

Season's Greetings from the International Center: Director Mike Matsuno



Hi Everyone!

We have had an excellent fall semester! Remarkably, 51 international students from 13 countries and 23 universities arrived in early September. Their first semester came to a close on January 10th. The fall semester was full of interactive activities and events hosted by the ISST* volunteer OGU student group, international students, the four International Center Shoin Senseis, and the International Center staff.

This was the first year ever, the International Students, together with the ISST members, hosted their own International Center Kishibe-sai booth. They sold a variety of foods featured from five different countries. The foods included: Kaiserschmarrn from Austria, dumpling from China, crepes from France, Kimuchi Jeon from Korea, and peal milk tea from Taiwan.



Top: Japanese and KC teachers
Bottom: 51 international students with teachers

The remainder of the fall semester was filled with a variety of sports events held for both the international and Japanese students. There was: basketball, soccer, golf, ping-pong, and even "Salsa Dancing" led by Oliver Hamacher from Fontys University in the Netherlands! Other social events included a huge karaoke competition featuring the students vs. teachers/staff at the Big Echo, Christmas caroling, I-Chat events for Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas parties. The cultural events included field trips to both Kodaiji and the Uji sake brewery; the Japanese language class field trips to view the leaves changing, a fall barbecue; the English course class trips to the Matsushita Museum, Bunraku, and the Osaka Municipal Government Office.

While the social and recreation was fun and plentiful, most of the international students have often made mention of the "extremely heavy" workload they experienced in their university classes. They spent the majority of their semester studying Japanese language, Japan-subjects in English, and the J-Bridge courses in Japanese. The International Center staff and myself, have had the goal to offer international students a well-rounded experience with fun and enjoyable activities as well as a rigorous and demanding Japanese language/studies program. I have always promoted our program as one of the most rigorous and challenging Japanese language studies program in Japan. Our four dedicated Japanese language teachers hit the ground running in September with this year's students! They challenged the international students to really push themselves to reach their highest potential in Japanese. Most students have been very satisfied with the balance of studies and play. Lastly, thanks to all of

~Once in a Lifetime Home Visit Experience ~

We need your help! Be part of an exchange of "world cultures"! OGU's increased number of international students have completely filled our current host family homes. If you or anyone would be willing to open your homes to international students whom are currently living in an apartment or dormitory for a "short-term home stay" experience please contact the International Center. How about helping us give students a taste of traditional family life in Japan! For more details, please contact the International Center at Osaka Gakuin University.

Tel: 06-6381-8434
E-mail: inoffice@ogu.ac.jp



Top: Students playing soccer at OGU Hiroba
Bottom: Mixed student group after the basketball game

you, the OGU Faculty/staff/students, clubs/circles, I-Chat staff, home stay families, dorm staff, and the Suita Community, we have had the most exciting fall semester at our International Center so far. From all of us at KC, we want to thank you all and wish you a very wonderful New Year in 2010!

*ISST: International Students Support Team

Host Family Meeting and Guest Lecture “Intercultural Communication at Home”: Invaluable insight in your partnership with an International Student”

In November of 2009, the first Host Family Meeting was held by the International Center. Ten host families of current international students enjoyed a presentation given by Professor Kazuyuki Yasuda from the faculty of International Studies. The topic of the presentation was Clinical Psychology ~ Intercultural Communications at home. The event was both informative and well attended. Many thanks to everyone who participated.

The first half of the event featured family introductions and the sharing of stories and their experiences with their current international student. Discussion topics ranged from the challenges of preparing vegetarian dinners, student allergies to fish, shoe etiquette and family shower schedules to money talk and economics! It was a great opportunity for everyone involved to exchange their open and honest opinions. The follow-up lecture by Dr. Yasuda summarized the various opinions and provided feedback for everyone in-

volved.

