

TAKING OFF



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What does “Internationalization” on the OGU campus really mean?

The focus of our previous newsletter examined the value of sending OGU students abroad as well as the benefits and the priceless experience they receive in terms of language, cultural awareness, and global life skills. Currently, only a relatively small fraction of Japanese students will participate in any short or long term exchange program during their four years at OGU. Therefore, it is essential to work on gradually internationalizing our home campus to expose our “home-bound” students to different ways of thinking, communicating, and interacting.

Initiatives in both Europe and parts of the US to make use of and further develop the internationalization process within home university campuses have been widely discussed and regularly practiced. Until recently, the mission to “internationalize” the OGU campus was not made a university-wide educational priority, primarily because most people were not certain how to embark on this task. But I believe the time is now. In order for Japan to compete globally and for OGU to compete domestically, we need to be progressive thinkers and move forward to internationalizing the OGU campus.

“How?” You might ask. The process of “internationalization” could include a wide variety of strategies, policies, classes, and activities. OGU could: have more foreign faculty teaching on campus; offer a larger number of courses in English focusing on international issues and subjects; integrate global issues, case studies and internships into the regular Japanese courses; establish more faculty led short-term programs abroad; host more faculty and staff exchanges with other foreign universities, and encourage more international joint research projects with other foreign faculty. The list is endless.

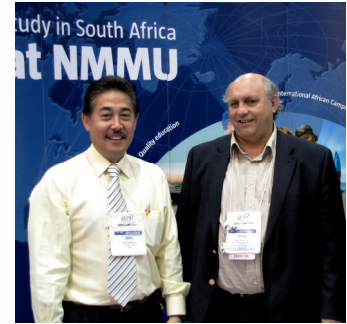
However, the incoming international students who come to study at OGU every year are perhaps the most powerful internationalization mechanism on campus. Many people on campus do not realize the value and positive affect of

having international students from up to 20 countries on our campus and as part of our OGU family. For example, some of our international students take regular Japanese courses and seminars together with OGU Japanese students. Others join sports, cultural clubs and circles on campus. Many participate daily in I-Chat and others socialize and study outside of the classroom with our Japanese students.

For the majority of our OGU students, who will not have the opportunity to study abroad-, the chance of meeting, talking, making friends, and spending time with our international students will at least present them with an authentic window and special opportunity to learn about people from other countries and cultures, how others think, communicate, and live. Their friendships with the international students could also become the catalyst for our Japanese students to become interested in studying in a foreign country. The international students help our students understand that “being different is okay,” and many of our students experience a “paradigm shift” by learning that although we may look different physically, we are all still very similar. We all belong to the human race.

Faculty that teach the international students in regular courses, seminars, English courses, J-Bridge classes, and Japanese language courses, have all highly complimented their commitment to study and learn and their endless effort to work hard. They often comment about what positive role models they are for the OGU students.

There is no actual method to measure how much influence the international students have on our students and on our campus. However, if you talk to OGU students who frequently visit I-Chat or the international student lounge in Building #1, you are sure to hear positive comments about their friendships and experiences with them. Ultimately, the international students have direct influence on our students and help promote campus-wide awareness of internationalism. Naturally, their presence pre-



Mike with Dr. Nico of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in South Africa

parens our OGU students to understand interconnectedness of peoples and cultures; build acceptance of different cultures, values, and attitudes; and encourages our students to appreciate global diversity. Furthermore, they contribute much value to our Japanese students’ 4-year college education and experience at OGU.

This coming fall semester, we will host 52 incoming international students from 12 countries. These students are the “kake hashi” to the world for our Japanese students who will not be able to go on an outbound study abroad or exchange program. Moreover, they are the lightning rods that help launch the internationalization process on our campus and within our classrooms. Let’s join together in welcoming, inviting, and facilitating the interaction of these new international students with our Japanese students. Feel free to invite the international students to join and participate in any classes, seminars, and off campus class activities. It may take some work and energy to initially get the international and Japanese students to intermingle, but once things get started, the rest will be easy!

