





JAPAN

Looks to Take Flight

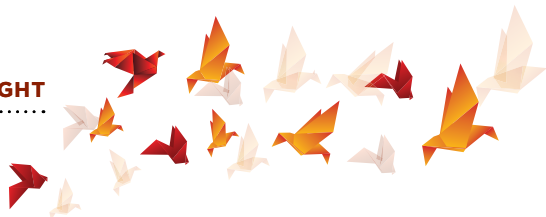
Through various initiatives,
Japan is working to make
internationalization soar nationwide.

By Charlotte West

IN JAPAN, “GLOBAL JINZAI”—AN EXPRESSION LITERALLY TRANSLATED AS “GLOBALLY COMPETENT HUMAN RESOURCES” OR, MORE SUCCINCTLY, “GLOBAL TALENT”—has become a phrase that is increasingly prevalent in discussions about the internationalization of Japanese higher education. In the last several years, the Japanese government has recognized the need for the country to produce globally competent graduates who have the skills to succeed in the twenty-first century economy. The development of global human resources has been an area of focus for the government in both the economic and educational realms.

In a 2013 editorial in the *Japan Times*, for instance, Japan’s Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology Hakubun Shimomura explicitly linked the internationalization of education with the country’s ability to maintain global competitiveness in light of global challenges such as climate change and domestic challenges such as a falling birthrate and an aging population. “Faced with these issues...Japan has no other course than to enhance the capabilities of each and every citizen through education if it wants to continue to grow as an affluent nation and keep its position within the world. For this, it is of paramount importance for Japan to ensure that its system of higher education, particularly through the internationalization of its universities, fosters highly capable people with a global perspective who can play active roles in many fields. This will be crucial for strengthening Japan’s international competitiveness,” he said.¹

Shimomura continued by saying that the government needs to both support Japanese students in studying abroad and internationalize Japanese universities by attracting foreign students and researchers. With this in mind, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) set ambitious targets for both inbound and outbound mobility. The government aims to attract 300,000 international students and send 120,000 Japanese students abroad annually by 2020. MEXT furthermore seeks to increase the international profile of its universities with the goal of having 10 Japanese higher education institutions rank in the top 100 world universities in the next 10 years.



Student Mobility in Japan

Japan has a long way to go on all fronts, needing to more than double current outbound and inbound figures to meet the 2020 targets. For example, currently only two institutions, University of Tokyo and Kyoto University, are ranked in the top 100 of the Times Higher Education World University index², and the number of Japanese students studying abroad declined from a peak of 83,000 in 2004 to approximately 57,500 in 2011.³ That number (57,500) accounts for only a small fraction—only about 1 percent—of all Japanese university students (OECD).⁴

The downward trend is also reflected on U.S. campuses, with around 19,000 Japanese students studying in the United States in 2013–14, less than half of the number at the peak in the mid-1990s when Japan was the leading country of origin for international students in the United States. However, the rate of decrease appears to be slowing, with only a slight decline from the previous year (IIE, 2014).⁵

Japan has slightly better numbers for incoming students, with international students making up around 3.3 percent of all postsecondary students in 2012 (OECD).⁶ The Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) reports that around 148,000 international students were enrolled at Japanese universities in 2013. Ninety-two percent of

these students come from Asia. The United States is the only non-Asian country in the top 10 sending countries of origin.⁷ Overall international student enrollment in Japan dipped after the tsunami and earthquake in 2011, but appears to be stabilizing. For example, the number of U.S. students studying in Japan dropped by nearly a third following the earthquake (it was 6,166 in 2009–2010 prior to the disaster and fell to 4,134 in 2011–2012) but has since rebounded to around 5,800 in 2012–2013 (IIE, 2014).⁸

According to JASSO, one of the future challenges for Japan's internationalization efforts is to increase the diversity of both study abroad destinations for Japanese students and the countries that are sending international students to Japan.

Government Initiatives Promoting Internationalization in Japan

To tackle the downward trends, the Japanese government has in the last five years launched a series of funding initiatives aimed at promoting the internationalization of its higher education sector. One of the most prominent programs has been Global30 (G30), an initiative that provided support to 13 top Japanese universities. Between 2009 and 2013, the Japanese government allocated \$140 million

A class at International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan.



