

TAKING OFF



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I-Chat Lounge

In the comfortable atmosphere of a sprawling room on the first floor of Building 13, students sit scattered in small groups around tables, sharing stories and learning new vocabulary from English speaking staff. In one corner, students are gathered in front of the TV with CNN's Larry King keeping them company. In another corner, a student pores over the latest issue of The Japan Times, while next to him, his friend enjoys viewing English video clips on YouTube.

This is a picture of a typical day at the International Chat Lounge or the I-Chat Lounge as it is known by people at OGU.

For nearly eight years, the I-Chat Lounge has served as a venue for students to learn new languages and gain new understanding about other cultures. It offers students support and guidance and gives them the opportunity to practice and hone their skills for communication in an international setting. Guest visitors from overseas are frequently invited, giving Japanese students the chance to regularly interact with foreigners without even leaving the university.

Monday through Friday from 10 am until 5 pm, the I-Chat Lounge opens its doors to more than a hundred students who stop in to use the facilities and mingle with the staff and fellow students. The available materials such as books, newspapers, and DVDs are all published in English. The TV is tuned in to channels such as CNN and a Tech Chat corner is available for students to access Internet resources in English.

While at the I-Chat Lounge, students are asked to refrain from speaking in Japanese whenever possible. Interactions take place mainly in English. On occasion, activities and events have been

conducted in other languages such as Korean, Spanish and German. Some foreign students also try to teach their native language to other interested students.

The I-Chat staff presently includes one Japanese speaker and four native English speakers. They support students in their language learning and are also in charge of planning events and activities for students to practice their language skills and to experience the traditions and customs of various cultures in fun and exciting ways.

Presentations by guest speakers from abroad, special cooking classes, crafts and music, sports activities, and welcome and farewell parties are some of the events regularly featured at I-Chat. Holidays such as Christmas, Halloween and Easter have been celebrated annually at the I-Chat Lounge, introducing students to a variety of traditions and giving them the chance to personally experience activities such as carving pumpkins, dyeing Easter eggs and decorating Christmas trees. O-hanami (cherry blossom viewing), Tanabata, and other seasonal Japanese activities are also held and are well attended by the international students.

Beginning this school year, two pilot projects are being introduced to respond to the academic needs of many OGU students, Hajimete I-Chat and the STEP-UP Learning Corner. Hajimete I-Chat was created for the benefit of freshmen as well as students who come in for the first time. It is especially designed for those students who are motivated to learn English but may not have confidence in their skills. They receive extra support with their language lessons as they are oriented about the rules and functions of the I-Chat Lounge as well as taught how to use their time at I-Chat most effectively.

Meanwhile, the STEP-UP Learning Corner is for more advanced learners who want guidance about improving their English level. Its aim is to help students further progress in their learning by introducing practical skills and techniques that they can readily use in their studies. The role of the staff member serves not only as a teacher, but also as a facilitator and supporter, providing students advice,



I-Chat Lounge Staff

which better enables them to achieve their learning goals and encourages them to become more independent learners.

As a new member of the OGU International Center family, the I-Chat Lounge will continue in its role as a place where both Japanese students and International students will be able to enjoy learning about people, languages and cultures of other countries. It will also now be the stage for holding activities hand in hand with the International Center to help create more opportunities for students and better prepare them for their future journeys outside Japan.

(J.D.)

The Essence of a Short-term Program A Student's First Steps Abroad!

The International Center offers not only single-semester or one-year exchange programs, but also presents opportunities for short-term programs twice a year; once in both the summer and spring terms. If you think it is impossible for you to attend a long-term study program, have you ever considered one for two weeks or a month? Regardless of the length of the short-term program, the chance to study a language or participate in volunteer work would be quite different from simply traveling on an overseas vacation. Attending a foreign university, living and communicating with the local people are all experiences you would never have on an ordinary trip abroad. Perhaps you assume a short visit may not be worthwhile? Rather, it really is all up to you



A typical day at the I-Chat Lounge

how to spend the limited time away from Japan. Some students, after participating in a mere weeklong study abroad program, returned to Japan with a more mature outlook on life. If you have goals to enrich your four-year stay at OGU, why not take a chance and consider a study abroad experience? The world awaits you!

Twenty-eight students have been selected to participate in the outbound study abroad program for the school year 2011-2012. Beginning in early August, the largest number of students so far, will depart to different overseas partner institutions.

In 2009, our first student attended the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University located in South Africa. This year, our first student will attend Vilnius University located in Lithuania, one of OGU's newest partner universities. It is exciting to hear about students' experiences in countries unknown to other OGU students. At the present time, the Interna-

Outbound Student Selection: 2011-2012 School Year



tional Center is at the peak of orientations and pre-departure preparations for the 28 outbound students.