Marcel Proust once said, “*The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.*” For our students, the interaction with the international students offers them the chance to open these “new eyes” of discovery.

Mike Matsuno
International Center Director

A Message from New York: Takahiro Aoki

A senior majoring in foreign languages, Takahiro studied at Dowling College in New York for one year and returned to Japan in May of 2009.

Can I really study abroad? Can I actually do this?

I remember these thoughts of insecurity following me from the time I was selected as an exchange student until the day I left on the airplane to New York. Like a scratched CD they played over and over in my mind, “Will people understand my English?” “What are classes in the U.S. like?” “Can I keep up with classes?” “Are meals in the U.S. tasty? Yes? No? If not, how will I be able to cope with all of the new situations?” As my departure date came closer, I revisited in my mind the list of hopes and wishes I dreamed of for my new study abroad journey. I want to buy many things in the US. I wanted to make many new friends and have a good time with them! Yet, I left Japan a little worried!

My worries stemmed from my limited skills to speak English and my lack of travel experience. I couldn’t even understand the English in American movies with Japanese subtitles. What’s more, in addition to my challenges with English, I had not even traveled overseas for more than one week. My longest visit outside of Ja-

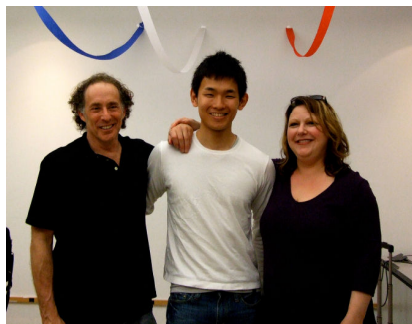
pan was back in high school on a short visit to Canada. Honestly, before leaving for this trip, I couldn’t even imagine how my plan to live in the US and study at an American University would play out.

To my friends and teachers, I cleverly masked my true feelings of uneasiness and pretended not to have a worry in the world. I wanted so much to demonstrate to them I was strong and certain about my new journey. Whenever asked if I was nervous about going abroad, I enthusiastically replied, “No, I am excited to go abroad! I want to leave for New York as soon as possible!” I went on to say “I am not worried at all. I just can’t wait to go!” Deep inside I knew that was not so and as a result, I missed out on my chance to be honest and share with my teachers, friends and family my true feelings before I left Japan. Regrettably, I departed for New York harboring feelings of self-doubt. Alas, these feelings only further fueled the growing anxiety in my mind.

Unsurprisingly, I arrived in New York confused. I myself didn’t even understand exactly how I felt about living in a foreign country to study. For example, in the past when I visualized New York City, the mere thought of it touched my spirit, and energized me. I would even get goose bumps just thinking about it. Yet once I arrived there, I wasn’t as impressed with it and it didn’t appear the way I had always imagined it to be. For the first few days I didn’t feel excited about being in New York at all. I was reluctant to allow anything to excite me. Honestly, I felt as if I was trapped. I couldn’t bring myself to relax and enjoy my new adventure. However, one day out of the blue, I realized that the degree of excitement is different

for each individual and the acclimation period or culture shock level might vary for some also. In time, I did feel “excitement” when I saw, heard and touched new things in the U.S. Once I allowed this to happen, my worries began to fade away and my adventure became a real exploration! From then on, life in New York changed significantly: I began to look at things from a different perspective. In fact, I found true pleasure in things I disliked before and gained a new appreciation for things I already enjoyed. In essence, my experience in New York taught me a very valuable life lesson: regardless of what my circumstances or environment puts before me; I am determined to face any challenge whatever it is with confidence and drive from here forward.

