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# Japanese exchange students travel to Gardner-Webb



Photo by Brittney Johnson

By: Brittney Johnson

For the past two weeks Gardner-Webb University has hosted four Japanese exchange engineering students from Chiba University. In order to strengthen their English and learn about America's engineering system, the four students became a part of Gardner-Webb's first ever exchange program.

Enthusiastic and curious, the four students, Hironori Sakamoto, Kyouhel Miyama, Yoshitaka Toeda and Ryosuke Mori, have jumped right into life here as an American student. From visiting major cities in the area, experiencing a different class setting and having a language barrier, the group will return home with many stories to tell.

From the moment they arrived Dr. Lorene Pagcaliwagon said the four exchange students have had great

energy. Although they were not acquainted beforehand, to see them all together you would not know this. Each with different levels of English, the guys stuck together and helped one another out, even working as a group to order a pizza completely in English.

It was clear that the guys got a real taste of southern hospitality. When Mori was asked about his favorite thing during his visit, other than his new found love for sweet tea, he said everyone was so kind. He learned about southern hospitality.

"When it rains here, you guys don't worry about umbrellas, you just run," said Mori.

Mori also mentioned the culture shock of being constantly asked "how are you?" or "how are you doing?", while shopping or out and about. "That's not something we do in Japanese culture," he said.

In their two weeks spent here, the guys went to a Charlotte Hornets basketball game, visited the NASCAR Hall of Fame along with Duke Energy power plant. They took a trip to Charleston, South Carolina and even experienced Krispy Kreme doughnuts.

On March 5, at 4 p.m. there was a farewell dinner open to the students, faculty and staff. All four were given certificates for their studies at Gardner-Webb and each of them put forth major efforts to communicate with students and staff.

There seemed to be a unanimous yes between the group and their plans to make another trip back to the United States.