The primary lecture points outlined in Dr. Yasuda's presentation included the following: “The intercultural experiences you currently face can be both rewarding and challenging. Average Japanese expectations would never be a natural intuition of any of the international students. Your experiences may actually change your perspective about the way you look at many things. Perhaps you may be often asking yourself the question: “Should I expect the international student to follow my family's Japanese customs so strictly or should I be more flexible and attempt blending or adopting their customs as well?” When you encounter challenging situations, in which you may not fully understand at that moment, it helps determine how interculturally sensitive and truly global you really are. Understanding and appreciating the perspectives of others actually demonstrates at what level you understand yourself. As a result, how

much you understand and know yourself will unveil how well you understand and appreciate others. As you play the role of parent to an international student, keep in mind, it also requires demands similar to raising your own child. Likewise, being a parent to a guest student helps us mature and grow similarly to when we raise our own child. The acknowledgment of these similarities rewards both you and your international guest with invaluable experiences.

As a host family myself, I personally extend my heartfelt thanks to all other host families for extending your warm hospitality and opening your homes to help develop OGU's educational programs. Your homes serve as true learning grounds for all international students. We look forward to conducting similar meetings in the near future and hope that families continue to participate.

Thank you.

(T.K.)

Cambridge University Queens College Study Program: Kazuki Mori (A senior majoring in International Studies)

Each September, OGU selects students to attend a study program at Cambridge University Queens College, where they have the remarkable opportunity to study economics under Dr. Murray Milgate. Although it is very difficult for some Japanese students to learn economics instructed entirely in English, the students who participate in this program become very stimulated by their study experience. Kazuki's dream came true when he became one of the selected candidates. Currently, as a senior at OGU, he is an ISST member and uses many of the skills he has learned during his overseas experiences.

The following is Kazuki's story:

After I returned from my study abroad in Sweden, during the first semester of my junior year, I was searching for a new goal. One of my teachers in the International Studies Department mentioned to me that if I took a special economics class at OGU, there was a possibility I could apply to go to Cambridge University for an economics program. That became my new goal! The special economics class was instructed via video conferencing, on the OGU campus once a week, by an economics professor from Cambridge University. The main points of the course outlined internationalization based on economics and the systems of the global economy as a whole. I didn't have sufficient knowledge of macro or micro economy, historical aspects of world economy and knew limited economic terms. Therefore, in the beginning, it was often difficult for me to keep up with the content of the class.

A year later, I was finally able to go to Queens College. There, in addition to what we learned in the video conferencing

coursework, we were exposed to a variety of topics such as: comparison of GDPs of America, Japan, England, France and China. Further, we learned how these comparisons tied to the world's economy and how each country's economy survived after changing events such as the collapse of the Bretton Woods System, the Oil revenue downfalls, the economic crisis in Mexico, the affects of the end of the Cold War and the burst of the bubble economy, etc. Moreover, we studied about the role of the International Monetary Fund and World Banks. Two of the most useful things I learned, were the effects of the Lehman shock and the ever-accelerating sinicization process. Although I studied at Queens College for only two weeks, it was an honor for me to be instructed by such a great authority on economics, Dr. Murray Milgate. Likewise, my free time there was rewarding, and I enjoyed my entire experience. If I were to note one regret, it was not having more basic history of the world's economy. Had I a more solid foundation of basic economy, I could have asked more questions and participated in more dialogue with Dr.



OGU students with Dr. Milgate

Milgate. Regardless, he was always so kind to answer my basic questions. Cambridge is a University town, so it is one of the greatest environments for any student who would like a quiet place to do research.

Much time has passed since my return from Cambridge and I am pleased to share with my underclassmen, at Osaka Gakuin University, my study abroad experiences and the many valuable lessons gained throughout my student life at OGU. During the final weeks before my graduation, I will give my best effort to share my important message each and every day with as many people as possible!



~The Special Feature: Federal Republic of Germany~

Osaka Gakuin University currently has three partner universities in Germany: The University of Trier, FH Mainz University of Applied Sciences, and Bayruth University. The partnership with the University of Trier, signed in 1995, has been particularly active with student exchanges almost annually. The following are featured essays authored by former and present exchange students from both OGU and the University of Trier.

The Mutsuko Ayano Scholarship: The University of Trier -Germany

Older than Kyoto, in 1984, Trier celebrated its 2000 year birthday of existence as Germany's oldest city. This area is famous for its beautiful river and hilly scenery with vineyards surrounding the city area. Even today, after entire sections of the city was destroyed in WW II, Trier has been rebuilt and now stands as one of the most historical areas in Germany.

