

Samuel Epstein - VT - 2011

When someone says that you are “down to earth,” that is often the greatest compliment you can receive. Under normal circumstances, I would agree. USSYP, however, has changed my interpretation of that axiom. I’ve come up with a new definition of down to earth, because at USSYP, no one was down to earth. At USSYP, I was fortunate enough to meet some of the biggest dreamers I’ll ever know. I met a delegate who wants to become a United States Senator. Another aspired to be an intelligence analyst with the Central Intelligence Agency. Yet another is hoping to work in environmental law and marine conservation. And not one delegate laughed off the possibility of becoming President as being too ridiculous.

Some say you need to be realistic. As Dave McMurtry, Senior Vice President for Strategy and Innovation for Habitat for Humanity International, offered us three key pieces of advice. He told us to aim high on the learning curve, seek disruption and value creation, and *love what you do and do it big*. The final point is perhaps the most important thing I learned while at USSYP, and it is a lesson I will carry for the rest of my life. Nothing has ever been achieved without risk-taking, and no one has ever taken risks without dreaming big. At USSYP, everyone was dreaming big, a testament to the courage and inevitable future success of the delegates. As Congressman Cory Gardner (R-CO), a USSYP alumnus, said, “You’re not just here to be a part of history; you’re here to make history.” Maybe that’s too cliché and hopeful. I believe, however, that people need to set lofty goals to affect change. There was no shortage of high aspirations at USSYP, which had a tremendous impact on my goals and dreams for the future.