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Obirin Gakuen
Foundation of America

Head Office:
1175 Park Pl #125
San Mateo, CA 94403

Phone:
Bay Area: 704-968-2102
Los Angeles: 310-384-2300

Email:
amia@obirin-gakuen.org
erinaka@obirin-gakuen.org

Web:
www.obirin-gakuen.org

Obiriner Family Newsletter

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We welcome your stories and news!

Editors: Maria Domoto
Eri Nakamura

Stories:
Kurumi Adachi
Amber Bush
Renee Frias
Enmin Li
Tomoko Marshall
Natsumi Naito
Fumitake Nakamura
Yoshio Tanaka
Jim Williams

Photos:
Renee Frias
Peter Mattersdorff
Mizuki Nagae
Akihiro Nezu

JUNBA 2013 Symposium and Summit, January 11-12, 2013

Welcome to the Year of the Snake

The Japanese University Network in the Bay Area (JUNBA), an organization of Japanese universities with California offices, hosts an annual symposium and summit. This year’s theme was “Educational Transformation in a Global World beyond International Exchange Programs.” After lectures from two Stanford University administrators, top administrators from 15 Japanese universities shared information about their global outreach and educational goals. Obirin was represented by Chancellor Toyoshi Satow, President Takayasu Mitani, Director of North American Operations Akihiro Nezu, and Manager of the International Center Hideki Matsudo. The California offices also had a poster session highlighting their global exchange activities.

(right) Akihiro Nezu, Director of North American Operations at Obirin, explains Obirin’s activities in North America to Kumiko Bando, Director General, Higher Educational Bureau, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan.

We at OGFA hope that you had a wonderful holiday season with family and friends and that this year will be even more fulfilling and prosperous.

As Obirin expands programs to North America, OGFA has been kept busy adding affiliates and designing programs that fit the youth of today’s Japan. We are excited that we have been able to recruit more North Americans to go to Obirin to study and that new short-term and long-term programs are attracting more Obirin students to come here. But what is most exciting for me personally is to run into Obirin alums. Two, Tomoko and Yuka, are featured in this newsletter. Little did I know that when I went to the University of Virginia one of the Japanese teachers there would say, “Do you remember me? I can never forget your voice. You taught me English at Obirin my freshman year!” What a small world this is! This year, Yukari Semba, our new Board member, and Eri Nakamura will be teaming up to seek more alums for all of us to network with and share the experiences we’ve had since we were all young together at Obirin. They’ll be contacting you all soon to ask you to help us find your classmates here in North America.

--Maria Domoto, OGFA Executive Director
Jim Williams  
Obirin Faculty 1980-85

I was thrilled to be invited to contribute a few thoughts to the Obiriner Newsletter about my memories of Obirin and life after Obirin. I had the pleasure of teaching at Obirin, ages ago, from 1980 to 1985, when I helped launch the Freshman English Program. My years at Obirin were important ones for me; I learned probably more than I taught.

In some sense, Obirin was the core of my experience in Japan. I had first come to Japan in 1972 as an international student at Waseda University. At the time, I was none too pleased with the directions my own country was taking (still true), and was eager to find alternatives. Japan seemed a perfect counter-narrative to the US. I returned to Japan in 1976 with a masters in ESL, first teaching in business and then at Obirin. What I found at Obirin was a group of thoughtful, committed educators—Satow, Domoto, Venter, Ohkoshi—educators who saw the transformative possibilities in education, at both personal and institutional levels. This commitment to the transformation of students, of the university experience, and of the institutions in which we study and work, was the main lesson I, and perhaps others who experienced that exciting time, took from Obirin. It has stayed with me.

Since leaving, I completed my doctorate in international education and development at Harvard. I took the commitment to educational transformation from the Obirin experience to the problems of under-development in poor countries. To help finance school while finishing my dissertation, I edited a journal at the Harvard Institute for Educational Development and took part in educational development projects in Botswana, Malawi, Egypt, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. After graduating, I worked for two years in the Analysis Research and Technical Support division of USAID’s Africa Bureau. Soon however, I felt the call of teaching, and took a position at Ohio University and then my current position at George Washington University in Washington DC. I have a broad range of research interests—too many really—education and conflict; education of out-of-school youth; policies and programs to improve basic education systems in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia; factors associated with equity of learning in classrooms, schools, districts and national school systems.