Today, there are 13,000 students attending the University of Trier along with a large enrollment of international students. Since 1993, OGU has been partners in this international network, sending one or two students a year to study at the University. The irony of this exchange program is it would not have existed, if not for the tragic murder of Mutsuko Ayano in 1983. Her shocking death devastated the peaceful, quaint city of Trier, and became the catalyst that would create the Japa-

nese studies program at the University of Trier and later the exchange program with OGU.

Thanks to the parents of Mutsuko Ayano, a special foundation was established in her remembrance. Due to the Mutsuko Ayano scholarship foundation, OGU students are able to attend The University of Trier.

Mutsuko Ayano was a "kind and gentle person, just the kind of person you want in an exchange student". A Rotary Scholar, studying for her masters degree at the University of Trier, she was attacked and robbed and later died in the hospital on November 1983. One of Mutsuko's life's wishes was to create a bridge between Japan and Germany and share this dream with other students and hoped they would pass her dream forward with enthusiasm. As a result of the scholarship, her dream has become a reality.



Mutsuko Ayano Street in Trier

During her stay in Germany, she wrote profound and meaningful letters to her family back home in Japan. A collection of those heartfelt letters were published in a book titled "Mutsuko ~ The Tragic Ending of a International Student's Life in West Germany". If you are or anyone you know is interested in reading the book, there are a few copies, published in Japanese, available at the International Center.

Sadly, the OGU German Department will become history once the freshman class of 2007 graduates. The following is the testimony of two OGU German Studies majors who previously studied in Germany. Senior, Hiromi Wakai and Junior, Tomohiro Kishino. Hiromi has been a strong role model for his underclassmen and on several occasions has shared with others his treasured experiences in Germany. His most impressive message to all reveals the true meaning of studying abroad and how one's opportunities can become endless once they travel to another country.

"Reasons I went to Germany: My Life Abroad": Hiromi Wakai (Senior)

Wow, foreigners are amazing!" When I was in high school, I was surprised when I would see foreigners walking along the streets of Japan. I was raised in Hokkaido where far fewer foreigners reside in comparison to Kyoto or Osaka. Therefore, I could never imagine having the opportunity to communicate with them one on one. Even more, going abroad was never on my to-do list. Yet, in my sophomore year in college, I traveled to Germany as an exchange student for a year and had too many precious experiences to mention here.

I first became interested in Germany as a result of T.V. In the fall of my junior year at high school, I was required to select a university I would attend in my future. At that time, I never dreamed I would go to a university in Germany. Coincidentally, one day I watched a TV program highlighting the culture and beauty of Germany. It featured the beautiful streets, nature, food with portions 3 times larger than Japanese portions, and what seemed to be delightful daily German life. The TV program sparked curiosity that I never felt before. It was then, I made up my mind: I would some-

how study in Germany during my university years.

Once I entered my home university, I worked hard towards my goal to study abroad in Germany. In the summer of my sophomore year, I successfully reached that goal and set off on my new journey. My new life abroad was much more challenging than I had ever expected. I quickly realized that what seemed to be average common sense for a Japanese person, didn't work most times in Germany. As a result, I didn't have any friends and experienced a period of anxiety and depression during the beginning of my stay. However, as time went on, I made friends and quickly began to understand better, the culture and history of Germany. I even found it fun! I also introduced Japanese culture to others, which helped me to appreciate cultural differences and realize there are different ways of thinking. From then on, I tried not to judge everything so harshly, but rather, I began viewing things from a different perspective and even started looking at my home country of Japan more objectively.

I started studying German as a way to live in Germany, but in the end, I found that

the German language was actually only a tool to communicate with others during my study abroad experience. It was my increased understanding of other cultures and other people's way of thinking that was most valuable and became the most important lesson I learned during my time away.

If I were to leave you with only one important message, it would be the notion that studying abroad is not only about studying a language. More importantly, it is the language you acquire that is the key to increasing your level of intercultural awareness and widening your opportunities. Why don't you take a step in this direction?



Hiromi (center) with local students

“Benefits to a Student Studying Abroad”: Tomohiro Kishino (Junior)

I studied at University of Trier for a semester in the fall of 2008. I would like to share with you what I learned from my study abroad experience.

