A feature of the LAHC Student conference through the years has been the emphasis placed on leadership. Representative democracy relies on leaders to accurately represent the views of their respective peoples. Building on this principle a Model United Nations forum was used this year in the belief that better-informed and active citizens can only make better leaders. With this in mind and accommodated at a luxurious beach-front hotel in Copacabana, 69 student delegates representing 21 LAHC schools gathered last month to discuss two issues of global importance at the British School of Rio de Janeiro.

The four days were certainly very intense, much of the time spent in session debating and negotiating. However, there was also time for relaxation and fun. The so­
cials on offer included a visit to the Corcovado Mountain with its famous Christ the Redeemer statue, dinner at the aptly named Porcão restaurant, where you are literally encouraged to eat like a pig, and also a disco on the final evening which was accompanied by the premiere of an amusing video of the event. New friendships were made, stories, jokes and experiences exchanged. Secretary-General Cesar Beck’s choice of the phrase, bridging the gap between cultures, proved to be very well chosen.

The delegates

The Security Council – The Palestinian and Israeli Conflict

On the eve of the conference violence once more erupted in Palestine which left the Security Council charged with a sense of urgency. A defining feature was the serious and mature attitude displayed by the delegates as well as the sophisticated and intelligent nature of the debate. Director Frederico Cox reports,

“During the debates: serious, respectful diplomats. During their leisure time: friendly and receptive people. The four days of the LAHC student conference was an incredible opportunity to encounter such students, making my experience, and hopefully theirs, nothing less then unforgettable.

Whilst directing the Security Council debate I was very pleased to see the enormous respect for peace and human rights which drove all 29 delegates representing 15 nations. The result came accordingly: a two-page resolution, passed unanimously, condemning “the wall” and overall encouraging peace and prosperity for both
Whatever the place, be it the formal atmosphere of the conference room or the more relaxed hotel lobby, talking to any of the 69 students proved to be an enriching cultural experience. More than in any place I have experienced, the similarities and differences between people of different nations were so evident, a contrast which truly made the conference as great as it could be. It was amazing to see how students shared so many interests, anything from music to politics.

Now the conference is over I feel a sense of satisfaction for having helped create such a fascinating experience for the delegates and staff. More than this, a feeling of optimism and hope that if any of the delegates present do become leaders in the future, be it in their community or in their country, the world will be a better place.’

**ECOSOC: Safeguarding the Rights of the Child**

An everyday feature of modern cities is the increasing number of young children on the streets trying to earn money. It is the right of all children to enjoy childhood free from such pressures. This was just one of the many issues facing the delegates of the Human Rights Commission. Director Rita Lobo reports,

I hope the students now appreciate the importance of the much questioned dress code for its equally important facets of formality and neutrality!

Hope to see you all at BSRJMUN4.

David Williams
Pastoral Director
British School of Rio de Janeiro

 ECOSOC in Session

'Directing ECOSOC at this year’s LAHC student conference was an experience I will never forget. Not only were the delegates immensely prepared and engaged in the topic, but they were also passionate and enthusiastic. It is so exciting to be involved in an event such as this one that brings so many young people from such diverse backgrounds, together working as a team for a better future. I hope the participants found this experience as memorable and valuable as I did, and I look forward to seeing them again at the next MUN.’

Democratic debate and collective decision-making are the key elements of any definition of citizenship. Well-informed and active individuals may develop into the more sympathetic leaders of tomorrow that the world so desperately needs, people who will better represent the needs of communities and will ensure that problems are addressed. The students who took part in this conference should be thoroughly congratulated for their energy, enthusiasm and appropriately formal behaviour, and also for their collective intelligence. The struggles between governments that inhibit real world diplomacy very often are a reflection of the problem of concentrated political power. The issues under examination have witnessed painfully slow progress towards finding long-lasting and satisfactory solutions. This conference was a demonstration of the power of active, rather than passive, citizenship. Democratic participation and respect for the opinions of others resulted in two well-meaning, balanced and problem-solving resolutions. It was also a very enjoyable experience for all those who took part.

Spot the British School!

At the Corcovado