

2009 International Student Leadership Conference in Hong Kong

If the United Nations Climate Change Talks in Copenhagen later this year are doomed to fail, then the Knox delegation to the 2009 International Student Leadership Conference in Hong Kong may be all we have left if the world is to avert environmental catastrophe.

After leaving the country in the midst of a chilling winter, the humidity typically associated with Southern China's jungle climate caught many of us by surprise. Arriving at the conference with shirts almost glued to our backs, there was no time to sit back and enjoy the air conditioning – instead, Knox was busy manning the trenches, trying to figure out, with the help of our international allies, how to win the war on global warming. At the conference, we were placed in stakeholder groups from Greenpeace to British Petroleum, after which we were tasked with developing an action plan on how our designated organisation would reduce its carbon emissions. The chance to present our solutions on the final day of the conference gave way to the emergence of an interesting consensus on the most effective way to deal with climate change, but also, helped to affirm that old school saying – 'rarely is a Knox boy lost for words'.

The international flavour of the conference itself was exceeded only by its exotic location. The experience of a different culture to our own is always an enlightening experience, but no memory of our journey to the Orient will remain more profound than the opportunity Hong Kong shopping presented to hone our negotiating skills. From fake Rolexes to imitation Burberry shirts, the measure of a Knox man quickly became his ability to drive a hard bargain.

On behalf of the Knox delegation, I would like to thank both Miss Schultz and Mr Gooding for not only organising and accompanying us to Hong Kong, but also ensuring the conference was a success. We are grateful and we look forward to the day when Knox can host its own International Student Leadership Conference.

As John Goldie writes:

This conference has been one of the most enriching experiences I have undertaken, both academically and personally. Against the backdrop of the ultra modern, fast paced, culturally fascinating chaos of Hong Kong and with companions from as far abroad as India and Australia, the conference offered a real world approach to our development. We were enticed by material with endless potential and given the rare opportunity to explore that potential on our own terms. In groups we had the burden of our final presentation, the culmination of our internal and social explorations, which was ultimately the most satisfying aspect of the conference. We were free to push our expectations further and were given insight not just into the real world, but the trajectory young people of the calibre of those that sat around me would take. Participation required intelligent action, but more so, the confidence to express the qualities of a leader. Ultimately, this conference was, for me, a master class in my persona, not my academic merits, and for this purpose, I will treasure it highly on my educational journey.