Participation in the 11th annual International Symposium for Educational Reform offered opportunities for cross-national collaboration and discussion about improving the quality of educational systems. The 2015 Symposium theme, *Educational Reform and Leader Preparation for All*, served to encourage discussion between education policy makers, school leaders, academics, and students. They contemplated how their reform efforts, if used across countries, could inform and enhance contemporary research, policies and practices in educational settings.

Impactful benefits of participation in the Symposium were opportunities to discuss various topics on an international scale that included:

1. National educational reform trends or efforts
2. Educational leadership preparation in response to national trends
3. Research efforts to inform leadership policy and practice

The setting for the Symposium – Uppsala University in Uppsala, Sweden – was especially noteworthy. This University’s founding occurred during the Middle Ages in 1477. Currently, the school has a student population of 24,000 full-time students and 2,400 doctoral students. Uppsala University is home to several notable faculty, scientists, and researchers: including physicist and astronomer Anders Celsius, inventor of the Celsius scale.

The small town of Uppsala, Sweden is a 20-minute train ride from the much larger Stockholm, Sweden. Comparably, Richmond, Kentucky is just a 20-minute drive from Lexington, Kentucky. Uppsala has beauty and character intertwined with the presence of a university with a rich heritage. The University and community are intermingled, similar to other urban campuses, yet the environment embodies a small town and country feel; as well as a large bicycling and walking population within the campus community.

The exploration and dialogue with scholars from various continents has allowed me to consider how differently institutions of higher education can affect change in their environments. My introduction to Uppsala University and participation in the Symposium provided me with a view of how universities and communities can exist in an integrated town–gown relationship. Since my return, I have been able to utilize insights gained in relation to campus and community relations.

Thus far, I have had the opportunity to lead the C3 Campus Challenge Camp where insights gained through dialogues and my visit to Uppsala University’s progressive architectural, yet heritage rich campus, allowed for a unique view of how universities and communities can grow. Together they can embrace beauty, achieve positive change, and sustain profound contributions to teaching and research over several hundred years.

In the future, I intend to highlight and utilize these experiences with students and others to encourage professional development, lifelong learning, and utilize contacts to help others excel where applicable. This exposure goes hand in hand with EKU’s slogan ‘Come here, go anywhere’. I highly recommend students of EKU to be bold, take opportunities to travel abroad, receive exposure to other countries and ways of living in order to expand and add value to their experiences that can then be shared with the world.

Thank you for your support in this opportunity!

Kristel Simon Smith