Students who were assigned the role of Journalists for the Council’s 2020 Model Senate Committee on Foreign Relations program were tasked with writing articles that summarized the day’s events. After preparing for the conference by conducting research and preparing interview questions, these students carefully observed their assigned subcommittee sessions and interviewed Senators and Expert Witnesses in order to write their articles.

Name: Mikayla B.
School: Bodine High School for International Affairs
Subcommittee: Migration in the Western Hemisphere

“There is nothing more important than a good, safe, secure home.” While many of us can attest to this, this statement especially rings true for the millions of families who are seeking safety, refuge, and opportunities in a foreign country. Many of us have been blessed with a consistent and secure home, however, this is not the reality for the families who are facing the harsh experiences of migration or forced displacement. Due to various factors such as natural disasters, government corruption, and socioeconomic adversities, the western hemisphere has experienced an influx of migration and an impending crisis.

When examining our country’s future and involvement in resolving this crisis, we must ask ourselves 3 questions: 1) How do we maintain our domestic interests while promoting safety and self-determination for those seeking asylum? 2) How do we protect the human rights and dignity of asylum seekers? 3) When drafting possible solutions, how do we apply the integrity, liberty, and equality we pride ourselves on? These questions acted as a guide for the students participating in the World Affairs Council’s Model Senate. This past March, brilliant young leaders gathered to model our Senate Foreign Relations Committee and to discuss and pose solutions to various global issues, one being migration. Students acted as expert witnesses and presented various policy proposals to relieve the immigration crisis. Despite the wide range of views, a majority of expert witnesses agreed that our country has been historically founded on immigration thus, the U.S. should welcome immigrants with open arms, protection, and easier access to citizenship. While several possible solutions were addressed, some of the most notable and widely-felt consisted of establishing treaties with various Latin American countries and repealing their sanctions, constructing habitable living spaces for asylum seekers, and allocating more funding in urban Hispanic communities. With its strong policy recommendations, the Migration council had been the only panel to receive bipartisan support on its resolution.

Throughout the program, students not only experienced an in-depth glance at how our democracy works but also gained a deeper knowledge of global issues and the various perspectives that
accompany them. With the strategic thinking, immense passion, and impeccable leadership demonstrated throughout this program, we can be certain that the future of our country rests in good hands.

School: Julia R. Masterman High School  
Subcommittee: Cybersecurity & Election Interference

Upon entering the Fox School of Business and being seated in the main auditorium, there was a slight emptiness to the room. As more students arrived, the auditorium wasn’t completely filled to the brim with student leaders and delegates, as it usually is during traditional summits. Nonetheless, there was still the same sense of excitement and curiosity coming from each student. This eagerness was highlighted during the guest speaker, Craig Snyder’s, opening address, as everyone attentively listened and asked questions. The opening plenary session, especially during the main speaker’s speech, presented valuable perspectives on how to handle the roles and assignments we were given throughout the day. After dismissing the witnesses, senators, and senator aides, each of the three committees dispersed into their assigned rooms where discussions swiftly began. In the subcommittee of Cybersecurity and election interference, the group as a whole discussed rising issues of cyber-attacks and electronic tensions between major world powers, as well as the issues of the international community in terms of Cybersecurity.

The beginning of the delegation consisted of Chairman Cory Gardner, Representative from Colorado, enforcing the time constraints, scheduled testimonies, and period to formulate the committee’s final resolution. Both Chairman Gardner and Ranking Member Edward Markey spoke on the topic at hand before calling the first round of expert witnesses to the panel. Senator Gardner remarked: “the significance of this issue of Cybersecurity is obvious, it is the protection and distribution of personal data or of the federal legislature.” He later stated: “there is a direct relationship between a person’s ability to create and that same person’s ability to destroy using cyber platforms.” Senator Markey also highlighted the importance of the topic by commenting: “We ask you, when you think about Cybersecurity, think about the businesses in which Americans are consumers and also think of the products in which Americans use every day.”

After Chairman Gardner and Ranking Member Markey provided these opening statements, they further reminded the witnesses of the set time allotted for each opening statement: only thirty seconds. The Senators were also told their three minute window of questioning witnesses had limitations of three questions per witness. After this, the first round of expert witnesses were called to the panel. During the expert witnesses’ opening statements, many proposed similar solutions to cyber attacks; such as Lawrence Norden and Bruce Schneider who mentioned the concept of switching to paper ballots. Among these ideas, there were also other proposals which included an international cyber court, monetary policies in Cybersecurity, and relations between foreign powers leading to sanctions.