What I attempted do during my stay in



Tomohiro (center) with local students

Germany was to keep a sense of curiosity and an open mind in everything I encountered. While, it was challenging to do something new in a very different environment, I gave it all of my effort to have courage and remain strong. Although I failed several times and felt depressed, every time I overcame one obstacle, I matured and gained a little more self-confidence. I believe a positive attitude is the most necessary aspect to ensuring your study abroad experience becomes a meaningful success story.

If I ever had the opportunity to study in Germany again, one of the things I would concentrate on more is communicating with international students from all over the

world, as well as those from Germany. I think this would give me a better overall experience as well as more motivation to become interested and try even more new things.

Through your study abroad experience, you will learn more than you would ever know if you stayed in Japan. If after reading this newsletter, you are interested in studying abroad, take the first steps to prepare for a study abroad experience. Meet with the staff at the International Center at OGU. More important than anything, is to take that first step, no matter how scary, and begin your dream. Have courage, take a risk and go for it!



Three OGU students are currently studying at University of Trier: Mizuki Nakagawa (Foreign Languages major), Sayo Morimoto and Yui Natsume (both majoring in International Studies). This newsletter features Mizuki's report from Germany.

“My Overseas Life With A Lot of Support”:

Mizuki Nakagawa (a sophomore majoring in Foreign Languages)

It has already been four months since I began my studies in Germany. Here, I will share parts of my journey and tell you about one of the most famous events during this time of year in Germany, “Weihnachtsmarkt (The Christmas market).

First, I studied German at the Goethe-Institute in Bonn for a month before the fall semester began. Bonn used to be the capital of West Germany before the Berlin Wall came down. Bonn is a small, quiet community. As the birthplace of Beethoven, the town hosts the Beethoven Festival. The streets are full of music and events and I felt fortunate to be able to attend. At the Goethe-Institute, most of my classmates were business people, and I was the only university student. In the beginning, I was somewhat worried about life in Germany, but a student from Hong Kong who knew the town well, befriended me and showed me around. All of the classes were, of course, taught in German only, so it was hard for me to keep up with the instruction. Thanks to my helpful classmates, we all became like a family in the end.

After my study program in Bonn was completed, I moved to Trier. Trier was as

small and quiet as Bonn. Some sites, which shouldn't be overlooked, include the Trier Cathedral, Porta Nigra (a symbol of Trier), and the Trier vineyards.

At University of Trier, it is easy to make friends because there are many Japanese majors who are interested in Japan and can speak Japanese. However, if I were to speak to them in Japanese only, my German language skills would never improve. I try to communicate with them in German.

You may have heard about the famous Christmas markets in Germany. These markets are held all over Germany during a certain time of the year. The city streets are decorated in theme and are illuminated with thousands of lights. Sidewalks are lined with many small market stands where Christmas ornaments, German sweets and a host of German traditional foods can be purchased. One thing I would highly recommend to anyone who has the chance to visit is a taste of the Glühwein (hot wine). Germany is very cold in the wintertime, but this wine makes your body warm up quickly and tastes delicious! It is sold in a specially designed cup featuring each city logo. A shopper could collect each cup for souvenirs. In addition to the market stands, every Christmas market includes a traveling carnival with a Ferris wheel, merry-go-round, and other entertainment events. At the end of each evening, the sound of huge church bells chime harmoniously to mark the Christmas Market closing time. This seemed to be a traditional German custom.

Lastly, I have had so much fun and such a wonderful experience during these past four months as a result of the warm support from all of my friends here in Germany. I



Three students studying at Trier



Köln Cathedral and the Christmas market

give special thanks to Julia, Christine and Johanna whom were all former exchange student to OGU. They came to the airport to meet me, invited me to their homes, and showed me all around Trier. All of them truly support me in many ways. I feel grateful for this opportunity to study in such a beautiful environment surrounded by such good friends.

The snow is now falling in Germany. I look forward to enjoying this season, as well as even more exciting experiences in my next seven months remaining here.

International Students' Report: Sabrina May & Jacqueline Unkelbach

Both Sabrina and Jacqueline are exchange students from University of Trier. They currently live with host families and enjoy their life in Japan. Here are their impressions of Japan throughout the first few months of their exchange.

Sabrina: Incredible Japan!