Like many Obirin Newsletter readers, many of my interests preceded my time at Obirin. But Obirin reinforced my interests, helped me trust them and told me I had to work hard to realize them. I suppose things may look rosier in retrospect than they seemed at the time. But I can’t help but think how lucky I was to have had the Obirin experience.

I welcome any Obiriners who come to Washington. Please feel free to contact me at jhwilliams2@gmail.com.

Yuka Inoue, Obirin English major class of 1985, is now teaching Japanese to kindergarteners in the Japanese bilingual and cultural program at Rosa Parks Elementary School in San Francisco. Rosa Parks is one of the sites where Obirin students volunteer in San Francisco. We are lucky to have alumni who mentor their kohai. And it was great for Yuka and Maria to reconnect after 25 years!

Yuka Takahashi with a bunch of her American and international friends at Western Carolina University. Yuka was part of our first cohort to Western. While at Western she was baptized and is now a Christian.
Enmin Li, Asian History Professor, J. F. Oberlin University, on sabbatical at Stanford

My research focuses on 19th to 20th century Ryukyu/Okinawa/Taiwan issues in the context of the China-Japan-U.S. Triangle. There are many unique historical materials at the Hoover Institute, including Chiang Kai-shek’s personal diaries. I have been immersed in reading those precious documents from the day I arrived. I love learning and absorbing new ideas and research methods. Stanford’s Freeman Spogli Institute and other departments organize outstanding conferences, symposia, lectures, and open seminars each week. I almost always go to those events and get involved in the discussions with the speakers and audience.

To understand Stanford’s curriculum, I have sat in on undergraduate and graduate classes, such as China in World Politics, and the Future Faculty Seminar. In addition, I attend PhD dissertation defenses. I spend much time with Stanford students, including PhD students and Postdocs. On weekends, I like to go to organ concerts or services at Stanford’s Memorial Church. I think my communication skills have improved considerably as I moved from using English not only in the classroom but also in real life.

I do not want to remain in the campus cocoon. To experience the mood of the 2012 elections, I watched the presidential debates with friends and then joined a courteous, respectful, moderated discussion that focused on the issues and debate performance. On Election Day, I even drove to some polling places to observe voting.

When Tomoko recalls Obirin, Sakura Dorm, where she lived her first year, comes to mind first. She was far from home in Okinawa, but students from all over helped her. “We complained about the strict cleaning inspections for bathrooms, but ended up with a sense of solidarity by respecting and helping each other. We also learned life lessons through freedom and responsibility, which helped us grow.”

She said she will never forget the three English professors who impacted her life most -- Maria, Travis and Angus. “I remember being totally immersed in English letters and sounds. They spent a lot of time with me outside class, which helped me learn a lot more,” she said. She recalled a Junior Year Abroad orientation when, instead of just a standard guidance lecture, the students had interesting exercises including meditation and non-verbal body movements. If Obirin just taught English instead of nurturing human beings, she would never have met those professors and grown to be who she is today.

She wanted to study in the US her junior year, but since she had studied there in high school, Travis recommended she go to the UK. So, she spent a year at Bath in England. “I was glad I went to England with its long and deep history which was quite different from the US,” she said. There, she expanded her horizons and knowledge of different cultures and customs from the religion course she took, as well as travelling all over Europe, India, and across Siberia with a Eurail Pass.