Despite my initial reservation to go abroad, in the end, I will take away from my experience the invaluable lesson that there are different angles of looking at the world and everything in it. I have always been disinclined to change my one-way thinking and was hesitant to expand my horizons and look at things through a different lens. Stepping out of my comfort zone was a new concept and somewhat scary for me. Therefore, I figured it was much safer to just remain in Japan rather than take any risks and possibly fail. I realize now, that being so fixed in my ways of thinking actually restrained me from being adventurous and taking any risks even though I had the desire to learn by doing new things in my life. In some ways, I was my own worse enemy. Ironically, in the end it was my own fears of leaving Japan to try a new experience which forced me to give more effort to becoming more open-minded. As a result, I now understand myself and the world around me more clearly! Why don’t you be the next OGU student to take a risk, try new things, and see yourself and Japan from the outside in? You won’t regret it!



Takahiro with teachers at Dowling College

Life at the Thai Village Camp by: Kazutoshi Takaki

Kazutoshi is a sophomore at OGU majoring in International Studies. He participated in the Thai Village Camp sponsored by Bangkok University with other Japanese university students.

I selected the Faculty of International Studies at Osaka Gakuin University because I was interested in learning about international collaboration and volunteer efforts occurring outside the classroom and around the world. For my first adventure, I chose to attend the Thai Village Camp. Unlike OGU’s long-term exchange program, there was no required language criterion for this program. I visited Thailand for ten days during the spring break and although my English level still needs much improvement, it was an exciting adventure!

Before my departure, I was filled with mixed feelings about the camp. For instance, on one hand, I had never been overseas before and I felt a little nervous. At the same time, this camp was one of the primary reasons I chose to study at Osaka Gakuin University, so I felt utterly excited to participate. Prior to my departure to Thailand, I received very worthwhile advice, hints and tips from both the International Center staff and former camp participants that truly boosted my confidence level.

My time spent at the Thailand camp and



Kazutoshi with children at the Thai Village Camp

away from Japan, became an unforgettable and treasured experience for my life! I experienced first-hand, the authentic Thailand rather than simply viewing it on TV or reading about it in a magazine. Professor Mike Matsuno told me that through this experience I would come to recognize the true meaning of “expressing thanks”, “business hospitality”, “using language as a tool”, and “acquiring courage to try new things”. All of this came true.

For the first four days in Thailand, we stayed in a hotel in Bangkok and enjoyed touring the city. I experienced indescribable excitement when I saw the various historical sites. Temples and Buddha images appeared everywhere I looked! I could feel the easy-going nature and energy of the Thai people and observed their deep respect toward the King. His photo was displayed all over the city. I was left with a positive impression of Thai people and their appreciation for taking time to enjoy life and never become rushed or pressed for time such as in Japan.

The Thai village, situated in the countryside, was quite different from Bangkok and the landscape of the expensive hotels. Although slightly nervous to leave the city, I was pleasantly surprised upon our arrival in the village. The village school reminded me of an elementary school in the Japanese countryside. The people and children in the village were very energetic and kind

and gave us a warm welcome upon our arrival. After meeting them, I now understand why Thailand is known as “The Land of Smiles”. The camp volunteers were divided into three groups: construction, meals, and caretakers for the children attending school. I was in charge of meals and construction. My group helped prepare and cook the meals. We chopped meat and vegetables, and cooked them over charcoal. While cooking, I learned some Thai words from the other volunteer students. They even gave me the Thai nickname of Som Chai. Though, the Thai university students did most of the actual cooking; one day the Japanese students made curry. The Thai students enjoyed it very much.

The construction group made cement by mixing rocks, sand, cement powder, and water. We carried the cement in buckets and constructed a foundation retaining wall. Next, we stacked blocks on the foundation to build it even higher. Even though we were instructed to take a break every twenty minutes, I didn’t want to just be a guest. I tried my best to work hard and continue to help out as much as possible.

My biggest challenge was communicating with the other university student volunteers from Thailand. Some understood English, but some didn’t. Despite not knowing how to say the words in English, I used gestures and body language to communicate with them. I think I did well, but

I do regret not studying English before going to Thailand.