I have been in Osaka for over three months now and so far it has been a very enriching experience! As a student enrolled at University of Trier, in my home country of Germany, I am majoring in Japanese Studies. Unlike most of the other exchange students at OGU, I have been on a previous exchange to Japan during high school. Although, not everything is completely new to me and I can communicate in Japanese, there are still so many things to be discovered and more incredible experiences that I can learn from.

Of course the courses offered at OGU are very helpful and I have learn a lot so far. However, I am learning an incredible amount from the extracurricular activities as well. I recently joined the Koto Club at school and the other club members are extremely nice and very open minded. Although I do not yet know them very well, they include me in their activities and therefore give me the chance to practice speaking Japanese consistently.

I also greatly benefit from living with a traditional Japanese family. I am staying with a host family for my entire time in Osaka and I am really grateful for this opportunity. I feel it is them who teach me the most. Often, their interest in my home coun-



Sabrina playing Koto at the Christmas event

try inspires me to ponder the cultural differences and our discussions about various topics helps to change my point of view from time to time. They also help me improve my Japanese and better understand the Japanese culture and its lifestyle. Both my host parents and host brothers are teaching me more than I could possibly have imagined before coming here. Even my host parents' children are teaching me new things everyday. I am amazed by how knowledgeable Japanese children are and by how devoted Japanese parents are to their children. For me, watching Japanese daily family life, helps me to better understand the Japanese people, their culture and their way of thinking.

I am really looking forward to the months ahead in Japan. Especially since the first few months have turned out so much better than I could EVER imagined!

Jacqueline: Amazing Japan!

More than 4 months have now passed since the 2009/10 exchange students arrived in Osaka. These past 4 months have been full of new experiences, that at first view, are very different from our western culture. I arrived after approximately an 11 hours flight from Germany. When I arrived in Osaka, my host mother picked me up at the bus station and took me to my new home. I should mention, that my home in Trier, Germany is located between beautiful vineyards and an abundance of lush nature. You can imagine that it was a big change for me to begin my new life in the center of such a big city as Osaka. I was really surprised, when I looked out of my bedroom window to a view of nothing but busy streets, and concrete buildings. Another surprise for me is the Japanese bathroom in my host family's home. It is not just one simple room like we



Jacqueline with other students in Hiroshima

have in Germany, but rather, consists of 3 rooms - one shower/bathroom, a separate toilet and a detached room with a sink and washing machine. One other interesting thing for me are the toilets in Japan. They are not as simple minded as I would have expected. The toilets switch on the lights for you, preheat the seat and even flush for you - how will I ever live without this when I return home?! Naturally, I could give examples such as these for hours.

In my opinion, the most memorable is, that we exchange students have had the wonderful opportunity to meet and build relationships with so many different types of people. No matter if they are students or staff from OGU, other international students, our host families or the nice combini owner from next door. Sharing the new experiences in Japanese culture and daily-life is invaluable. Becoming familiar with the Japanese teaching-style, trying all the new foods, managing homework and daily life, speaking Japanese (for example buying train-tickets), traveling to Tokyo, Hiroshima or Kyoto and last but not least singing Karaoke all night long! The time I have spent with all of the people I mentioned and having their support made my experience in Japan even more awesome and enjoyable than I could have ever imagined!

~OGU Students' Report~

"A Treasured Experience":

Daichi Misaki (A sophomore majoring in International Studies)

Hello! I have been studying at The University of Mississippi since last August. I would like to share with you, my daily experience, and how I spent the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays in the U.S.

I often think....."Thank God, I am Japanese". This was my honest feeling when I had a bad experience at a restaurant one day. The reason I say this is because this area in the US has poor customer service. As you may already know, in the US, it is customary to pay all wait staff for their service. Of course, I knew about

this before I came here, but had never experienced this before. Let me tell you about one of my service experiences I had with a very bad service waitress. While at lunch with friends the other day, the waitress from our table argued with other restaurant staff and complained a lot while we were eating. There was no way we could enjoy lunch, so I wrote \$0.00 for her tip on the tab. When she saw the amount of the tip I had left her, she was furious and remarked, "I served you, so why don't you give me a tip?" One of my friends paid her a tip, so nothing bad happened to him. However, I felt uncomfort-



Daichi with Tim's family

able to see what a poor attitude she had towards customers. This was quite different from any Japanese staff I had ever seen, so I had a difficult time understanding her point. It seemed as if she served customers simply for the money. This is only one example of culture shock I experienced.

