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Japan Study at
Waseda University
Cultural Internship Program Report

2020
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Opening Remarks

For more than two decades, the Cultural Internship has been one of the defining features of the Japan Study Program. For one month, students are provided the opportunity to leave the familiar cocoon of Tokyo and to immerse themselves in more remote locations throughout the country. Through varied work assignments, extended home stays, and everyday interactions, they become acquainted with new ways of life. Indeed, the Cultural Internship is a remarkable and unparalleled experience that is not possible to replicate in any other way.

On behalf of the Japan Study Program, I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of our CI partners for inviting our students to participate. I hope that these mutually beneficial and enriching experiences will continue for many years to come. In that spirit, please enjoy this compendium of internship descriptions as a celebration of memories from this past year.

Sam Pack
Waseda University Center for International Education Visiting Professor
Resident Director, 2019-2020
Kenyon College, Professor of Cultural Anthropology
2020 Cultural Internship
Site Map

* Years listed in the upper-left corner of the following pages indicate the year the program was established.
What did you learn from this experience?
I spent 5 weeks learning about oyster farming in Rikuzentakata, where my hosts kindly taught me many things. I saw first-hand how complex the oyster’s path is from ocean to consumer. One of the things that was difficult for me was opening the oyster shells and I was never quite able to get the hang of it. Washing the oysters was easy, though!

What surprised you the most?
I was most surprised at how quickly news travels in the countryside. For example, one night when a friend and I went out to eat, it turned into an unforgettable event. I had forgotten to tell my host family, but through the grapevine, they learned where I was!
I was also surprised the first time that I climbed the local mountain. I could see all of the town stretching out in front of me!

What do you think is the most difficult part of an oyster farmer’s life?
I think that balancing on the farming rafts is the most difficult thing. On my first afternoon, I went out onto the rafts where they breed the oysters; while it looks simple to walk on them, it was actually very difficult with the movement from the wind and waves.

Please write a message to your host family and the people at your site.
I am very much indebted to the people of Rikuzentakata. I had a wonderful experience with my host family and they introduced me to many new foods. Thank you to the fishermen for teaching me the local dialect and about their trade. Thank you to all of my new friends and acquaintances for introducing me to the local culture and new experiences. Though the time I spent there was short, I made many wonderful memories.
What did you do during the CI?
During my Cultural Internship, I cleaned guest rooms, lockers, and the lobby. I prepared the dining room for meals and learned how to properly fold and put away futon.

What part of the experience did you find the most challenging?
I thought that setting tables and plating food in the dining room was rather challenging. Before I came to Hakuba, I had never prepared a table for customers before, so it was difficult at first. Plating the lettuce and meat was very difficult and so I spent a many a nervous hour trying to get it right every day. But by practicing I got better, so by the end of my time at Hakuba it was easier.

What did you do in your free time?
I had free time once I finished the morning work. If the snow conditions were right, I skied in my free time. Unfortunately, this year the snow was scarce, so I was only able to ski about seven times. The time that I spent skiing was really fun, though!

What was your impression of Japan’s “snow country”?
I have a very good impression of “snow country.” Hakuba is very beautiful and serene. The mountains of Hakuba looked like something out of a movie. There isn’t anywhere with scenery as beautiful as Hakuba. The view from the hotel dining room window was stunning. Someday I would like to visit Hakuba again.

Message for the people at Hakuba
I am very grateful to the hotel owners and my co-workers. Thank you for helping me every day! This experience was very interesting and special.
What was the most memorable experience?
During the internship, I visited many day care centers in the town where I introduced the children to American culture, played with them in English, and taught them English songs and dances. At one day care, when my presentation was finished, the 4 & 5-year-olds ran up, encircled me, and gave me lots of big hugs.

In what ways did this experience impact your personal growth?
I was able to experience work at the city hall, day cares, and library as well as the general Japanese office atmosphere. Through this, I learned about many types of employment and work cultures in Japan. In the future, I would like to work in Japan, so I think that this opportunity to re-frame my thought processes and attempt new things in the workplace was extremely beneficial.

Please tell us about the charm of Fujikawaguchiko.
Every day that I was in Fujikawaguchiko, I could see Mt. Fuji and its surrounding beautiful, natural scenery. There are many museums and theme parks in the town, so even after being there for 1 month, there were many places that I had not yet visited. I think that Fujikawaguchiko has great appeal and that anyone who goes there will find something of interest to them.

