

Read the students APEC blog

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GREENVILLE, S.C.—When President Barack Obama spoke at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference in Japan last week and said America was committed to reducing trade barriers and opening markets throughout the Asia Pacific, five Furman University seniors had an experience no classroom could duplicate. They heard President Obama’s remarks live.

The Furman students were attending the weeklong APEC conference in Yokohama as Voices of the Future Delegates, where they lived with fellow students from the representative nations and met with international policy makers and economists. In addition to hearing Obama’s speech, some of the highlights included visiting Nissan headquarters in Yokohama and hearing a presentation by Mexican President Felipe Calderon.

The Furman students attending the conference were Nora Collins, an economics major from Greer; Karim Kanjani, a political science and economics major from Peachtree City, Ga.; Marissa Pavia, an economics and Spanish major from Greenville; Katie Shultz, a political science major from Hoover, Ala.; and Elizabeth Trenary, a political science and history major from Raleigh, N.C. The group was accompanied by professors Cleve Fraser (political science) and Jessica Hennessey (economics).

The university’s participation in the APEC conference is sponsored by the Riley Institute at Furman. According to Don Gordon, director of the Riley Institute, Furman has been asked to serve as the official student host for the Voices of the Future program at next year’s APEC conference in Honolulu, Hawaii.

“To be at such an important international event with the leaders of the 21 Pacific Rim countries and have such remarkable access to the political and economic interchanges and policy discussions is an experience that creates huge advantages for these Furman students,” Gordon said, “and to watch these students and see the level of knowledge they bring to the conference makes me especially proud of what Furman provides.”

Established in 1989, APEC is a forum for 21 Pacific Rim countries that seeks to promote free trade and economic cooperation throughout the Asia-Pacific region. This year's meetings took place Nov. 7-14.