Next, I will share with you the two big holidays I spent in the U.S. I spent Thanksgiving Day with Wesley's family, who came to OGU on a short-term summer program in 2009, and Christmas Day with Tim's family, who was an exchange student from Dowling College in New York. First, Thanksgiving Day is the day to celebrate the first harvest and is celebrated annually on the fourth Thursday of November. On this holiday, family members and relatives who live far away gather and eat turkey,

pies and a huge home cooked feast in fellowship. Secondly, although Christmas Day seems to be the day for lovers in Japan, the true meaning of this day is to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with family members and relatives. Christmas presents start piling up under the Christmas tree about a week before Christmas. Americans value family time together. During these two holidays, they happily share family memories, recite their friendly stories and tell jokes to one another. The houses I visited were filled with warm and happy holiday cheer. I cannot thank Wesley and Tim's families enough for welcoming me into their home as if I was a member of their families during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

I have learned a lot from my life in American. My experience has helped me learn a

lot about America, myself, and even given me more appreciation for many things I neglected to notice in my home country of Japan. I will continue to do my best in the next semester at The University of Mississippi. I am forever grateful to those people who gave me this valuable opportunity to study abroad in the U.S.



Daichi with Wesley's family

"My Aussie Life":

Joohoon Song (A sophomore majoring in International Studies)

I am a Korean citizen who moved to Japan to play baseball in high school, but I quit the sport once I enrolled at OGU. Without baseball, I was bored and the days all seemed to be the same. I knew I needed to find more purpose for my university life. I knew that despite Korea and Japan's close proximity, they were two very different countries. Next, I wanted to learn about the differences between Korea/Japan and other foreign countries as well. It was at this time, I decided to study abroad. OGU has partner universities all over the world. I chose to study abroad in Australia because I enjoyed wild kangaroos. Since I was the first OGU student to attend the University of the Sunshine Coast, I didn't have much prior information about the university nor the city. For this reason, I share my story. I hope my experiences will be helpful for potential OGU students who choose to study here in the future.

The University of the Sunshine Coast is located in Queensland, Australia. The small city is characterized by a country-side environment. There are kangaroos and many types of birds in the city and there are beautiful beaches nearby. Kangaroos and I am a Korean citizen who moved to Japan to play baseball in high school, but I quit the sport of once I enrolled at the OGU. Without baseball, I was bored and the days all seemed to be the same. I knew I needed to find more purpose for my university life. I knew that despite Korea and Japan's close

proximity, they were two very different countries. Next, I wanted to learn about the differences between Korea/Japan and other foreign countries as well. It was at this time, I decided to study abroad. OGU has partner universities all over the world. I chose to study abroad in Australia because I enjoyed wild kangaroos. Since I was the first OGU student to attend the University of the Sunshine Coast, I didn't have much prior information about the university nor the city. For this reason, I share my story. I hope my experiences will be helpful for potential OGU students who choose to study here in the future.

The University of the Sunshine Coast is located in Queensland, Australia. The small city is characterized by a country-side environment. There are kangaroos and many types of birds in the city and there are beautiful beaches nearby. Kangaroos and birds look very cute, but they are in fact dangerous wild animals. I often see warning signs, which read, "Don't come close." During lunch, if we go outside on campus, birds try to swoop down our heads, so we have to be cautious when they are around.

The campus is located only 15 minutes by car or 25 minutes away by bus from the beach. City buses run regularly, but you may want to check the schedule well in advance, because the number of busses is very limited. Mooloolaba is the most famous beach at Sunshine Coast. People go here to swim and surf throughout the week. Everyone enjoys the relaxed Aussie lifestyle. If you come, why don't you try body boarding or surfing? Currently, I am trying hard to learn improving my swimming skills, so I can then learn to surf!