Message to the people of Fujikawaguchiko
From the very first day, my host family and the people at city hall were very generous and considerate. Thank you all so much! Thanks to all the people of Fujikawaguchiko, I had a wonderful month and fell in love with the town. I want to return to return to Japan soon and visit all of my new friends and “family” in Fujikawaguchiko!
What did you do during the Cultural Internship?
During the CI, I worked in the Japanese dining restaurant Youkou-kan at the Fukui Phoenix Hotel where I assisted with tasks such as arranging dishes on trays and serving customers. When there were events at the hotel, I helped prepare the banquet room; after the event was finished, I carried dishes to the kitchen and helped clean up.

What was the most memorable experience?
My most memorable experience was the day I went sightseeing with my co-workers. We went to see Ichijyo-dani, Asakurashi Iseki (remnants of an historic castle town), and a waterfall; then we made Echizen soba noodles and Washi paper. At the end of the day we visited the seaside cliffs of Toshindo. It was so much fun! Because I worked in the hotel restaurant, I hadn’t had many opportunities to speak with the rest of the hotel staff, so it was great to get to know them outside of work. Thank you so much to Minami-sempai for driving and to Watanabe-sempai for choosing the places that we went.

What is your impression of Japanese hospitality “omotenashi”?
Before the internship, I thought that a restaurant would be an easy place to work, but I had a lot to learn. For example, when you give guests oshibori (wet towels to cleanse their hands), you have to do it from their right side so as not to get in their way. All of the staff always used keigo (polite language) and smiled, which I thought was wonderful. I had read a lot about omotenashi, but it was a great opportunity to see it first-hand at a hotel.

Message for the people of Fukui Phoenix Hotel
Although 1 month was a very short time, I am glad to have been able to work with all of you. I apologize that my Japanese is still not very good and so I was not able to speak too much with everyone. Thank you so much to the department head for telling funny stories and treating me to ramen. Thank you to everyone for always being so generous and kind. Thank you to the chef for always making such delicious meals for us. Although it is a Japanese restaurant, the bread and Chinese food were also delicious! Fukui is a beautiful city and I would like to visit again!
Name: Jacky Valentine  
Institution: Oberlin College  
Oberlin, Ohio  
Majors: East Asian Studies & Creative Writing  
Home state: Nevada

**What did you do during the Cultural Internship?**  
I worked in the Phoenix Hotel restaurant, banquet hall, and other places. I assisted with tasks such as clearing away guests’ plates, greeting customers with “Irassyaimase,” and tidying up after events.

**In what ways did this experience impact your personal growth?**  
While I was working in the restaurant, I became more confident to speak Japanese. I think that I was not actually used to speaking Japanese when I came to Japan, but since my arrival I have had many great experiences and opportunities. Working and greeting customers at the hotel and restaurant was an especially important experience to me because I had never done anything like that before. After one month of learning *keigo* and how to interact with customers from my co-workers, my insecurities disappeared. I think that it is very important to take on new challenges and try new things. Thanks to this experience, I think that I grew a lot as a person.

**What is your impression of Japanese hospitality “omotenashi”?**  
*Omotenashi* was very interesting. I could tell that my co-workers at the restaurant were always thinking about the customers. For example, we were always supposed to clear plates from the customers’ right-hand-side so as to not get in their way.

**Message for the people of Fukui Phoenix Hotel**  
Thank you to everyone at the Phoenix Hotel for teaching me so many things and being so kind. It was very fun going on sightseeing trips outside of work! Thank you for showing me around Fukui and the hotel!
What is your impression of Japanese hospitality “omotenashi”? 
This was my first experience with omotenashi, but I thought that it was wonderful. I personally liked making other people smile. I think that making guests happy is something that is achieved by delivering excellent hospitality. I was glad to have the opportunity to help customers have a wonderful experience at the ryokan (traditional Japanese hotel).

What did you learn from the Cultural Internship? 
I learned many things, such as how to use keigo (polite language) to greet customers, how to move about the ryokan while customers were present, how ryokans are run, and how much fun it can be to work in one. My daily work consisted of tasks such as folding up and laying out futon, setting out tea services, and preparing customers’ rooms. I also helped with office work and other tasks.