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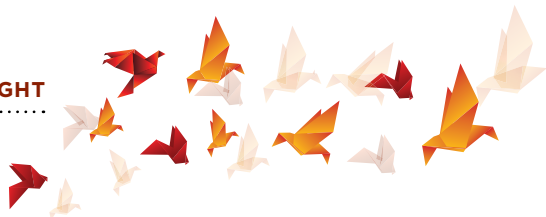
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(U.S.) to fund projects such as the development of degree programs in English, the hiring of English-speaking faculty and staff, and the establishment of student services to help support international students in Japan.⁹ According to MEXT, the results of the G30 have been promising. Through the scheme, the Japanese government provided funding for the establishment of 156—33 undergraduate and 123 graduate—degree programs offered in English. The number of international students at the 13 universities increased from 23,086 to 28,636 annually in the five years of the initiative.

While the initial G30 program focused in increasing inbound mobility, MEXT has also begun promoting outbound mobility through marketing campaigns and funding schemes encouraging the development of study abroad programs at Japanese universities. In 2012 Japanese universities were invited to submit proposals through the Go Global Japan initiative (originally titled the Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development) to develop study abroad programs, enhance English language programs, and promote internationalization on their campuses with the goal of helping students develop global competence. Another area of focus is professional

development, such as language training, for faculty and staff, and the recruitment of foreign faculty. Forty-two Japanese universities received funding for either campuswide internationalization strategies or for programs in particular departments or faculties. The government has allocated ¥210 billion for 2012–2016.

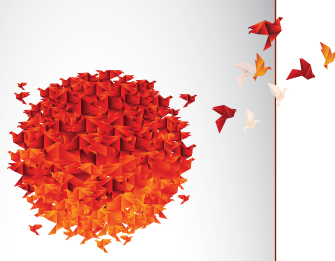
International Christian University (ICU), for example, received funding from Go Global Japan to enhance the development of its English for Liberal Arts Program (ELA). According to ICU President Junko Hibiya, the main goal of the new program is to better prepare students to be successful in university courses taught in English. ICU offers a bilingual curriculum in English and Japanese, and Hibiya says that the Go Global Japan grant allowed it to help improve its students' English proficiency and diversify the content and duration of its study abroad programs.

Another institution that has received funding from the G30 and Go Global Japan schemes is the Tokyo Medical and Dental University (TMDU). Government funding was used for initiatives such as the establishment of the Office for Global Education and Career Development, which is staffed by English-speaking faculty with backgrounds in health science. It also developed a Global

The International Christian University campus in Tokyo.



PHOTO CREDIT: INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY



“The number of Japanese students going abroad under the international exchange agreement between Japanese universities and their counterpart universities is gradually increasing...”

Community Workshop, where freshmen discuss global health issues in English. The workshop is also a prerequisite for study abroad, so around half of all freshmen participate. TMDU also developed a multiyear interdisciplinary program, the Health Sciences Leadership Program, which provides mentoring and support for long-term global career development to a select cohort of first-year students.

Shibaura Institute of Technology (SIT) has also focused on developing programs that give students skills for global careers with funding through Go Global Japan since 2012 and Top Global University since 2014. According to Osamu Sugiyama, manager of SIT's Global Educational Initiative Section, they have implemented a global project-based learning model where students form international teams and tackle issues such as the environmental degradation. Another program offers English classes and takes undergraduates to advanced research laboratories. In 2013, more than 300 SIT undergraduate students studied abroad, which was also twice the number from 2012.

In addition to the programs providing funding directly to Japanese higher education institutions, the government has also significantly increased its support for scholarships for both domestic and international students. MEXT requested JPY 12.1 billion in 2015 to fund scholarships for Japanese students to study abroad, almost twice what it spent in 2013. The government also funded scholarships for approximately 8,500 international students to study in Japan in 2014 (JASSO).¹⁰

MEXT also launched a campaign, “Tobitate! Ryugaku Japan” (“Go abroad! Study Overseas, Japan”), in 2013 to promote study abroad among Japanese students, including a website and a series of promotional events featuring prominent business personalities, artists and athletes who have previously studied abroad. In conjunction with the campaign, the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), an independent administrative agency established under MEXT, started a new initiative called “Japan Public-Private Partnership Student Study Abroad Program ‘TOBITATE! Young Ambassador Program.’” The response to the scholarship program indicated an increased interest in study abroad among Japanese students. They received around 1,700 applications for the JASSO Young Ambassador Program, which was about five times more than they expected, according to JASSO vice president, Hideki Yonekawa.

Yonekawa says that the impact of the MEXT initiatives is starting to be evident: “The number of Japanese students going abroad under the international exchange agreement between

Japanese universities and their counterpart universities is gradually increasing. This trend means that many of universities and related institutes selected under the initiative are starting to launch some short-term programs to go abroad.”