The Thai Village Camp taught me many lessons. Amongst them was the importance to have gratitude toward other people and to accept others without any intolerance. Needless to say, it was a great opportunity for me to meet Thai university students my age. We all shared a common goal in our international collaboration and volunteer efforts to help others. Likewise, the Thai university students seemed to enjoy their volunteer work because they chose it, not simply because they were told to do it. Consequently, their positive and diligent attitude encouraged me to adopt the same outlook and enjoy my volunteer work very much.

Essentially, my experience in Thailand taught me a very valuable life lesson: “One will not achieve anything if they do not have the courage to take a risk and try new experiences. Taking the first step is the most difficult challenge, yet it is possible and is the most crucial step”.

At the moment, I am dedicated to my new goal and plan to study abroad on a long-term basis. From today forward, I will work hard to gain more self-confidence and will make a more concentrated effort to improve my English skills by taking the TOEIC course at OGU, and continue moving forward step-by-step onward bound!



Above: Johanna in an interview
Below: Listening to a lecture in Japanese

Johanna is an exchange student from the University of Trier and has been studying Japanese for several years in Germany. In recent years, she has had many opportunities to meet both Japanese students and teachers at her home university.

Johanna currently lives with a host fam-

Foreign Student: Johanna Lauer from the University of Trier, Germany

ily while attending OGU for her Japanese studies. Initially, they spoke to her primarily in English. However, she eventually asked them to communicate with her in Japanese because she came to Japan for full immersion Japanese studies and preferred the daily opportunity to practice. The family was very understanding and quickly began speaking to her entirely in Japanese. Johanna really appreciated their willingness to listen and grant her request.

Johanna has a passion for learning both Japanese language and culture. She actively participates in various extra-curricular activities at OGU. She especially enjoys participating in the OGU “A Capella” group. It is a small choral singing group in which members all know one another and even beginners quickly feel successful. Johanna is the only foreigner in the group and contends “all members talk to me in Japanese and interact with me no differently than any other member of the group”.

Additionally, Johanna is taking a seminar and Japanese history course with other OGU Japanese students. During this class, she often records the teachers written notes and then reviews them at home. While

taking undergraduate courses at OGU, she was surprised to learn how very different the Japanese university system is from the academic systems in Germany. For example, in Japan, university students take general academic courses in the first and second years and specialized courses in the third and fourth years. In contrast, German students study general courses in high school and take only specialized courses at the university level.

Johanna is majoring in Japanese and English Studies at the University of Trier and studies languages and literature in Japan and several English-speaking countries. Classes are instructed in German, but English Studies courses are instructed in English at her home university. Two years remain until she graduates, but her future dream is to work where she can use her Japanese language skills.

Finally, Johanna sends this message to all students: “Don’t be afraid to study abroad. You can study abroad with confidence if you do the necessary research about your destination. Enjoy your journey and interacting with people in any host country!”

(T.K.)

Home Stay News by: Lee Yu-Hung from Taiwan



Trip to Taiwan with the Kobayashi Family

Your lunch looks delicious! Did you make it yourself?" "Yes, I made it with my host mother," Yu-Hung replied.

One day, I passed by Yu-Hung who was having lunch with her friends. I was surprised to see her enjoying a lunch, which looked so tasty and delicious. It was a home-made lunch Yu-Hung and her host mother created together. She is well liked by her host mother and they even make her daily lunch together each morning!

Yu-Hung has been living with the Kobayashi family since last February. Her host mother is very kind to her and treats her like a daughter. Her host father is a very intelligent man. He is very knowledgeable about various topics and is like a teacher to Yu-Hung. He often answers any questions she asks about the world.