What was the thing that surprised you the most? 
I was very surprised at how many set rules and routines there are when working in a ryokan. I was also pleasantly surprised at how wonderful it was to speak with guests from all over Japan. My Japanese is still not very good, but I was able to communicate with the customers a little bit.

Message to everyone at Ryokan Tanigawa 
Everyone at the ryokan was very kind and generous; through all of your kind instruction, I learned a lot. Every day was enjoyable and it was fun to work with everyone. With all of your help, my Japanese improved. I am so grateful to have had this opportunity and would like to sincerely thank everyone at Ryokan Tanigawa.
What did you do during the Cultural Internship?
Every day was different, but I usually participated in events sponsored by ACROSS. I also went to Daito City Library and one elementary school during my stay. In my free time, I went to Nara, Osaka, and other sightseeing spots and spent time with my host family.

What was the most memorable event?
The most memorable times for me were the 3 days that I spent at the Daito City Elementary After-School Club making snacks, doing homework, and playing games with 100 or so children. Even though the children’s Japanese was difficult to understand and there were times when we couldn’t communicate well, the kids were very kind and had fun playing with Francesca and me.

Message to the people of Daito
To my host family,
Thank you for hosting me for 1 month. I am so grateful that you understood and supported me even at the times when I was shy or quiet. I thought that you were very kind and a fun family to be with. Thank you for coming to various ACROSS events with me. Let’s meet up again sometime!

To my co-workers,
Though my time there was short, I truly felt the warmth of all of your hearts. You were very kind to create all kinds of events in which Francesca and I could participate. I will never forget all of your or my internship at ACROSS.

What phrases or words did you learn in Kansai dialect?
Even now, there are times when instead of “be careful” I say, “Akan.” I also learned the phrases “so nan ya (that’s so)” and “so ya de (that’s right).” Also, though I don’t know if it is Kansai dialect or not, I will never forget the phrase “ponkotsu (piece of junk)” that my host family taught me. There is so much Kansai dialect that I learned that I don’t have space to write it all here.
What phrases or words did you learn in Kansai dialect?
One of my friends’ mothers in America is from Osaka, so even before going to Daito I knew a little Kansai dialect. I knew that instead of “wakaranai (I don’t know),” you use “wakarahren” and instead of “dame (no good),” you use “akan.” I often heard these words while in Daito. Other phrases that I learned were that instead of “shite iru (I know),” you use “site haru” and instead of “chigau (that’s different),” you use “chau.” I also learned that there are differences of intonation between standard Japanese and Kansai dialect.

What was the most memorable experience?
The experience that most stands out in my memory is when I participated in the after-school club of an elementary school in Daito. I usually have absolutely no interaction with children, so I was concerned about how I should communicate and play with them. But the children were all very kind and cute, so I didn’t have any issues at all. Just playing with the children made them so happy and that gave me a sense of gratification.

What did you learn from your experience?
I learned that when you do work in Japan that you have to be very conscious of small details. I often thought that the staff were working diligently as they always paid attention to small details to which I would never have paid attention. I felt that my co-workers believed that the small details held great value.

Message to the people of Daito
One month passed very quickly, but it was an experience of a lifetime. I am so grateful that I was able to meet many people and have so many experiences. Daito is a town not often visited by international people, but I learned a great deal about its history and culture; I would like to share Daito’s appeal and interesting history with other people.
What part of the experience did you find the most challenging?
I thought that the most challenging thing was dealing with Iiyama’s cold temperatures. I honestly don’t enjoy the cold and spend each day of winter hoping that warmer weather will come soon. I knew before going on my CI that Iiyama was colder than Tokyo, but though I had prepared my warmer clothing I hadn’t quite mentally prepared for the cold. Though at first I was always cold and uncomfortable, I got used to the cold much sooner than I imagined I would. There were even times when working outside that I got pretty warm from moving around and took off my coat! So while the cold was difficult at first, it really wasn’t that bad once I got used to it.

What was your impression of Japan’s “snow country”? Coming to Mori no Ie was my first experience with the “snow country.” While it snows where I am from, it doesn’t snow that much, so you can hardly call it “snow country.” My first impressions were that it was very cold and that the snow was incredibly deep, but now I also see its beauty. The snow piled on the treetops looks like flowers and the far-off mountains are also beautifully draped in snow. So while “snow county” is cold and the snow is deep, my most prominent and lingering impression is of its beauty.