The universities that have received funding have seen an increase in the number of students studying abroad, particularly in short-term programs. In 2013, for example, more than 300 SIT undergraduate students studied abroad, which was twice the number from 2012. At Tohoku University, study abroad numbers increased from 120 in 2012 to 280 in 2013.

With G30 ending in 2014, MEXT has more recently focused its efforts on a new program titled Top Global University Project. The goal is

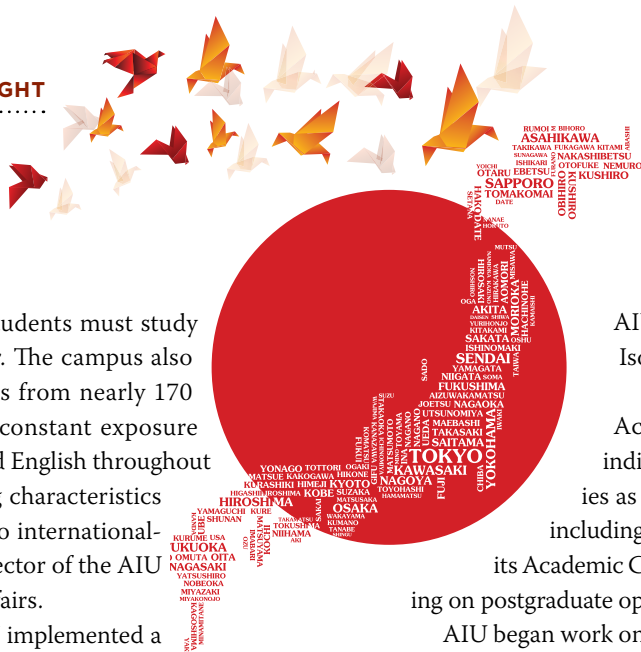
to increase the international competitiveness of Japanese universities and promote comprehensive internationalization on their campuses. Thirty-seven universities—both the country's top research and education institutions and other institutions with innovative approaches to internationalization—will receive between approximately ¥170 million (\$1.6 million) and ¥420 million (\$3.8 million) annually over the duration of the 10-year initiative.

“The Top Global University project aims to enhance the international compatibility and competitiveness of Japanese higher education through thorough university reform by not only internationalizing academic systems but also redefining organizational culture in each university, while preserving and improving its tradition and existing strengths,” says Hideto Matsumoto, director of the MEXT Office for International Planning.

The application process for the Top Global project was intended to encourage universities to review their current systems and advance their internationalization efforts in the process. “The process of applying was an effective tool to make higher education institutions move forward for internationalization. In the process of designing the application plan, there were concentrated discussions in most of the applicant universities and the process itself functioned as a driving force to let universities review their own systems from an international prospective,” Matsumoto continues.

Akita International University Leads with Faculty

Akita International University (AIU)—which has received government funding through both the Go Global Japan and Top Global University initiatives—is a Japanese public institution that has been international since its start in 2004. All classes are



taught in English, and all students must study abroad for at least one year. The campus also hosts international students from nearly 170 partner universities. "This constant exposure to international students and English throughout the campus are the defining characteristics of AIU's holistic approach to internationalization," says Ken Isogai, director of the AIU Division of International Affairs.

Through Go Global, AIU implemented a faculty exchange program with its international partners in which instructors gave guest lectures while studying each other's systems to strengthen their educational approaches.

"The faculty exchange enabled by the Go Global Japan grant, which began in 2012, has given our students the opportunities to study under professors who they never otherwise could have met and has also given our professors the outstanding opportunities to evaluate their own teaching in comparison with international standards and strengthen their instructional skills. The project is still ongoing, with about 15 faculty members exchanged between

AIU and our partner universities every year," Isogai explains.

A second focus was on the creation of the Active Learning Support Center, a space for individual pursuit of language and culture studies as well as for tutoring in a variety of subjects, including academic writing. In addition, AIU opened its Academic Career Support Center, which provides advising on postgraduate opportunities.

AIU began work on the Top Global University Project grant in November 2014. It is currently working on a benchmarking project with globally recognized liberal arts colleges in an effort to bring its curriculum up to a global standard. In addition, it has revamped some of its on-campus housing into theme-based housing clusters including "Future Graduate Students," "Japanese Studies," and "Public Policy and Diplomacy," to bring students with common goals closer together along with advisers assigned to each cluster.