After graduating, she received a Master’s in Education from St. Louis University and now teaches Japanese at the University of Virginia. “Now that I am the one that engages students as a Japanese lecturer every day, I have to create a serious but fun learning environment. Teaching the syllabus is important, but establishing life goals, being a good role model, and learning to laugh together are also important. Now 22 years after my graduation, I truly appreciate that the three professors who supported me at Obirin gave me the skills and perspective to learn, to share with my students, and to help them grow not just as Japanese language speakers but as human beings,” she said. This spring one of Tomoko’s students will be at JFOU, so the circle is complete!
それは人との関係に国境はないということです。最初の1か月間は上手くいかなかったり辛いと感じことも多く、自分の語学力のなさをただ悔んだりしました。しかし、アメリカでただネイティブの授業を受けるだけではなく、何か留学でしかできない経験をしなければと決めていました。私は元々好きなことが、ダンスクラブに入りたいと思っていましたので、とにかくたくさん探し、人に聞いて何とか連絡を取って参加しました。最初の方はほとんど喋れず、楽しいと言えるものではありませんでした。それでも毎週欠かさず通い、一生懸命話しかけ、秋に行ったパフォーマンスにも参加しました。うまくいかなかったコミュニケーションも自然と取れるようになり、それがすごく自信につながり、様々な行事に積極的に参加できるようになりました。クラブ活動とクラブの仲間会うことは今では毎週の楽しみです。

毎日の学校生活も、けんかをしたり、朝まで語り合ったり、旅行に行ったり、正直に言って、言葉も文化も違うクラスメイト達とこんなに仲良くなるとは思っていませんでした。また、ホームステイの家族はとても優しく、ハロウィンなど行事のたびに呼んで下さり、1週間の旅行にも一緒に行きました。家庭の雰囲気や家庭料理などを教えてもらう、私のアメリカのお母さんです。今、私から後輩たちにアドバイスできることがあるとすれば、とにかく踏み出すことです。言葉も文化も違う中に飛び込むことは、決して最初から楽しいことではないけれど、英語が話せるという理由で閉じこもるのではなく、なんでもチャレンジすること。それが発見や自信やもっと学びたいという事にも繋がると思います。毎日本当に充実していて、もっともっと英語を学びたい、人と話したい、と思って過ごしています。これからあと4か月、さらに色々な事を吸収して帰りたいと思います。
Voice from Our Affiliate

The University of Kansas

Renee Frias, Program Coordinator,
Office of Study Abroad, The University of Kansas

The University of Kansas (KU) and J. F. Oberlin University have had a long and fruitful relationship since 1992. KU sent the first KU student in Fall 1992 and has since then sent over 55 students to study at J. F. Oberlin University. KU has hosted over 37 J. F. Oberlin University students.

Our prosperous exchange partnership has allowed many KU students to further their Japanese language skills and study content courses about Japan taught in English, which have counted towards their East Asian Language and Cultures Degree at the University of Kansas. Many KU students have enjoyed staying with a host family while studying at J. F. Oberlin University. Over the years, KU students have participated in the many activities and field trips that J. F. Oberlin University offers. One KU student even played on the J. F. Oberlin baseball team.

J. F. Oberlin students have studied a variety of courses at KU. Many have also studied English language courses at the KU Applied English Center (AEC). While at KU, J. F. Oberlin students have enjoyed attending football and basketball games and celebrating Thanksgiving with a local family in Lawrence. J. F. Oberlin students have also participated in the AEC Conversational Partner Group which has weekly informal conversational gatherings and dinner outings as well as field trips in Lawrence and the Kansas City area.

The KU Office of Study Abroad wishes to thank the J. F. International Student Center for their dedicated support. The J. F. Oberlin staff has been extremely helpful and a joy to work with over the years. They have helped KU students have an enriching, life-changing experience while studying abroad at J. F. Oberlin University.

Nicole Lopez who studied at J. F. Oberlin Fall 2010 and Spring 2011:

“My study abroad experience is hard to describe in just a couple of sentences. My understanding of learning and appreciation of intercultural exchange now has a new dimension. Above all, the things I discovered about myself I would have never known without going overseas.”

Ian Maatta who studied at J. F. Oberlin Fall 2010:

“Studying abroad was a fantastic experience for me. The faculty was knowledgeable, approachable and helpful in most every way. Living in Machida was also an incredible experience, and I would recommend the Obirin Exchange program very highly to anyone with an interest in the Japanese language or culture.”
Global Education: The Most Important 21st Century Challenge

Yoshiro Tanaka, OGFA Board Member, Special Assistant to the Chancellor

Why should everyone take advantage of higher education? Part of the uneasy nature of this question arises from the difficulty of predicting the requirements of a “society in becoming.” Whatever it is, we will be in a more changeable and more complicated opaque age that simultaneously requires global cooperation and co-existence while also demanding international competitiveness. It will be an aging society with a declining birth rate, where the productive population decreases, thereby severely affecting industrial structure and employment. The social needs for lifelong learning for all, including professionals, will grow rapidly.

