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A Youth Voice at International Summit

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A youth voice at international summit

When world leaders gathered in Canada for the G8 and G20 summits, Melissa Greenaway '12 had an unprecedented glimpse of politics on a global scale.

A major in political science and economics, Greenaway has not just seen the need for change, but has been a part of it. Greenaway was selected as one of seven college students to represent the United States at the My Summit 2010 conference, held in Canada in June alongside the official G8 and G20 summits, and heard passionate debate along the way.

The G8 Summit is an annual forum for leaders of eight industrialized nations to address global challenges through discussion and action. The G20 Summit is a forum for discussion about the international finance system; finance leaders from 19 countries and the European Union participate.

"Melissa was one of only seven students in the entire United States selected by the Canadian government to attend the summit meetings — she was representing our country," says Dawn Nowacki, professor and chair of the Political Science Department. "The experience of seeing the G8 and G20 operate firsthand is invaluable to someone like Melissa who studies political economy."

Greenaway's interest in communications and foreign affairs led her to apply to be a student delegate to the conference. She was astonished to be selected.

"It was shocking but so exciting at the same time," says Greenaway, a member of the Linfield swim team, water polo club, and Alpha Lambda Delta and SPURS honor societies. "I knew it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

The conference was diverse with participants attending from around the world. "The best part was meeting all the different people from all the different countries," Greenaway says. "Everyone I met was really enthusiastic about being there and being the youth voice on issues."

Workshops gave the youth delegates the opportunity to discuss, debate and negotiate the same issues that were considered by G8 leaders. Their debates covered topics such as terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation, food security, maternal and child health, and climate change. The discussions culminated in a communiqué that was presented to leaders at the G8 Summit and included the delegates' suggestions for action on the various topics.

"I thought, 'This is why I'm here, I want to be involved in this process,'" Greenaway says. "Your opinion can be heard."

Greenaway said one of the greatest skills she developed through the summit was learning how to negotiate between differences of opinion. "It's not always black and white," she says. "I credit my Linfield professors for making me look at both sides of an issue."

Using her communication skills overseas, Greenaway is now spending fall semester studying at the University of Nottingham, England.

"Melissa is an extremely strong writer and very articulate," Nowacki says. "She has flowered under the influence of her liberal arts education, and her selection to attend My Summit 2010 attests to her intellectual development and academic skills."

The experience helped Greenaway solidify future goals. She hopes to attend graduate school to study international relations and eventually work in government. She also plans to continue traveling and gaining a greater understanding of the issues outside the United States. 🌍

— Crystal Galarza '13