Isogai stresses that AIU is not pursuing globalization because of government grants but rather has received government grants due to its existing internationalization efforts. "AIU has established

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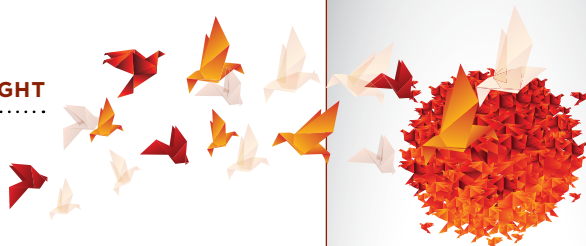


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a role as the leader of internationalization in Japanese education and pursues these efforts as a critical part of the university's mission, earning the much-appreciated grants and support of the government as a result of our forward-looking approach and successes," he says.

Tohoku University Looks to Attain Global Competency

Tohoku University (TU) is another institution that received funding through Go Global Japan and was more recently awarded a grant through the Top Global University project. TU had previously received support as one of the 13 universities involved in the G30 project.

Tohoku University used funding from the G30 program to start three international undergraduate programs in engineering, science, and agriculture through which students can earn BAs in English, and an additional 13

"I am the first generation of these English undergraduate programs in Tohoku. For me, finding new experiences, making connections, and having global friends is as important as receiving a great education..."

international graduate programs across various disciplines, according to Kazuko Suematsu, professor at Tohoku's Global Learning Center. All international students who have thus far participated in the international undergraduate programs created through G30 also received scholarships that covered their tuition and living expenses. In addition, TU developed exchange programs in engineering and science, allowing exchange students in all disciplines to take courses in English.

Chanon Pornrungrroj is a senior from Thailand who is in the advanced molecular chemistry major, one of the

English-taught undergraduate programs funded through Global30. He chose Japan because of its world leadership in science and technology and he selected Tohoku University because of its rank in materials science. "The professors and staff here will help me to achieve my dream of creating a new materials because professors and staff here provide me not only with an education in fundamental chemistry but also the relevant world-class research opportunities," he says.

"I am the first generation of these English undergraduate programs in Tohoku. For me, finding new experiences, making connections, and having global friends is as important as receiving a great education. So, I was prepared to take this risk of joining a newly established program," he continues.

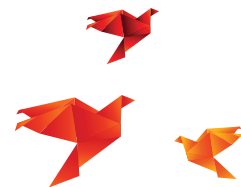
The idea of producing globally competent graduates has been explicit in the creation of the G30 programs. Pornrungrroj says that he did research as to why 13 Japanese universities would create programs in English: "I found out that one of the main reasons is that they anticipated that having international students on campus would result in encouraging local Japanese students to study other languages, especially English, and then go study abroad... In order for Japan to be a globally competitive society, I think that globalization is the key that MEXT has to be able to implement in all students to build globally competitive human resources in the future."

In addition to increasing the number of international students on campus, TU has created opportunities for its students to engage globally. Through Go Global Japan, Tohoku launched an international certificate program,

Chanon Pornrungrroj, from Thailand, is studying molecular chemistry in an English-taught undergraduate program at Japan's Tohoku University.



PHOTO: CREDIT: COURTESY OF CHANON PORNRUNGROJ



the University Global Leader Program (UGL). The program requires students to not only take relevant classes but also engage themselves in extracurricular activities with an international component, such as internships abroad, volunteer activities, or collaborative projects with international students. Students must also study abroad during their undergraduate studies. To help facilitate this, Tohoku has aggressively developed 20 short-term study abroad programs in 11 countries in the past 3 years, sending more than 300 students per year. In addition, it has created a number of internationalized courses to meet the certificate requirements. Suematsu says that 1,300 students are currently working toward earning the certificate.

“These short-term programs have been acting as a teaser, boosting up the number of outgoing students who are going for longer study abroad. While the Go Global Japan program initiated by MEXT originally intended to prepare Japanese students to become global citizens, Tohoku University targeted both Japanese and international students. This led us to creating a number of ‘colearning classes’ where Japanese students and exchange students, in addition to degree-seeking international students, all learn in the multicultural setting,” Suematsu explains.

Kensuke Sugawara, a Japanese international relations major studying at University of California-Davis on exchange, is one of the first TU students to receive the University Global Leader certificate. He says the program allowed him to attend lectures by professionals who have had global careers.

“My biggest achievement in UGL program is to have gotten a mindset to be professional and a leader. From the lectures by great teachers who are active in their fields, I learned what professionalism is,” he says.

