quickly an undergraduate organization forgets, as experienced leaders graduate. And she created the space other Society leaders were free to achieve their own goals.



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In his nomination letter, ODUMUN Faculty Sponsor Aaron Karp wrote, ‘Katie worked harder than anyone could have asked to keep the Society vibrant, prospering even in the pandemic. I am convinced her leadership and activism benefited the entire ODU student community and high schools throughout the region and internationally, ensuring international activity was available to all ODU students and participants at our

conferences, even when not much else was happening.’

The award, ODU’s highest commendation for student leadership, is named for Dr. Ellen Neufeldt, the long-serving vice-president for student affairs. Dr. Neufeldt left ODU in 2019 to become President of California State University in San Marcos.



Keith with (from the left) ODUMUN’s Tyler Rector, Miles Perry, J Belin, Aaron Karp, Blaizen Bloom and Rue Willis.
Photo: Dr. Laura Delbrugge.