What did you do during your Cultural Internship?
I learned a lot about the local environment and Japan, such as that Japan is home to the location that gets the highest annual snowfall in the world. While in Tokyo, you may not realize that Japan gets a lot of snow, but I experienced first-hand just how much snowfall Japan gets during my internship in Iiyama. I also learned various things about Iiyama’s trees and animals.

Message to the people at Mori no Ie
Thank you to everyone for all of your hard work. I am very much indebted to you for all that you taught me about Japan’s environment and culture. I will never forget my experience at Mori no Ie. Through both cold and busy times, you always thought about your fellow staff and helped one another. Thank you for allowing me to be a team member and work with all of you. See you again someday!

Name: Izzy Seicol
Institution: Earlham College
Richmond, Indiana
Major: Linguistics
Home state: Massachusetts
What was the most challenging part of life at the temple?
For me, the most difficult part of life at Sogenji was waking up at 3:40AM every morning. It was so cold in the early predawn that sometimes I thought I’d give up, but then I would soon settle in to the daily routine and everything would go smoothly.

What was your favorite place at the temple?
While I only went there 3 times, my favorite place at Sogenji was, without a doubt, the bamboo grove. The towering bamboo was magnificent. That bamboo grove was the most beautiful place that I’d ever seen.

In what ways did this experience impact your personal growth?
While living at Sogenji, I was able to contemplate and meditate on the source of my suffering. Sogenji taught me how to detach myself from my anxiety and depression and over the course of a month, I became a much brighter and happier person.

What was one part of your experience that you found particularly difficult?
The thing that I thought was the most difficult at Sogenji was definitely seiza (sitting traditionally with your legs folded under you). I had to constantly maintain my concentration and sitting for long periods of time caused me extreme hardship in the beginning. But in the end I got used to seiza.

Message to the people of Sogenji
Thank you for supporting me through the rough times and laughing with me at others. I really think that this was a wonderful experience. I am hopeful that we can meet again someday.

Name: Toni Davis
Institution: Grinnell College
Grinnell, Iowa
Major: Gender Studies
Home state: Texas
What was the most challenging aspect of life at the temple?
The most difficult part of life at Sogenji was getting used to the cold mornings and nights. When I woke up at 3:30 in the morning, it was so cold that I didn’t want to get out of my futon. Doing seated meditation for 2 hours in the early morning was like being in a freezer. During this time I was barefoot and didn’t wear any gloves, so my hands and feet were always numb at breakfast. It was also very cold when I went to sleep, so I wore 5 layers of clothes to bed. In America, my entire house was always kept warm with central heating, so it was difficult for me to sleep in the frigid Sogenji guest house.

What was your favorite place in the temple?
I have many places that I like at Sogenji. One of them is the pagoda at the back of Sogenji and the scenery that you can see from the top. The sunset and stretching views of Okayama are especially beautiful. I also enjoyed speaking with the other monks and Japan Study participants in Sogenji’s kitchen. I have many fond memories of my time spent in the kitchen helping prepare meals, eating traditional vegetarian monk fare, and having conversations with everyone.

Message to the people of Sogenji
I am indebted to all of you for my 5 week experience. I am very grateful to the head monk Harada and the other monks for teaching me about Zen. My time at Sogenji was the best memory that I have of my study abroad experience. When I sat in seiza and concentrated on my breathing, I stopped thinking about unimportant things. I will never forget what I learned there. If I have the opportunity, I would like to visit Sogenji again.
What was the most challenging aspect of life at the temple?
I think that everything about temple life is challenging. The most difficult thing for me was following all of the temple’s rules, such as waking up at 4:00AM every morning. Though it was difficult to wake up early, I thought that the cold temperatures of early morning were even more difficult to cope with. I was always shivering with cold in the main temple building. Furthermore, we had to do the same chore for 3 hours a day according to a rotation schedule; sometimes doing the same task over and over became boring.

What was your favorite place at Sogenji?
My favorite place at Sogenji was the guest house where we lived. I made many great friends and have fun memories of my time spent there. Getting to know my fellow monks was interesting and enjoyable.

What did you do during your Cultural Internship?
On a normal day at the temple, I did meditation, cleaning, and chores. On my free days, I went on trips with the other monks to the aquarium, played soccer, and visited the public baths.

