

# A Window Open to the World

Center for International Exchange Programs at  
Sugiyama Jogakuen University Newsletter

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## Visiting partner universities in South Korea

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Director of the Center for International Exchange Programs**



I visited five partner universities in South Korea -- three existing (Pai Chai University, Soonchunhyang University, Sookmyung Women's University) and two new universities (Seoul Women's University, Mokpo National University) -- at the end of summer vacation in September 2023. During my visits, I exchanged ideas about our relationship with members of the international affairs divisions of long-standing partner universities to strengthen our relationship. I also met with new partner universities to introduce them to Sugiyama Jogakuen University and build a relationship of mutual trust so that they could send students peace of mind. At each university, I had the opportunity to introduce SJU's history, willingness to accept exchange students, curriculum, and other information to about 20 or 30 students, mainly Japanese majors. During the Q&A session, I received many questions, and the students seemed to be attracted to our scholarship system for incoming exchange students and the clean dormitory with private rooms.

All five universities I visited proposed "double degree programs," with many advocating "2+2" (earning a degree from two universities by earning credits for two years each at their home university and a partner university). However, "1+3" was also proposed. Perhaps because of the "Study Korea 300k Project," Korea's policy for inviting international students, we have received requests for such degree-granting study abroad programs and even to send more students regardless of the number specified in the agreement if students are interested in studying abroad in South Korea. SJU accepts several exchange students, but I heard from a university I visited this time that the "satisfaction rate for exchange program" of the students sent to SJU was far higher than that of other partner universities. This rating proves our approach of "educating exchange students with great care," which we all involved in international exchange programs strive to do daily.

Lastly, I would like to talk about the situation of universities and the recruitment of international students in South Korea. The declining birth rate in South Korea is a critical issue for universities there; they recruit international students from overseas, especially from Asian countries, to make up the number of students. When I visited Taiwan in March 2023, I saw a similar situation. In Japan, the decline in 18-year-olds is also a significant issue. However, unlike South Korea and Taiwan, universities in Japan do not seem to face the problem of recruiting and accepting international students head-on. If things do not change, Japanese universities will become too focused on domestic students, leading to "Galapagosization." To implement double degrees and other programs, it is necessary to recognize academic degrees while offering enough courses in English. Such courses conducted in English are manifested in "The SJU's Vision of Going Global." Still, there are only a few courses conducted in English in the School of Cross-Cultural Studies (School of Foreign Studies from the 2024 academic year), and it is worrying that not enough courses are offered in English to shape a curriculum for the Double-degree program. I hope all young students will acquire foreign language skills as learning measures and go to the world to study their areas of expertise.



# + + Activity Report on Incoming Exchange Students + +

Let us introduce the activities in the 2023 school year !

## \\ Incoming exchange students \\

The number of incoming exchange students at SJU further increased from the 2022 school year. 6 students (two from Taiwan, one from Korea, two from Thailand, and one from Malaysia) and 10 students (one from China, two from Taiwan, five from Korea, one from Thailand, and one from Australia) were accepted in the first and the second semester, respectively. Among the exchange students, there are students visiting Japan for the first time. All of students are studying hard at SJU while gradually becoming accustomed to Japanese language and life in Japan.



## \\ Classwork \\

Incoming exchange students take Japanese language classes (grammar, vocabulary/expressions, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and conversation) every day from Monday to Friday. There are two levels of Japanese language classes: Intermediate and Pre-advanced. A placement test at the start of the school year determines the level of classes. Depending on their Japanese proficiency level, the students can also take classes offered by departments. Incoming exchange students took courses including Art of Calligraphy, English for Business, and Gender studies.



## \\ \\ \\ \\ \\ Field trips \\ \\ \\ \\ \\

The students went on field trips to Ise/Toba in the Spring semester and Gujo Hachiman in the Fall semester, respectively. On the trip to Ise and Toba, students learned about the origins of Japan from legends related to the Ise Grand Shrine and experienced firsthand Japanese culture and charm by painting of Edo wind chimes. On the trip to Gujo Hachiman, the students walked the castle town while viewing the autumn colors and tried Gujo Odori dance and made food samples. The students were accompanied by Japanese students on the trip, and they deepen their relationships through pair work.



## \\ \\ \\ \\ \\ Internships \\ \\ \\ \\ \\

Incoming exchange students participated in internships during the summer and spring break. The students had an opportunity to cultivate a professional outlook and learn about Japanese corporate culture, for example, while working at the front desk of the hotel, providing operational support at a concert hall, and gaining research and work experience at a company.

## \\ \\ \\ \\ \\ Home visits \\ \\ \\ \\ \\

During home visits, incoming exchange students spent a day at host families home to experience Japanese home life. Together with the host families, students cooked, played with children and pets, and went to parties. The students continue to communicate with their host families even after home visits ended.

