SAU students compete in Model UN

Students representing Syria and Lebanon

(From left to right) Jose Moreno-Pelayo, Christopher Harris, Nimendra Mawalagedara, Valerie Maangi, Dr. Young, Prashant Acharya, Subir Shakya, Jonathan Martin, and Abhishek Devkota competed in a Model UN at Arkansas Tech University.

Christopher Harris, Staff Reporter

This past weekend (Nov. 2-3), seven Southern Arkansas University students competed at Arkansas Tech University at a Model United Nations and won two awards. The Model UN is a competition in which students are assigned a nation and then represent the assigned nation, much like the actual United Nations. SAU was assigned the currently hotly-contested countries of Syria and Lebanon.

“All throughout the day we participated in three different council meetings where we debated some hot topics and tried to solve the problems,” Nimendra Mawalagadera, senior political science major from Sri Lanka, said.

Before the competition even begins, model UN participants begin their research on the country they are assigned and try to learn as much as they can about the country. During the competition, participants are required to act as if they are actually from the country they were assigned.

“This makes the competition more difficult because if you don’t do your research, you don’t know who your allies are,” Chris Harris, senior history major, said.
Mawalagadera began working on getting a team together last year when she decided to compete in the 2012 Model UN. After petitioning the Student Government Association last year, Mawalagadera was turned down because she did not have enough supporters. This year, Mawalagadera grew her team and found a faculty sponsor to drive them.

“Dr. Young (Assistant Professor of History, Political Science and Geography) was very enthusiastic about helping us and has been a huge asset to the team,” Mawalagadera said.

The team competed well against other schools that have been competing for years, and has decided to continue with the competitions in the future. Currently, the team is looking at another competition this semester in Arkansas, and two competitions next semester.

The SAU Model UN team is currently working hard to improve in their abilities so that they may compete at Harvard University’s Model UN competition, where over 200 different countries will be “represented”.