Why does the International Center encourage students to participate in study abroad programs you might ask? What are the benefits to studying overseas? The main objective of studying abroad is to develop one's language ability. Yet, equally important, the experiences which students gain abroad can potentially forever change their lives. While living outside of Japan, students will find themselves in situations where they are re-

quired to take full responsibility for their own actions. They must communicate with people who speak a different language and will experience life within cross-cultural settings.

Have you ever had this kind of experience in Japan? Even if you wanted to, these are things you will be not able to experience if you stay only in Japan. The study abroad programs are offered to each OGU student with equal opportunity. Thereafter, it's up to you to grab the chance! Who knows? You could be the next study abroad student!

University of Gävle/Sweden

Homare Masuoka (Junior, International Studies Major)

I'm off to the study at the University of Gävle for a semester! I figured if I was going to study abroad, I wanted to experience something different and unique. This university offers a special course in outdoor education. I heard there was an exchange student at OGU from Sweden several years ago. Since there isn't anyone now, it was difficult to find first hand information about the country of Sweden. I am excited about the experiences that lie ahead for me. Although one semester is rather short, I hope to absorb everything I possibly can in my limited time in Sweden!

University of St. Thomas/U.S.A.

Yutaro Kashu (Junior, International Studies Major)

I leave for the University of St. Thomas in August. Since my freshman year, I have wanted to study abroad. I had a challenging time raising my TOEFL score. I wanted so badly to study abroad in the US. I did everything I could to improve my English. I enrolled in English conversation classes when I was a sophomore and I even tried listening to CNN while on the train ride home each day. I took every TOEFL test available and after one year I achieved the necessary score to qualify as a study abroad candidate. It took me two long years, but I think it's really great that I was given the opportunity this time! What appeals to me most about going on an exchange pro-

gram is being able to interact with people from different countries. I'd also like to cultivate the value of being able to form good personal relationships with all kinds of people.

Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages/Taiwan

Mariko Yamamoto (Junior, Foreign Languages Major)

As a foreign language major, I'm interested in languages other than English. I chose to study in Taiwan because I took a course in Chinese as a second language. I'd like to go where the Chinese language is actually spoken and learn to improve my own Chinese language abilities. However, my purpose to study abroad is not entirely for language learning. I also hope to exchange views with the local people of and other foreign students about the customs, languages and sub-cultures of Taiwan. Through my study abroad experience, I also hope to better understand the pros and cons of Japan as a country. It is my wish to broaden my perspectives and apply the new skills I will learn in Taiwan in my future life.



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Soonchunhyang University/Korea

Keisuke Nitta (Junior, Foreign Languages Major)

I chose to attend a study abroad program with the strong desire to do something different from everyone else. I want to engage in my upcoming experience in Korea proactively and try everything possible leaving no regrets. At the same time, I hope to become a person who can adopt the views and ideas of people different from my own. I aspire to deepen future international exchanges that many can enjoy. Now, might be my last chance to study abroad. I often remind myself about the spirit to challenge myself and do the best I can do. I will do everything possible to learn about the Korean culture during my time there!

Universität Trier (Germany)

Hiroki Ota (Sophomore, International Studies Major)

A year in Trier is just a short time so while I enjoy myself in Germany I'd also like to have a productive study abroad experience. First I want to acquire German skills. I will work as hard as I can so I can return to Japan capable of taking the 1st level of the German language exam. This doesn't mean, however, that I want to go abroad only for the sake of studying language. I'd also like to try things unique to Germany or Europe. For example, there are soccer teams in Germany that are famous worldwide. I love soccer and would like to gather with the German soccer supporters to cheer the

local teams on. Since it's also easy to move around the EU countries, I'm hoping to go see an Italian soccer game as well. You can bet I'm off to have a study abroad experience that's both fun and fulfilling.

Medicine Hat College (Canada) Naoto Imamura (Junior, Foreign Languages Major)

For sure, I will learn about language and culture during my year studying abroad. However, through this experience, one of my other objectives is to share information about Japan with Canadians and other people from around the world. When I go abroad and meet others, I would like for them to learn more about my home country of Japan, and to teach them about Japanese culture, history, customs and ways of thinking. To do this, I must first grow as a person who understands different cultures. If even only a one person's interest is developed about Japan, I can add at least one more person to the number of those who would like to study or travel to Japan in the future.



Seiko and Stella with students

Guidance Counselors: Creating the Bridge Between International Students and OGU

Studying abroad in a foreign country can be one of the most exciting experiences of a student's life. On the other hand, it could also be one of the most frightful, lonely, and uneasy experiences for some. One of the jobs of the International Center is to help students cope with culture shock and daily transitions as they acclimate to their studies and new life in Japan. Five years ago, there were only 11 international students studying at OGU. With so few students, the International Center staff independently managed all of the counseling and guidance issues for each incoming student.

