

Aiming High

AN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN JAPAN IS PRODUCING A FLOOD OF GLOBAL TALENT

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BILLING itself as “a truly international university,” Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU)—located in Beppu on the east coast of Kyushu—aims to produce graduates with job skills and a high capacity for independent thought. Of the university’s 5,745 students, 2500—or almost half of the student body—were international students (exchange students studying under the same conditions as their Japanese peers) as of May 1, 2014. In 2013, firms in Japan recruited 187 of APU’s international students upon graduation. APU’s high percentage of international students provides a cosmopolitan study and living environment that has no equal anywhere else in Japan. Kei Suzuki of APU’s career office—which fashions this hospitable environment—spoke about employment prospects for young foreign talent at Japanese firms.

“We’ve gathered a body of international students capable of entering top-level universities not only in their own countries but in the West as well,” Suzuki says. “Japan is relatively stable politically and economically, and our graduates have the possibility of working at large companies that are household names globally. In the West, foreigners with no working experience have almost no chance of being employed there full-time, even if they graduate



university with excellent grades. In Japan, however, they can obtain a working visa without much difficulty, have a chance of being employed at a major company, and advance their careers in Japan and elsewhere. It is reasonable to say that Japan is an ideal environment for young people from around the world looking to start a career.”

APU is attracting attention not only from the world’s brightest young people but global corporations, businesses and research facilities as well. In a single year over 350 companies visit the APU campus to hold information sessions and initial recruitment screenings.

The university offers the same career counseling to domestic and international students alike. First-year students get one-on-one counseling with a view to their long-term careers, and a curriculum is constructed to meet those goals. Internship destinations for second- and third-year students



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- 1 Campus life at APU is culturally and linguistically diverse
- 2 Students at an APU graduation ceremony
- 3 Students receiving career advice from APU guidance counselors

include employers and companies, government organs, and NGOs overseas, allowing students to gain practical experience before commencing their careers. Since the program started, 1,500 students have taken part.

“International students at APU tend to come to Japan with a different mentality than exchange students at other universities,” Suzuki states. “Their motives are more goal-oriented—to study globally, with other students from a diverse range of cultures—and APU was the university that offered that environment. And through dormitory life, they gain both knowledge and an intuitive grasp of Japanese culture. This makes them highly appealing to corporations.”

Approximately 60 percent of exchange students across Japan reportedly opt to work here after graduation. Nationwide, however, only about 20 percent succeed. In stark contrast, the employment

success rate for APU grads is around 90 percent.

“As the globalization of society accelerates, the skills and attributes that businesses will demand when recruiting new graduates also changes,” Suzuki notes. “Though study-abroad and language proficiency experiences are still highly valued, those assets alone will not net employment offers from leading firms.”

Suzuki does believe that true global talents are “those capable of responding quickly to societal conditions in a world that is rapidly changing, and who are equipped with an open-mindedness that allows them to accommodate differing viewpoints. It doesn’t matter if you’re from Japan or overseas.”

For its part, APU will continue to offer employment support that makes absolutely no distinction between Japanese and international students and produce global talent capable of working anywhere in the world. 