Message to the people of Sogenji
Dear everyone,
Thank you for everything. I had a wonderful experience at Sogenji and I learned many things about Buddhism. Everyone was so kind and generous. Thank you for teaching all of us at the temple. I sent you some snacks from Vietnam. I hope you like them!
Name: Alex Papastergiou  
Home institution: Knox College  
Galesburg, Illinois  
Major: International Studies  
Home country: Greece

What did you do during your Cultural Internship?  
For my CI, I went to Sogenji Temple where I learned about Buddhism and practiced meditation every day. I gained insight into a life of meditation.

What was the most memorable experience?  
My most important memory from this experience is that of the first day of *O-sesshin* (the week of silence). *O-sesshin* was the most difficult week of my month at Sogenji and every day was a challenge. During this week, we did meditation for 11 hours each day.

I also enjoyed the time spent having tea with the head monk. He is a wonderful person and I learned a lot from him.

What was your favorite place at the temple?  
My favorite place was the large forest at the back of the pagoda. I waked there every day to relax. I love nature, so it always cheered me up.

What was the most challenging part of temple life?  
At the temple, you wake up at 3:30AM and go to bed at 10:30PM, so you don’t have too much time to sleep. This lack of sleep made me tired and so meditation was challenging. Also, you don’t get much to eat for breakfast or lunch, so I didn’t have too much energy.*

Message to the people of Sogenji  
Thank you for your advice. You were all very kind and I am grateful. Thank you for teaching me how to meditate and about life at the temple. I wish you all the best!

*Note: Students and monks are allowed to have extra helpings at meals.*
What was the most difficult aspect of life at Sogenji?
Meditating late into the night during O-sesshin (the week of silence) was the most difficult part of my experience. Because we meditated for so long, the next morning was always a challenge. During the first seated meditation session of the day, I was always extremely tired and cold, so it was difficult to focus on my meditation.

What was your favorite place at the temple?
In one of the temple graveyards, there is a magnificent sculpture of Jizo (the guardian deity of children). In that graveyard, I spoke with the Jizo bodhisattva almost every day.

What was the thing that surprised you the most?
There were 5 people at Sogenji who spoke Spanish. I was able to converse with one woman from Mexico not only in English, but also in Japanese, Spanish, and sign language. There were many people with prodigious language skills. It was very fun!

What was the experience that impacted you the most?
During my stay, I was able to have a meditative consultation with the head abbot 4 times. His messages and teachings made a great impression on me. It was like he could read my soul and said things that only I could understand.

Message to the people of Sogenji
I am very grateful and much indebted to all of you. You looked after me like family, helped me out when I was troubled, and answered all of my questions. Please take care of yourselves. I will treasure the things that I learned at the temple and the memories that I made there.
What experience made you feel that you were really in Kyushu (a southern island of Japan)?
I felt that I was in Kyushu the first time I had breakfast with my host family, the Koikes. I woke up early and sat down at the kotatsu (a low table with a heater underneath). While I was drinking the miso soup that my host mother had made, I thought that the flavor was a little different from that of Tokyo. Koike-san told me that the way of making miso is different in Kyushu and Kanto (the central region of Japan). Tokyo uses red miso whereas Kyushu uses white miso.

What was the most memorable experience?
The experience that most sticks out in my memory is the time that I spent working at the children’s center. Over those 4 days, I spoke a lot with the teachers and mothers which helped me realize some similarities and differences between American and Japanese culture. I watched the children do a cute performance at the cultural festival, learned the song “My Neighbor Totoro,” and read them some books. I am also interested in Japanese dialects, so the teachers taught me some interesting phrases in the Saga dialect.

What part of the CI did you most enjoy?
I was excited to have various cultural experiences in Saga. While I had had some of these in Tokyo, I had never before had cultural experiences in the countryside. I learned about hand-copying sutras at a temple and discussed life with the high priest over tea. I ate my first traditional Japanese sweets when I had the opportunity to try the tea ceremony. I had tried matcha in the U.S., but Japanese matcha was different. I also learned the proper way to drink tea and about various types of pottery.

Message to the people of Taku
Thank you very much to the people at Taku City Hall and my host family, the Koikes. I didn’t know much about Kyushu before coming to Saga, but thanks to you I learned a lot. My experience in Taku was one that I will never forget.
In what ways did this experience impact your personal growth?
I think that I grew during my first time living alone while in Miyazaki. While living on my own, I had to think about things like buying groceries for dinner and cleaning the house, so I learned how to do things independently. After graduating from college next year, I may move out of my family’s home, so this was great practice.
As for my Japanese skills, it got a little easier for have conversations as I practiced speaking every day. Of course I still make lots of mistakes, but I’m not as shy or anxious when speaking to people I don’t know now.