During the Golden Week of this year, Yu-Hung traveled to Taiwan for six days with her host parents. With a twinkle in her eye she shared, "I was so happy my host parents became interested in Taiwan." They visited Yu-Hung's parents' house and home university. They also met her university professors and many of her classmates. Yu-Hung said with enthusiasm, "we had so much fun visiting Taiwan!"

During her time with her host family, Yu-Hung became more interested in cooking. Although she could not cook when she first arrived, she has learned how to cook Japanese dishes while helping her host mother prepare family dinners. Her host mother claims that Yu-Hung did not

even know how to properly maneuver a cooking knife in the beginning. She often worried that Yu-Hung might cut or slice her fingers while in the kitchen. However, Yu-Hung was quick to grasp the skill and her host mother no longer worries about her so much during their cooking time together.

Her host mother is a very good cook and Yu-Hung loves her "macaroni au-gratin" dish the best. Whenever Yu-Hung expresses her appreciation for the great flavor of any of her host mother's home cooking, she is quickly given the recipe and is shown how to prepare the dish. Yu-Hung has learned to cook many dishes, yet her best dish is "Omu-soba (omelet + soba)." She claims Omu-soba was a challenge to make at first, but her host mother taught her how to efficiently wrap soba with eggs and now she has become a master at cooking this dish!

Yu-Hung alleges, "I will definitely miss Japan when I return to Taiwan, yet, I will be forever filled with the fond memories of learning to cook with my host mother."

(T.K.)

Additional International Center News

1) Completion Ceremony

The 2008-2009 Japanese Studies Program completion ceremony was held on July 4, 2009. Twenty-four exchange students from around the world along with one researcher were recognized for their remarkable accomplishments during a ceremony to celebrate their achievement. Congratulations to all the international students! Many have formed special bonds with their teachers, friends and host families that will continue throughout their life. As a result, it was difficult to express their final good-byes. Best wishes to all of them in the future!

2) Japanese Studies Program ~ 2009-2010

OGU will welcome fifty-two international students this coming September 2009.

Detailed schedule:

September 7 & 8: Arrive in Japan

September 10-12: Orientation

September 14: Classes start

September 19: Welcome Party 11:00-13:30

We are currently recruiting staff for the International Student Support Team (ISST). The role of this team, mainly consisting of students, will be to support new international students during their time at OGU. Join us in welcoming the new members of our "OGU family" by volunteering your time to be a part of such a great effort to help others and learn new things. If interested: please contact the International Center for more details.

3) 2009-2010 Study Abroad Exchange Program

As mentioned in a last newsletter, eighteen OGU students will depart for their host Study Abroad University beginning in July. The first student to leave will be Mr. Sho Saito, a senior

majoring in Economics. Sho will be going to the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in South Africa. He will send us periodic updates about current events, such as South Africa's preparations for hosting the 2010 World Cup.

Introducing Mr. Hiroyuki Kumei

The International Center consists of seven people: Director: Mike Matsuno, Deputy Director: Noboru Goto, Section Chief: Hiroyuki Kumei along with four other staff members.

In this newsletter, we would like to feature our Section Chief: Mr. Kumei. He has been an employee of OGU for twenty-eight years and for the past five years has been the "rock" of the International Center. Mr. Kumei is very modest about his accomplishments, is quick to credit others, and approaches IC projects while always encouraging team effort. His interests include



Kumei-san with international students

baseball, especially the Hanshin Tigers, and he also enjoys a nice cold beer on his time off from work! Perseverance, commitment to students, professionalism and his caring attitude are some of the traits, which make Mr.

Kumei very special! The international students feel immediately at ease when they meet him. He has a desire to make all feel welcome and become an integral part of the International Center family. He is very positive and patient and treats everyone with genuine kindness. In fact, the international students even affectionately call out to him "Kumei-san, Kumei-san". Many truly respect his attitude and he is loved by all! The secret word on the street is: Mr. Kumei once had LONG hair in his youth and he loves the pop group ABBA. Any truth to this trivia Kumei-san?