My school schedule is quite busy! My English classes begin quite early, at 8:40 a.m. every day. Therefore, I am often very tired! My teachers are friendly and teach well, but some have heavy Australian accents. To be honest, sometimes I have no



Joohoon with some USC students

idea what they are saying. The University hosts students from all over the world: Switzerland, France, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Spain, China, Taiwan, Korea, Germany, etc. I have made friends with students from many different countries. However, it is difficult to meet undergraduate students because I am only in the English program. Next semester, I will work hard in hopes of taking regular undergraduate courses

During the first couple of weeks, classes were too difficult for me. I felt frustrated and nothing seemed right. As time passed, I built a circle of friends who always encouraged me, spent time with me, and took me out for drinks. Gradually, I naturally became used to my new study environment and my stress faded away. I even began to enjoy my classes! While it is very important to acquire the language of the country you study in, equally important, is to make new friends and lasting memories, which will stay with you forever. You may face many difficulties in your study abroad experience. In the beginning, you may first enjoy many new things, but there may be times you feel frustrated with everything. Although this is my second study abroad experience, I sometimes get lonely and depressed. For example, when I first went to Japan, I couldn't speak Japanese very well and didn't like Japanese food. I lost 14 kilograms in the first two months and became



Joohoon with English program classmates

homesick for Korea. In the most difficult times, my strongest supporters were always my good friends. It is the same here in Australia. If you come to Australia as a study abroad student, I recommend you find many friends and that you try hard to

enjoy your Aussie life in every way possible.

Time flies. I try not to waste not even one minute. As much as possible, I want to cherish my remaining months here and continue to experience everything not

available to me in Japan! I wish everyone much good luck with your preparations for your future study abroad experience! Exciting!

“My First Experience Abroad”:

Takayo Nakao (A Junior majoring in Foreign Languages)

Hello, everyone! It has already been four months since I came to Helsinki, Finland.

As you may already know, Finland is a small country hosting rich nature and a population of 50 million. It borders Russia to the east and Sweden to the west. One third of the country is located in the Arctic Circle. Interesting huh? Did you know that Finland is the origin of the character Moomin, the sauna and is the birthplace of Santa Clause! Christmas in Finland is rather quiet compared to the Christmas markets in Germany. Most of the stores and transportation systems are closed from 2 p.m. on Christmas Eve and remain closed throughout Christmas day. On Christmas Eve, people get together with immediate relatives to feast on a Christmas dinner featuring a special dish known as Kinkku (pork ham). Later in the evening, a person acting as St. Clause, travels to each home to deliver gifts for each family. Beforehand, little elves known as Tonttu, assist Santa Clause by checking with families to see if their children have behaved throughout the year,



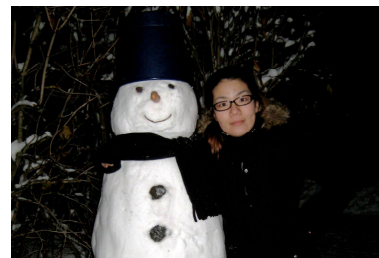
wrapping gifts, and sorting out Christmas cards from all over the world. Historically, this story was only a fairytale, but recently, people acting as Tonttu actually do work in the Santa Clause Village. I received more Christmas presents this past Christmas,

from my host family, than the total amount of Christmas gifts I have received in my entire lifetime.

University life in Finland is equally incredible! I am majoring in Foreign Languages at OGU, but I study business courses here at Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Since I was not familiar with business studies, I was nervous at the beginning. Finland is known to host the world's best education in business studies. Interestingly, in the classroom, students do not simply sit and listen to the professor lecture, but rather, they complete group projects, give presentations, and submit final reports. This is the basic style of most courses. I was surprised to see and experience such a different style of teaching/learning. Regardless, my group had a good leader, and I worked very hard on the project. We completed the project successfully! When I finished the course, I not only felt relieved, but also, a true sense of accomplishment!

Since my arrival, I have made friends from many different countries and have learned much about cultural differences and the value of education. For example, the most surprising thing to me about students in Finland, is their level of motivation and positive attitude toward their studies and education. They place a high priority on their studies and take seriously their educational experience. To the contrary, like many other Japanese students my age, I only applied to college because I was told graduating from a university would help me find a good job. Had I remained comfortably at home in Japan, unwilling to take a risk to

study abroad, I would have missed out on this invaluable opportunity to witness how students from all over the world, value their educational experience. Today, I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to everyone who played a part in giving me this priceless opportunity to study in Finland. I pledge not to return until I become fluent in Finnish. For myself, as well as for all of you.....I will do my best!



Top: The first snow
Bottom: With St. Clause