



JAPANESE STUDENTS CHALLENGING THE WORLD: AKITA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY'S EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

AIU University Library

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As globalization continues, the graduates of Akita International University (AIU), located in Akita, will play leading roles on international stages. Established in 2004, AIU offers students a fully English-based curriculum. Its students are required to participate in a one-year study-abroad program, similar to the Erasmus scheme in Europe, while the Akita campus also hosts a number of foreign students on short-term study programs.

Trying to prepare for the globalization age, where interests and values often cross borders and where students need solid language and communication skills, as well as an education at overseas programs, Dr. Mark Williams, Vice-President of AIU stated: "Akita International University contributes by nurturing students with practical abilities, including excellence in English and other foreign languages, along with a rich liberal arts education."

One of the keys to providing this education is the exchange program. AIU is partnered with 155 universities around

the world. (as of September 2013) A compatible GPA system coupled with credit transfers allows students to take courses at universities abroad while gaining credits for their efforts at home. Former AIU President, Dr. Mineo Nakajima established this system, providing opportunities for Japanese students where none existed before.

The student's aim is to become self-reliant, to acquire the skills needed for autonomous learning and to become adaptable to changing environments. This helps establish the skills necessary to eventually assume positions of leadership.



Active learning support center



Foreign languages supporters



Lecture theatre

To prepare for exchanges abroad, all students at AIU must first take the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course which provides the fundamentals required for advanced academic learning. They are also strongly encouraged to participate in international festivals, speech contests and the like.

One program that has gained immense popularity is called “Project Based Learning” (PBL), whereby a multinational team works on a common research project with professors from both AIU and a US partner institution. One example is a joint Pennsylvania-AIU project studying the comparative effects of ageing societies in Japan and the US. During the 6-8 week program, this Japan-US team engages in fieldwork at each university.

After graduation from AIU, all students are expected to have developed the abilities necessary to thrive in a globalizing world. Those students who had a solid university life will have a strong sense of identity, confidence and acquisitive learning. 📖

STUDENT INTERVIEW

IKUMA YASUDA “Someone I know who attended AIU was really passionate, and I entered AIU out of admiration for that person and my own desire to grow. Factors like dorm life and English-language debates, as well as the AIU curriculum, provide good training, and I also like having so many friends who are able to motivate each other. Outside of class, I practice for Kanto Matsuri, one of the big three festivals of the Tohoku region. Working out both my class and club activity, I’ve also learned time management skills.”

LEON IKEDA “I aim to study in Australia. The required academic achievements will push me to excel in my studies. I have travelled overseas before, but this is the first time that I will be living and studying abroad. It will be a great chance to learn about a new way of life while also learning something about Australian business. I hope to take up the Global Business Program, so I see this as a great opportunity to play a role in international business somehow. However, the most important component is the opportunity to develop as an individual.”

KOHARU WATANABE “Although there were some points that I felt uneasy about, such as the fact that all classes are taught in English, and the fact that I must live away from my parents and stay in a dormitory, I was certain that this decision will make me grow and made up my mind to come to this university. At first, the classes in English were difficult, but because of this, my listening ability has improved a lot in the past year. I am interested in social welfare, so I decided to study abroad at a university in Norway. I am already very excited about being able to take classes in one of the countries where social welfare began.” 📖