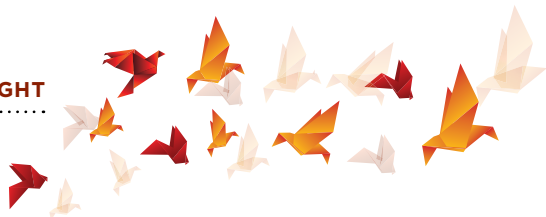
Sugawara had previously gone abroad for a month in 2013 to study English. “That experience made me realize that going abroad for a month was too short to improve my English and experience a foreign country,” he says.

With funding through Top Global University program, the institution aims to further implement comprehensive internationalization on its campus via its proposed Tohoku Global University Initiative. Planned activities include the development of collaborative international graduate programs that will offer joint degrees with partner universities, the establishment of international research centers in fields such as material science and data science, the expansion of international courses through the Institute for Excellence in Higher Education (IEHE, established April 2014), and degree programs in English in every discipline.



Kensuke Sugawara is a Japanese student studying at the University of California-Davis.

PHOTO CREDIT: COURTESY OF KENSUKE SUGAWARA



Tohoku University has focused its internationalization efforts on creating international opportunities for both domestic and international students. For outgoing students, they identified four obstacles that prevented Japanese students from going abroad.

“Those obstacles are lack of financial support, lack of language proficiency, insecure feelings toward living in a foreign culture, and not being able to graduate on time,” Suematsu says.

To help address these issues, TU allocated \$1 million (U.S.) to create scholarships for both long- and short-term study abroad. According to Suematsu, 60 percent of the funding is allocated for short-term programs that have components of language and cross-cultural training. In addition, TU provides extensive support to students to help improve their English proficiency, such as free TOEFL tests, intensive language training, on-line study materials, and English tutoring.

In 2014 TU also launched a new short-term study abroad program—the first of its kind for a national university in Japan—for high school students who had been admitted as freshman. Seventeen students participated in the program.

One challenge that TU faces in its internationalization efforts is that half of its student body comes from the northeast region of the country. “They have not been exposed to international perspectives compared to those who grew up in big cities. So changing their mindset and having them gain insights into the globalizing world have been our biggest challenges. Our students are academically excellent but as not internationally oriented as we would want them to be when they come to Tohoku University. This is the reason we emphasize global citizen education and study abroad at a very early stage of their university education,” Suematsu says.

Fukushima University Responds Creatively

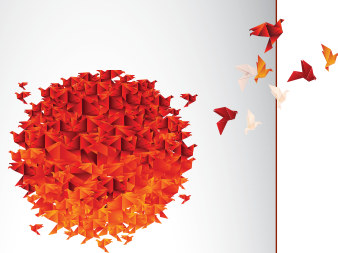
Although it has not received government funding to promote internationalization on its campus, Fukushima University (FU) is another Japanese institution that has developed innovative international programs. In 2011 three of the nuclear reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant melted down after the plant was hit by the tsunami triggered by the Tohoku earthquake. In the aftermath of the disasters, Fukushima University experienced a 60 percent drop in international student enrollment, from 178 in 2011 to 72 in 2014.

“The negative stigma attained to our university and prefecture’s name is something that is still and will continue to be our largest challenge (in terms of international-

Anna Yoshizawa, a public administration and social science student at Fukushima University, is studying abroad at Colorado State University.



PHOTO CREDIT: COURTESY OF ANNA YOSHIZAWA



"I made friends with many, many kind American students and learned many things about the big earthquake in Fukushima in northeastern Japan. Because I come from the Miyagi prefecture, I did not really understand how the current situation in Fukushima was."

ization)," says William McMichael, assistant director of Fukushima University International Center.

However, Fukushima University has responded creatively to a very challenging situation and built several unique programs in the wake of the disaster. McMichael says that following the disaster it has refocused its international efforts from numerical targets to instead concentrate on the diversity and quality of international opportunities that are being provided to its students, with a strong focus on short-term programs.

