Almost 600 students from 11 global sites are set to compete in ‘Host Nations: A Refugee Simulation’

Friday 25 January, 2019

The United Nations University institute in the Netherlands, UNU-MERIT, will host 43 graduate students in the 2019 NASPAA-Batten Student Simulation Competition on 23 February 2019.

This year’s competition - a partnership between the University of Virginia Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, and the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) - will connect 585 students from 11 global host sites including Cairo, Dhaka, Maastricht and Mexico City to tackle policy issues linked to forced migration through computer-based simulated gameplay.

Developed by experts at the Batten School’s Center for Leadership Simulation and Gaming (CLSG) using extensive real-world data, the simulation places students in leadership roles within a time-sensitive, fast-paced environment where they must work together to solve complex policy issues.

“We designed the *Host Nations* simulation to be challenging, exciting and educational,” said CLSG Director Noah Myung. “The game was developed using real-world data on a pressing and timely issue. Participants, placed in teams, compete with other teams to select the best approaches to asylum policy in different economic and political environments, while their success is measured against specific metrics and policy objectives. Incorporating scholarly knowledge from fields as such as economics, migration studies, and systems modelling, we have created a versatile learning tool that can be deployed anywhere in the world.”

Built specifically for students of public policy, *Host Nations: A Refugee Simulation* is a web-based experiential learning tool. Taking on roles such as Prime Minister, Minister of Employment, or Minister of Health, players work in teams to manage a migrant influx. Each player is in charge of a distinct policy portfolio and the decisions they make will affect not only their own country but the other teams’ as well. The game challenges participants to weigh human rights, integration, and GDP growth against budget restrictions and political resistance. Teams will be evaluated on simulation scores, negotiation skills, and presentations made to regional site judges. A panel of prominent ‘super judges’ will determine the global winner and award USD $5,000 in prize money.

“Simulation-based learning is an incredibly valuable tool, offering some of the most exciting, intense, and impactful learning on the planet for public affairs education,” said NASPAA Executive Director Laurel McFarland. “In the classroom, our graduate students have been trained to be problem solvers, team players, and analysts— these simulations enhance students’ abilities to tackle complex policy problems they may face in the real world. They'll be ready for the next influx of migrants—or for whatever crisis they might face in their public service career.”

This is the fifth year NASPAA has conducted the student competition and third year partnering with CLSG to produce the simulation. Thousands of students from NASPAA’s global network have participated in the competitions, which examine a different multifaceted policy issue. For the 2018 NASPAA-Batten Student Simulation Competition, CLSG created a public health crisis simulation in which participants battled a dangerous pandemic. Following the competition, CLSG developed a classroom version, now available for free through their website. The simulation has since been used in university classrooms in Maryland, North Dakota, and Virginia to teach important concepts about public health policy as well as critical thinking skills.

***About NASPAA**: The Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration or NASPAA is the global standard in public service education. It is the membership organization of graduate education programs in public policy, public affairs, public administration, and public & nonprofit management. Its over 300 members - located across the U.S. and in 24 countries around the globe - award MPA, MPP, MPAff, and similar degrees. NASPAA is the recognized global accreditor of master’s degree programs in these fields.*

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***About CLSG**: The University of Virginia's Center for Leadership Simulation and Gaming at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy prepares students for public life by allowing them to test real-world solutions in a virtual environment. The CLSG designs, develops and implements cutting edge simulations and experiments to advance education in leadership and public policy; conducts rigorous leadership and public policy research using simulations and experiments; and creates a community of scholarship where faculty, researchers and students are supported in their scholarly efforts related to the methodology of simulations and experiments.*

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***About UNU-MERIT**: Based in Maastricht, the Netherlands, UNU-MERIT explores the social, political and economic factors that drive technological innovation, with a particular focus on creation, diffusion and access to knowledge. Following the integration of the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance (in December 2010), the Institute functions as a unique research institution and graduate school covering all aspects of governance in domestic and global organizations, and as a UN think tank addressing a broad range of policy questions on science, innovation and democratic governance.*

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