Essential to a strong inbound Japanese studies program is the clear understanding of students' individual needs. Such diverse student backgrounds, their range of life experiences, and the differing university support systems call for an innovative plan of support. Last year, the number of international students attending OGU increased to 51 total. As a result, the International Center found it necessary to institute an additional level of guidance support for all the incoming students. To help with such support, International Center teachers, Seiko Furuhashi and Stella Maxwell, were asked to help provide guidance counseling for the new students. In the beginning of the fall semester, these teachers met individually with each international student to welcome him or her and complete an initial arrival intake form. Both teachers discussed with the students matters such as their incoming experiences, any initial difficulties, and potential challenges in Japan. Stella sensei met with students

from English speaking countries or with students who spoke English comfortably. Seiko sensei conducted intake interviews and meetings in Japanese with the non-English speaking students. Most students were doing well and did not require any special support. Others needed assistance with adjustment challenges: including culture shock, homesickness, difficulty making new friends, host family communication difficulties, letter writing assistance, test anxiety, and campus resources.

Both teachers did their best to listen and support the international students. If their students had challenges they could not assist them with, the teachers would privately discuss the issue with a staff member from the International Center. The staff would then take charge from there. All student information was held in strict confidence between the guidance counselors and the respective International Center staff in charge. At a student's request, OGU also offered weekly counseling with a visiting psychologist. In addition to outlining the support needed, the general intake form on file provided the International Center a better understanding of the various needs of each student making it easier to structure activities accordingly.

There are tentatively 75 international students expected to study at OGU this coming fall semester. More than ever, it will be necessary to sustain a strong support and guidance plan for all of them. Once again, new students will be assisted with their transitions and warmly welcomed to the OGU community and the International Center family!

"The Path to International Development" by: Yumi Nagato (OGU graduate student, International Studies, Class of 2001)

Yumi Nagato represented OGU as an exchange student to the University of St. Thomas. After graduation, she returned to the US where she earned her master's degree. She later joined the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers with the desire to be involved in international relations. She has quite a remarkable record having also done work for the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Yumi's enthusiasm to offer something to the world and make use of her past experiences has inspired her to pursue her doctorate from the Graduate School of Interna-

tional Studies at OGU. For OGU students interested in the field of international relations, Yumi is definitely the number one model alumna!

After being in the field and seeing how various developmental aid is being implemented in different countries, along with my experience working at the MOFA, I wanted to share with others my reasons for choosing to devote myself to studying full time.

In Zimbabwe where I had been dispatched at the time, power and water outages were a common occurrence even in the urban areas. The economy had been in such a state of collapse that

the inflation rate was said to have surpassed 10,000%. While all around starving children were dying of hunger, the country's politicians were leading lavish lifestyles without a worry about the lack of food or fuel. They were living in huge homes and owned several luxury vehicles. When I saw for myself this reality, my desire to become engaged in work involving Japanese government aid and the development of developing countries grew. I decided to refresh my knowledge and study again the basics of international development.

After returning from Zimbabwe in August 2007, I attended classes of the professor who was in charge of graduate courses in international development,

Izumi Kobayashi. Coincidentally, he was my seminar adviser from my college days. Not long after that in May 2009, Japan sponsored the Fifth Japan-Pacific Islands Forum Summit Meeting that is held every three years. This meeting hosts 4 countries and two regions in the Pacific. Prior to the summit, the MOFA organized an Eminent Persons Group in which Prof. Kobayashi, who specializes in development issues in the Pacific, was elected head. At his recommendation, I was hired as his assistant and thus began my work at the Ministry.

Although this position ended when the group completed its responsibilities in March 2009, positive feedback regarding my work performance merited me a job as a specialist in economic cooperation at the MOFA's International Relations Bureau. The job lasted for a short two years, but was similar work to that of a full-time MOFA employee. It was a good opening for full-time employment and would be a great opportunity for someone like myself

who was interested in development issues.

However, in my work at the MOFA, I became painfully aware of the need for me to acquire fundamental knowledge about development. I began to think that if I wanted to be fully engaged in development issues, I needed a proper academic background. Next, I decided to pursue a doctorate in the Graduate School of International Studies at OGU. In March 2010, I began my studies.

My future goal is to pursue the real essence of development issues while at the same time, completing my PhD. I hope to further link my research in international development to my professional experience in the field. It is simply not enough for me to just know about international development superficially by simply rely on my knowledge of areas such as world history, religion, politics and economics. It is necessary for me to understand the structure and

trends in international society. I may also face some challenges given my gender and age.