On the other hand, science and research, the driving forces for an affluent society, will advance more rapidly. Interdisciplinary, comprehensive research will be needed more than ever. The higher education environment will change dramatically. The new era will require a profound restructuring of “intelligence” in higher education institutions. 21st century skills - Knowledge (Communication, Decision Making, Adaptive Problem Solving, Adaptability, Situation Awareness), and Attributes/Competencies (Adaptive Expertise, Creative Thinking, Metacognition, Teamwork) - will be required for everybody.

A global vision is quite important. How well does higher education embrace a global view? The best kind of collaboration obviously promises rewards far beyond the ability of a single researcher, student, or institution working in isolation. Collaboration is a necessary means to overcome problems that cross national boundaries.

Reich (1991) stated, “We are living through a transformation that will rearrange the politics and economics of the coming century. There will be no national products or technologies, no national corporations, no national industries. There will no longer be national economies as we have come to understand that concept. All that will remain rooted within national borders are the people who comprise a nation.” Nowadays, we are obviously a part of this global community.

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Dream big, have fun, and work hard! The future is in your hands.
佐藤東洋士桜美林大学総長と潘基文国連事務総長が会談

2013年1月8日（火）、佐藤東洋士桜美林大学総長は、ニューヨークの国連本部にて、潘基文（パン・ギムン、Ban Ki-moon 国連事務総長）と会談します。グローバル化時代における“平和と持続可能社会（Peace and Sustainability）”の実現に向けて、教育機関が成すべき行動の重要性を再確認しました。

同時に、桜美林大学は、国連アカデミック・インパクト（UN Academic Impact）、原則1の世界拠点校（Global Hub）として、世界の教育機関との協創によるネットワークを通じて国連憲章の精神を広め、“Globally Minded University”としてカリキュラム開発等の推進を含め、人間教育を通じて、更なる貢献を進めることを合意しました。

国連アカデミック・インパクトは国連のアウトリーチ活動であり、世界大学総長協会（International Association of University Presidents: IAUP）が協働しています。IAUPの次期会長（2014-2017）である佐藤総長は、桜美林大学が国連と共力で昨年8月に発行したテキストブック「世界平和への歩み—ノーベル平和受賞者が語る」（英語名：“Pathway to Peace – for building a culture of Peace”）を潘基文国連事務総長に手渡しました。このテキストは桜美林大学がGlobal Hubとなっている原則「国連憲章の原則を推進し、実現する」を広く共有する目的で日本語・英語の2か国語併記で刊行されました。今後、IAUP加盟校の協力の下、他の言語にも翻訳される予定です。

留学生お正月体験

新年を本国で迎えられない留学生を佐藤東洋士理事長・総長が桜美林学園伊豆高原クラブに招待しています。12月31日から1月1日の1泊2日で行われ、初日は、立食会と留学生による特技（カラオケや手品）を披露し、年越しを食べながら新年のカウントダウンをします。2日目は、大室山に登り、初日の出を拝んだ後に、お節料理を食べ、餅つき、書初め、かるたといったお正月に因んだ体験をします。今回は、7か国55名の留学生が参加して楽しいひと時を過ごしました。

Reconnaissance Japan/考察日本プログラム 2012年秋学期終了式

1月18日、薫冠堂チャペルにて、今学期を終えて帰国する交換留学生のための終了式を執り行いました。世界中の提携大学から派遣される留学生を受け入れているのが、Reconnaissance Japan/考察日本プログラムです。今期をもって終了する11か国・地域57名の留学生のほか、プログラムの授業を担当する日本語の教員やコンテント科目の教員、国際学生支援課の職員なども列席して、留学生のみなさんが日本で努力した成果を一緒に称えました。国際センター北米室長の根津先生から一人ひとりに終了証書を手渡し、「日本での思い出や人とのつながりを大切に、またいつか桜美林という『ホーム』に帰ってきてください」という言葉を送ると、会場の学生は大きな拍手でそれに応え、再会を誓い合いました。