After all the expert witnesses gave their brief opening statement on their view of Cybersecurity, the floor was opened to questions from senators. The senators did an excellent job of questioning the witnesses’ ideas in order to better understand how a solution could arise from this problem.
Several of the questions brought up pertained to the matters of funding Cybersecurity, the likelihood of possible future attacks, etc. The next three panels of witnesses functioned in the same manner as the previous; each witness was allowed a brief thirty seconds to present an opening statement, followed by questions from senators. As the session continued, the expert witnesses continued to offer fresh perspectives on the rising issues facing the subject of Cybersecurity.

The topic of China’s rising influence, along with Huawei, China’s largest telecommunications company, was introduced during the discussion of Russia’s ability to meddle in previous, and potentially, future elections. The debate between offensive striking vs. defensive backing was explored, especially when the senators questioned witnesses about Russia’s retaliation. To combat this argument, numerous proposals were presented, such as implemented economic sanctions to fix Russia’s election interference problem. On the topic of preventing weaknesses in Cybersecurity, expert witness Joseph Maguire responded by stating: “with a peaceful Cybersecurity system, we would be closer to world peace as a whole.” There were also other statements from expert witnesses on the same topic of defending Cybersecurity against election interference: “We will never be one hundred percent safe since Cybersecurity constantly evolves and we must evolve with it.” Thus, again, highlighting the main problem and importance of implementing an effective Cybersecurity protocol within the United States.

Approaching the end of the final panel of witnesses, the question of funding in Cybersecurity was brought up once again, to which Jens Stoltenberg, one of the witnesses, stated: “the current department of defense spending is estimated to be around 686.8 billion dollars [and the problem of limited financial sources for Cybersecurity comes from the] lack of awareness and lack of how to invest.” Stoltenberg also asserted that: “this is really a new era of global conflict where conflict does not occur from tanks, bombs, planes [but instead comes from] implementing malware and sending viruses to computer systems.” In the concluding remarks on the topic of funding, Stoltenberg commented: “I think it's just, as we progress further into the 21st century, something like this will become more common where more nations will set aside defense funding for Cybersecurity.”

Once the last panel was questioned, the senators and senator’s aides quickly began discussions on writing a final resolution during the working lunch. The bipartisan agreement during this designated time was relatively smooth, and each senator worked well in creating the final resolution. During each of the discussions, Senator Cory Gardner effectively took control of the conversation to maximize the number of inputs given, with help from Senator Edward Markey. After the working lunch was over, the expert witnesses returned to the delegation room and read aloud the proposed resolution. During this time, the expert witnesses did a great job of questioning and clarifying the clauses in the resolution, in order to modify the final consensus and include all the main points that were presented. The senators also did a great job in clarifying their intended ideas, all the while collaborating with additional points brought up.

Overall, the discussions and collaborations that were brought up by both parties of senators and expert witnesses helped enforce the strongest resolution that could be formulated. In the end, these productive talks and arguments led to the completion of a passed resolution. Once the resolution was passed by a majority vote within our Cybersecurity group, all the subcommittees
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Program Overview

The 2020 Model Senate was run by students with a thirst to learn about events going on around the globe. For once in their lives, young adults were capable of speaking out on topics that they were knowledgeable on, without fear that an adult will criticize them for being too young to know about such sensitive things. The students attending the program held onto the chance to have their voices heard and jumped into their roles.

Ranging from the titles of senator to expert witness, everyone was prepared. The expert witnesses answered every question that was fired at them with conviction, while the senators attempted to find gaps in their answers. Students stood up and voiced all the previous information they learned through weeks of preparing, in turn creating engaging discussion. The program was amazing for the students in high school who rarely get the chance to discuss topics such as migration, cybersecurity, and more. In addition, it gave everyone the opportunity to learn more on these subjects through the different views of political officials that are helping run the United States.

The World Affairs Council of Philadelphia and Temple University showed their passion and acceptance of students participating in the 2020 Senate program. The program had the adults take a step back, allowing students the ability to discuss global issues and some potential solutions. The young adults of today are the future politicians and problem solvers, with a need to be heard by all who are willing to listen, and the audience at Temple University were hanging onto every word that was spoken.