What was the thing that surprised you the most?
I was most surprised at the differences between Tokyo and Miyazaki. For example, in place of trains there are cars and gas stations. There were also fewer pedestrian walkways and people walking around the town.

Please tell us about the charm of Miyazaki.
Miyazaki has a wonderful climate and it feels like the countryside. For example, there are lots of vegetable patches, mountains, and bodies of water. While there are many local specialties, the fresh seafood was the best!

Message to the people at Life no Pan
Thank you for letting me work at Life no Pan. You were all so kind and patient, which helped me feel comfortable. You taught me about many important things such as nutrition, bread making, and greeting customers. I still think of these things often. This internship was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Name: Maya Mumford
Institution: Earlham College
Richmond, Indiana
Major: Japanese
Home state: Maryland
Please tell us about the charm of Miyazaki.
Miyazaki’s greatest feature is its beautiful, natural environment. On our last day there, we went with the bakery owner Mariko-san by car to Aoshima. The weather was nice and it was so warm with all of the sunshine – perfect weather for a walk! Seeing the natural scenery in Miyazaki gave me energy and was very soothing.

What did you do during your Cultural Internship?
I worked in a bakery with where all the employees were wonderful and I was always excited for the next day’s work. After our last day, we all gathered at the manager’s home where we ate cuisines from many different countries. The homemade soba noodles were especially delicious!

What part of the experience did you find the most challenging?
While it was difficult to get to Life no Pan everyday by bicycle, all of the employees were kind as so the work was very fun. The first week was the most challenging since I wasn’t used to standing all day. On my days off, I ate delicious bread from the bakery which refueled my energy and allowed me to do my best at work again.

Message to the people at Life no Pan
Mariko-san, Manager, and Hiro-san,
How are you doing? Thank you for this wonderful experience and for always being so kind. Though 1 month was a very short time, I learned a lot about work in a bakery. I am very grateful that you were kind enough to take me to Sakurajima, the hot springs at Kirishima, and other places. I want to listen to Mariko-san’s music and eat delicious food again, so I hope to return to Miyazaki someday. If you every come to America, please get in touch!
What was your impression of Japanese schools?
The schools were wonderful! I think that it was great that the students were able to meet international people and have new experiences at such a young age. When you become an adult, sometimes the desire to try new things fades away. When I was with the children, I had lots of fun and didn’t need to worry about conducting myself as an adult. I hope that the children will continue to grow and thrive. Incidentally, school lunches in Japan are delicious! American school lunches are honestly rather disgusting, so I was worried about eating lunch at the schools. I was pleasantly surprised at how good the Japanese school lunches were.

What did you learn from your Cultural Internship?
I learned a lot about Shimane’s history and culture. The people there took me to many special places including Matsue Castle. Shimane has a very interesting history. I think that the thing I learned the most about, though, was daily life in Shimane. In Tokyo, the pace of life is fast and everyone is busy. In Shimane, I think that people live more slowly and do things with greater care. There is no rush for anyone to go anywhere. Everyone is already right where they belong.

Message to the people of Unnan
Although it was only for 1 month, I felt at home. Thanks to my host family, the people at the schools, and everyone in Unnan, I had a wonderful time. It was a lot of fun to spend time with my host family. You were a very kind and funny family. My host mother worked very hard every day to make delicious meals. I love eating, so I was very grateful! You both were so generous. Someday I would like to visit you again.
What was your impression of Japanese schools?
I thought that Japanese schools were strict, but the teachers and students were always very kind. Compared to America, I thought that the Japanese school lunches were much better. There wasn’t much meat in them, but they were delicious.

What was the most memorable experience?
The most memorable time was my first Sunday in Shimane. That morning, Kurosaki-san, Maddie, and I went to Unnan’s horse therapy center. I rode a cute pony and everyone at the center was very nice. I wanted to go again, but I didn’t have the time. After that, we went to Kakeya Village and played “Kakeya cards” with the local residents. It was my first time to play, but the teacher taught us the rules. That Sunday was the most exciting and memorable day.

