

# Model U.N. tests students diplomacy

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International delegates huddled in small knots Friday, working out compromises, checking on idle threats and trying to prevent wars, as pages scurried from room to room delivering messages in the first Central Texas Model United Nations session at St. Edward's University.

Just as in the real world, the crises kept occurring.

Nigeria threatened war with Cameroon over a peninsula both countries claim. Cameroonian delegates asked the United Nations for help.

Larry Cameron, a Lanier High School student who acted as the ambassador from Djibouti, took the initiative to solve the make-believe impasse by calling a caucus of the African nations. He and Mayra Del Valle, a Nigerian delegate from Reagan High School, groaned as they talked about dealing with the tough Rwandan delegate, Jennifer Harkness from LBJ High.

Cameron turned to a fellow delegate from Lanier and said, "Go get Rwanda, even though they are kind of overpowering. They've just had a war, and you don't want to mess with these people."

This little drama was one of the crisis scenarios acted out by students from eight Austin, Round Rock and Eanes high schools who portrayed delegates in the model United Nations at St. Edward's. They planned an agenda for debates, but the crises called for improvisation.

"The goal is to provide something that forces them to go beyond what they have learned," said Paul Goode, chairman of the model United Nations crisis committee. "Being able to respond to crisis on the spot is the keystone of diplomacy."

The model U.N. session was led by Stephen Thibodeau, a graduate student at the University of Texas who was secretary-general; Goode, who is on a break from his studies at the Moscow Linguistics University; and other students from UT, Southwest Texas State University, Southwestern University and Austin Community College.

Austin middle school students were pages, and true to U.N. procedure, the pages even barred the doors during Security Council votes.

**Illustration:** PHOTO Boris Hristov, a Westwood High School student, representing Bulgaria, participates in a vote on a resolution involving Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and the United States at the Central Texas Model United Nations at St. Edward's University. The event featured high school students playing the roles of international delegates debating and solving crisis situations concerning world diplomacy. Austin middle school students were pages. Hristov was born in Bulgaria.

Ralph Barrera

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