Despite any difficulties forthcoming, I believe my experiences so far have prepared me well to face any challenges. Most importantly, I continue to remember and appreciate all those around me who have supported both my academic and professional goals. I will continue to work hard and do my best to successfully achieve my dream.



Yumi With children in Zimbabwe

Tips for a Host Family—Part III by: Yuko Teramura

As we continue to feature hints about possible challenges for host families and international students, we hope they will help you better cope with any problems you may encounter while hosting a student in your home. Regardless of the types of problems you may have, keep in mind, conflicts are common and occur due to the differences in language, culture, and customs in any family.

Explain your expectations on the first day

Timing is everything. If you think, "The exchange student will live here for three months, so I have plenty of time to explain my expectations," or "They will grow to understand the rules naturally," or "The International Center will orientate them about how to live with a host family," you will definitely come across problems later on.

It is important to lay the foundation of house rules early on. If you avoid communicating with the exchange student and simply remain polite and perfectly accommodating, they will be unaware of any of your expectations and this will eventually lead to a downward spiral in your situation at home.

For example, suppose during the first month, they return home late, take long showers in the morning, or leave water bottles lying around and you say nothing. Then suddenly, you inform the student not to do it. This sudden shift may not only confuse them, it may create hard feelings and begin to build resentment

within a student's mind. It is difficult for students to understand the house rules unless they are informed in advance.

Write down rules and expectations

Although it is best to verbally explain the rules, it may also be a good idea to put them in writing, post them on the wall, or file them for kind reminders. Students are often nervous upon arrival to your home and may miss out on some details in rules. However, if you write them down, students can later look up words they do not understand.

Some details may slip your mind, such as what food in the fridge is for eating or drinking first, and which house items are off limits to students. While many rules seem minor in nature, problems can rapidly accumulate and can lead to deeper issues if not addressed properly.

Coping with broken rules and expectation

When the student violates a rule for the first time, repeat the rule to them and explain its purpose making sure they clearly understand you. Use gestures, sign language, or pictures to present your message. It is entirely possible, the first time you explained the rule, the student simply misunderstood your Japanese because they were nervous when they first arrived. Some students may have a limited vocabulary, but if you write words down for them, it will help them become familiar with new vocabulary as well as reflect on the rule and its purpose. Often times, students simply apologize for disappointing you and it rarely happens again.

International Center News

2011-2012 Exchange Programs

Exchange program dates are scheduled for next year. Some dates may seem far away, but prepare yourself early! Start now!

Application period:

Jan. 11-24, 2011

Language examination:

Jan. 25 & 26, 2011

(For French and German only)

Screening Interview:

Feb. 1-10, 2011

(In Japanese and English)

Announcement of results:

Early Mar. 2011

A reminder to those students interested in becoming a candidate for an exchange program: While fulfilling the language requirements set by each university is expected, grades are also important. Applications will only be accepted from those who have a GPA of 2.5 or higher. Exchange students are sent to overseas partner universities as representatives of OGU. Keep in mind candidates must maintain the required GPA for the exchange program!



Football field at The University of Mississippi

Medicine Hat College officials pay OGU a visit

During April, OGU welcomed President Ralph Weeks and Russel Boris, director of International Education of Medicine Hat College from Canada. Representatives from both schools shared in discussion about their programs, and later attended a special event at the I-Chat Lounge together. Medicine Hat College will offer an intensive three-week English language program slated to begin this summer. The first OGU exchange student, Naoto Imamura, a Junior and Foreign Language major will attend Medicine Hat this coming fall.



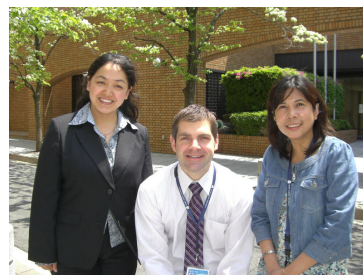
(Top) Mr. Weeks (Second from left) Mr. Boris (Leftmost), (Bottom) I-Chat Event



Welcome to KC!

As we said farewell to Titis Nitawari, during the month of March, we also welcomed three new members to the International Center family in April. Joy De Vera is from the Philippines and calls Quezon City home. Joy has cross job duties at the I-Chat Lounge as well as in the International Center. Students will see her all around campus. Meng Tao, originally from Shanxi, China also holds British citizenship. For questions regarding anything Chinese, Tao is the

go-to person! Daniel Lilley comes to us from Christchurch and is New Zealander who definitely understands Kansai humor. The three new staff members are multilingual; they can speak Japanese, English, Chinese and Filipino. We can now say with confidence, the International Center has become truly ethnically diverse, making it a truly international team.



From right: Joy, Daniel and Tao

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