What part of your CI was particularly challenging?
I have allergies, so there were many things that I could not eat. Also, I discovered some new food allergies while I was in Shimane, so those were also difficult to deal with.

Message to your host family
Suyama-san,
Thank you for hosting me for 3 weeks. I made some wonderful memories. You were very kind and each day I had fun and ate lots of good food. I also want to see Koma-chan again. The time passed quickly, but I hope to see you again someday. Thank you very much!
What was your most memorable experience?
While I had many great experiences, the most memorable time was when I visited my host family’s parents’ home one weekend. The grandmother and grandfather taught me how to make traditional Japanese dishes, showed me around their traditional-style home, and were very kind. I am grateful for the handmade bag that they gave me as a present.

In what ways did this experience impact your personal growth?
During my month in Unnan, I learned many things about how one person can contribute to the community. The people of Unnan are conscious of the declining population in rural communities and so they strive to bring happiness into the lives of all the people around them. Seeing their efforts made me want to create more relationships with the people around me and take social responsibility in my own life.

Message to the people of Unnan
Thank you very much to my host family Hirotaka-san and Nana-san. While I am sure that in those 3 weeks that there were times when you may have been uncomfortable due to our cultural differences, thank you for generously accepting me as I am. I also want to thank the people of the Unnan International Association and everyone who hosted various cultural events. Through my interactions with you, my outlook broadened and I realized the importance of cultural exchange. I am looking forward to seeing you again in the future!
Name: Evan Gooding
Institution: Earlham College
Richmond, Indiana
Major: Japanese
Home state: West Virginia

What was your impression of Japanese schools?
Before the Cultural Internship, I had never been to a Japanese school and so I didn’t know much about them. Thanks to this experience, I learned about methods of teaching and school culture in Japan. Especially when compared to American schools, I think that Japanese students help out more with things like serving school lunches and cleaning up the classroom.

What part of the experience did you most enjoy?
I saw many intriguing things and visited many interesting places in Unnan. My favorite thing was the place with the Dotaku (ancient Japanese bronze bells), but the shrines in Unnan were also very beautiful. I also didn’t know anything about Tatara (a traditional iron-works) before coming, so that was interesting. It was also fun to speak with the students at the schools. I like spreading American culture, so I enjoyed doing presentations at the schools.

What was the most memorable experience?
The most memorable thing was playing American games with the elementary school students. Those games were very nostalgic for me and I really enjoyed myself. Sometimes the students also taught and played Japanese games with us. Playing Japanese dodgeball was especially fun.

Message to the people of Unnan
Hello, everyone. How is everything in Unnan? I have returned to America. As the coronavirus situation was getting worse, I thought that it was best for me to go back home. While it was a shame that we had to leave all of a sudden, I had a very interesting experience in Unnan and learned a great deal. Thank you very much.
What was your impression of Japanese schools?
I think that things are more orderly in Japanese schools than in U.S. ones. I was also impressed at how considerate the people of Unnan were of the schools and students. The teachers, students, and parents all strove to do their best for the school. I also was surprised at how delicious the school lunches were.

What did you learn from this experience?
I learned about many interesting things from my time in Unnan, such as Japanese history. Shimane also has a very rich history that is shown through things and places like Tatara (a traditional ironworks), Kagura (a traditional mythology play), shrines, and temples.

In what ways did this experience impact your personal growth?
At the beginning of the internship, I still didn’t understand much Japanese, so I was nervous and anxious. I didn’t have any self-confidence. My host family in Shimane helped me get better at Japanese, and so I think that my language skills were one area in which I grew.

Message to the people of Unnan
My experience of living in Unnan was wonderful. Everyone I met was truly wonderful and they were so kind to me. In one short month I went to many places and had a fun time. I am very grateful to everyone for this wonderful experience. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.
Mashiko, Tochigi Prefecture
Daiseigama Pottery Studio
February 12 ~ March 12 2011

What is the special appeal of Mashiko-yaki pottery?
I think that the appeal of Mashiko-yaki lies in its strong connection to nature from start to finish. The ingredients for making both clay and glaze are gathered in Mashiko Village. Mashiko-yaki is never fired in electronic kilns, only in traditional wood-burning ones. Mashiko-yaki’s connection to nature ensures that each piece is unique and valuable.