## Introduction to the main events in the 2023 school year

### Conclusion of new agreements for exchange and outgoing study abroad

A new student exchange agreement was concluded with Sookmyung Women's University (South Korea) in April 2023. Sookmyung Women's University is a prestigious private women's university in Seoul. In addition, outgoing study abroad agreements were concluded with the University of Dayton (US) and San Diego State University (US) in July and September 2023, respectively. Both universities run medium term study abroad programs with the School of Cross-Cultural Studies of SJU and have deep relations with SJU. With these new agreements, SJU now has 18 partner universities. We are contacting universities all over the world to further increase the number of partner universities.



Sookmyung Women's University



University of Dayton



San Diego State University

### Outgoing exchange students

In the 2023 school year, 16 students went to partner universities for a student exchange or study abroad. We were not able to send students to Shanghai Normal University, Asia University, University of Tasmania, and Victoria University of Wellington since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, but were finally able to resume sending students to these universities from this school year. We expect the students to grow greatly from their contact with various cultures and value systems during the six months or a year at their destination before returning home.

| University name                                 | First half | Second half |
|---|------------|-------------|
| University of Quebec in Montreal (Canada)       |            | 4           |
| Shanghai Normal University (China)              |            | 1           |
| Asia University (Taiwan)                        | 2          |             |
| Soonchunhyang University (South Korea)          | 1          | 1           |
| Pai Chai University (South Korea)               | 2          |             |
| University of Tasmania (Australia)              | 2          |             |
| Southern Cross University (Australia)           | 1          |             |
| Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand) | 2          |             |

### Summer program resumes for the first time in four years

In August, one student each from Lehman College of The City University of New York and Asia University participated in the summer program, which was held for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The students learned elementary Japanese, experienced Japanese food, tea ceremonies, stringed instruments, and other elements of Japanese culture, and took field trips to Inuyama, Arimatsu, and Kyoto during the 15-day program.



### Courtesy visit from two universities in Thailand

Eight instructors from Sripatum University and King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang made a courtesy visit to SJU in June 2023. We have cultural exchanges with Sripatum University through exchange programs and overseas training at the Department of Human Environment Design. Along with King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang,



we exchanged ideas about more international exchanges in the future.

### Study abroad information session at Sugiyama Jogakuen High School

An information session on university student exchanges was held at Sugiyama Jogakuen Senior High School in January 2024. The session explained importance of starting preparations to study abroad during university while still a high school student and particularly emphasized the need for IELTS/TOEFL strategies in order to study overseas in English-speaking countries. Although it was the first time an information session had been held at a senior high school, over 80



students participated, and it was a good opportunity for them to proactively think about studying abroad.

# Exchange student report

Nodoka Kamiya (3rd-year, School of Cross-Cultural Studies, Department of Foreign Studies)

I was an exchange student at the University of Quebec in Montreal in Canada for 8 months from September 2022 to May 2023. Located in a former colony of France and Great Britain, Montreal is a city of streetscapes that still feel like Europe. Due to this history, French and English are the official languages of Montreal, and there were many bilingual residents. There were many opportunities to speak and hear both languages, so every day was exciting. At the University of Quebec, I studied not only language, but also Canadian history and other specialized knowledge. At first, I was too nervous to act, but by setting small targets each day and taking the initiative, I made a lot of friends and am no longer hesitant to speak and express my opinions. I can now happily speak with pride in both English and Japanese. Canada is made up of people of many nationalities, and the people close to me had their own nationalities and cultural backgrounds. After living together with such people in a dormitory, I acquired the ability to adapt and realized the importance of understanding and interacting with others.

This study-abroad experience helped me grow in various ways. I would like to use what I learned to take on various challenges in the future.



## Study mates/ Exchange student supporters

Study mates support exchange students to study, teach each other about their country's languages and cultures, and are an academic support. Exchange student supporters accompany exchange students on field trips, plan events such as the Star Festival, Christmas parties, and athletic meets to deepen cultural exchanges.



## New schools/ department

New schools and a new department will be introduced in April 2024 at SJU. The School of Cross-Cultural Studies, School of Culture-Information Studies, and Department of Human Relations of the School of Human Sciences were reorganized into the School of Foreign studies, School of Information Sociology, and Department of Human Coexistence of the School of Human Sciences, respectively. Each of these reorganizations meet the needs of the times and are a realization of the education ideals of SJU. In particular, the School of Foreign studies intends to tout studying abroad for all applicants and implement various study-abroad programs.

## Editorial postscript

Operations related to international exchange were implemented within the Student Affairs Division up to the 2022 school year, but these will be the responsibility of the Center for International Exchange Programs Office launched in April 2023. Accordingly, the Office was also newly established. April 2024 also saw the start of the School of Foreign studies, which will focus on studying abroad and marks a major turning point for international relations at SJU. Students' passion for studying abroad has been waning for various reasons, but we plan to restore their interest by adopting new points of view and techniques.

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