

APEC 2004

Furman students and faculty emerge from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit with a deeper understanding of how U.S. policies affect other countries.

As an economics major, Jordan Teague '05 understands that the United States is a driving force in the world's economy. After all, America accounts for approximately 30 percent of the world's gross domestic product.

But the opportunity to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit, held in November 2004 in Santiago, Chile, helped her gain a deeper understanding of how U.S. policy impacts other countries.

Established in 1993, APEC works for economic cooperation that facilitates bilateral trade and investment. The APEC countries represent 2.5 billion people with a combined gross domestic product of \$19 trillion, or 58 percent of the global total. They account for more than 50 percent of world trade.

The organization's signature event is an annual summit hosted each year by a member nation. Representatives from 21 countries attended the 2004 summit, which generated headlines around the world and featured appearances by President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and the presidents of China, Japan, Russia and South Korea. Government corruption, terrorism and international trade policy were popular topics, as was the development of a standardized shipping system that would allow countries to track freight and monitor content.

Teague and six other Furman students — Amer Ahmad '06, Dan Ennis '06, Monica Handa '07, Mike Overby '05, Chris Schoen '07 and Cindy Youssef '07 — were chosen to attend the international conference through a program sponsored by the Richard W. Riley Institute for Government, Politics and Public Leadership and conducted under the auspices of the Virtual Trade Mission (VTM) Foundation. The Washington, D.C.-based foundation is dedicated to educating students, educators and business people about the emerging global economy.

The Furman trip was made possible by a grant from the John I. Smith Foundation.

The students, who were accompanied by political science professor Cleve Fraser and economics professor Ken Peterson, were considered "citizen diplomats." While rubbing elbows with international business executives and trade officials, they lived, worked and socialized with their peers from APEC member countries and helped to create a digital video of their experiences.

Says Teague, "After talking with students from various nations of the Asia-Pacific region, I began to better understand the degree to which U.S. policy affects not only our country, but also the functioning of the rest of the world's nations."

In all, 120 students from around the world participated in the program. They were granted press passes and had access to government officials, trade ministers and business executives. The Furman students spent much of their time interviewing conference attendees and mingling with their international peers, but they also had the chance to tour the area and learn how Chile, once ruled by military dictator Augusto Pinochet, has developed one of the fastest-growing economies in Latin America.

Don Gordon, director of the Riley Institute, says that Furman plans to participate in future VTM trips to South Korea and Vietnam, which will host APEC summits in 2005 and 2006, respectively.

“The VTM program is going to be an increasingly important resource for Furman over time and in a variety of ways,” he says. “It will engage our students, help us recruit international students by introducing them to Furman representatives, and help to expand Furman’s national and international reputation.”

— **John Roberts**