In what ways did this experience impact your personal growth?
While I was interested in Japanese art as a whole before my CI, I didn’t know anything about pottery. Through my experience in Mashiko, I became particularly interested in traditional Japanese pottery. Now I would like to study pottery in college and return to Japan after graduation to continue to study Japanese pottery.

What was the thing that surprised you the most?
I was surprised at how much physical labor is involved when working at a pottery studio. I did various labor-intensive tasks every day such as hauling kindling, splitting wood, cleaning the kilns, and making clay. Before the internship, I didn’t have a clear idea of the nature of the work that I would be doing, so I was a little surprised.

Message to the people at Daiseigama pottery studio
Thank you to everyone at Daiseigama for always being so kind! I am very grateful to you for teaching me new things every day. Thanks to all of you, I now think of Mashiko as my Japanese hometown.

Name: Theo Hunt
Institution: Earlham College
Richmond, Indiana
Majors: Japanese & Art
Home state: Indiana
What did you do during the Cultural Internship?
For my CI experience, I went to Mashiko Village in Tochigi Prefecture where I helped make Mashiko-yaki pottery. I really enjoyed all of the work that we did every day, but I particularly liked chopping down branches for kindling. We called this “tree massage.”

What was the most memorable time?
The times that I spent having tea breaks with everyone at 10AM and 3PM were particularly memorable.

In what ways did this experience impact your personal growth?
At first, I was very nervous to speak Japanese since I hadn’t had much practice doing so in quite some time. But through my conversations with everyone during the internship, it became very easy to speak Japanese.

What is the special appeal of Mashiko-yaki?
Mashiko-yaki pottery is different from other Japanese pottery. The methods of making Mashiko-yaki have been passed down through the generations at Daiseigama pottery studio and so the pottery is very traditional. The people at Daiseigama use climbing kilns and collect ingredients for glazes and the red pine wood used in the kilns themselves. The resulting pieces are traditional, one hundred percent hand-crafted works of art.

Message to the people of Daiseigama pottery studio
Thank you so much to everyone at Daiseigama. While we were nervous at first, it turned out to be a wonderful experience. I have only positive things to say about my month there. While making pottery was of course very enjoyable, I think that I liked the time spent chatting, having tea breaks, and eating ramen with everyone best. If I ever return to Japan, I will definitely come to visit!
Closing Remarks

I would like to sincerely thank everyone who hosted our students for the Cultural Internships. We could not make the CIs happen without the support of and cooperation from a great many people. Thank you for supporting the CI program in various ways and hosting Japan Study students.

As in previous years, this year’s CI experiences took place between the beginning of February and the middle of March in various sites all over the country. However, in the beginning of March, the spread of coronavirus began to have effects on daily life. While there were no direct ramifications for most of the sites, events such as school visits had to be cancelled.

From March 20th, concern about the spread of the virus in Japan continued to escalate and so the Japan Study program instructed all students to leave Japan by March 25th. This was a very difficult decision for the program and it was likewise a challenge for students to complete all of their preparations to leave Japan by the 25th in time.

In the following months, not only did the pandemic continue to spread in Japan, but it also became a serious issue for the entire world. Waseda University shifted all of its spring semester courses to online instruction for the semester beginning on May 11th, which was something that had never been done before. Our students continued to take classes online from the comfort of their own homes back in their native countries.

I am very glad that our students were able to complete their Cultural Internships right before the coronavirus became a full-blown pandemic. Students continually tell us that the CI was a highlight of their study abroad experience and so I am very grateful that they were able to successfully complete their experiences. Without the support, understanding, and graciousness to host our students from people at various sites all over Japan, the CI program would be impossible. I once again thank you most sincerely for your kindness.

Waseda University has once again decided to hold courses online and did not accept any international study abroad students for the fall semester. While we will not be able to offer the Cultural Internship experience to students for the spring of 2021, we hope that the coronavirus will have subsided and we can offer the CI for 2022. We look forward to working with all of you again in the coming years.

Michiyo Nagayama
Waseda University International Division, GLCA/ACM Japan Study Program

Students were asked to answer questions specific to their site as well as choose from questions including those below:

- What did you do during the CI?
- What did you learn?
- What was the experience that impacted you the most or was the most memorable?
- In what ways did this experience impact your personal growth?
- What was the thing that surprised you the most?
- What part of the CI did you most enjoy?
- What part of the experience did you find the most challenging?