"The creation of better English-taught programs on the graduate and doctoral levels for studying the situation in Fukushima, and promoting the prefecture through short-term programs and academic research findings, is going to be very important for our university and its international education," McMichael continues. In 2012 Fukushima University launched a two-week program called the Fukushima Ambassadors Program

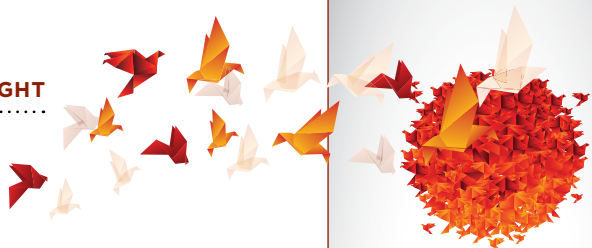
(FAP), which invites 10–13 students from international partner universities on a journey through the prefecture with 30–40 Japanese student volunteers. During the program, students travel to various field locations and interact with locals to learn about critical global issues, such as radioactive contamination, the effects of the prolonged evacuation on the health of evacuees, current measures to ensure food safety, and reconstruction efforts on devastated municipalities in coastal areas. To date it has run the program six times.

McMichael says that the FAP not only provides an opportunity to increase international students' understanding of the situation in Fukushima,

but it also gives domestic Japanese students a chance to explore global issues with their counterparts from around the world. Furthermore, it helps increase awareness about the region and the university itself as international students return home.



Students studying at Fukushima University with residents from a local temporary housing for nuclear evacuees.



“By implementing a community-service based, hands-on approach to learning, this program helps both domestic and international students alleviate any misconceptions they may have about post-3/11 Fukushima, and gain a global perspective on media literacy and the bias that sometimes accompanies global news. The program has also been very effective in encouraging domestic students to study abroad, as it provides ample opportunities for the students to establish friendships with students visiting from partner universities, and more importantly, helps raise their awareness about current issues in Fukushima and the need to share their stories with the world in order to support their local communities in overcoming the stigmatization that has been hampering their recovery,” McMichael says.

Anna Yoshizawa is a Japanese student studying public administration and social science at Fukushima University. She has volunteered with FAP to assist four different U.S. cohorts. She says that not only did the program give her a chance to interact with American students, she also learned about global issues in her own country. “I made friends with many, many kind American students and learned many things about the big earthquake in Fukushima in northeastern Japan. Because I come from

The study concluded that Japanese students’ attitudes toward study abroad were similar to, if not more favorable than, those of their peers in the United States and the United Kingdom.

the Miyagi prefecture, I did not really understand how the current situation in Fukushima was,” she says.

Participation in the FAP also informed Yoshizawa’s decision to study abroad in the United States at Colorado State University. She says she realized her knowledge of the United States was limited and she wanted to find out more for herself.

Another initiative at Fukushima University that has gained a lot of international attention is its OECD Tohoku School project, a two-and-a-half-year project sponsored by the Organization for Cooperation and Development (OECD). FU students

and faculty were paired with high school students from devastated areas across the coast of Fukushima, Miyagi, and Iwate, to help develop their language and presentation skills and organize an international festival near the Eiffel Tower in Paris in August 2014. More than 30,000 visitors attended the festival.¹¹

The project will be expanded next year with a new set of high school students, and new locations for the festival. “We hope to keep this project running since it truly is a unique opportunity for our students to not only nurture their English skills, but also nurture their ability to train soft interpersonal global skills, while also learning about critical issues related to the coastal areas in Tohoku,” McMichael adds.

The university has also established the Institute of Environmental Radioactivity (IER), which has attracted many researchers and doctoral students from around the world as Japan’s first research center focused on studying the movement and environmental effects of radioactivity in Fukushima. A joint commission of universities, including Tsukuba, Nagasaki, Hiroshima, and the Tokyo Maritime University, runs the institute. Fukushima University plans to create a graduate school within the institute by 2016 and develop the IER into a global hub for radioactivity research and education around the world.¹²

Next Steps

The recent decline in the number of Japanese students studying abroad appears to be slowing. The latest figures released by MEXT were from 2011 so more recent data

Japanese students in an English language class



is needed, but a 2013 article in the *New York Times* reported that the trend is reversing.¹³

An “inward-looking” attitude is one of the often-cited reasons that Japanese students do not venture abroad. This rhetoric has appeared both in the media and in government publications, and is a major challenge to the national priority of creating a globally competitive workforce. A recent study by the British Council surveyed more than 2,000 Japanese students and recent graduates between the ages of 16 and 25 to ask their opinions about overseas study. The study concluded that Japanese students’ attitudes toward study abroad were similar to, if not more favorable than, those of their peers in the United States and the United Kingdom. Students listed a lack of language skills, cost, and concern over safety as the top three obstacles to study abroad.¹⁴

Kensuke Sugawara, a Tohoku University student currently at UC-Davis, concurs with these findings: “Honestly, I don’t think myself unique among other Japanese students...I know a lot of my friends were willing to study abroad and to try to improve their English skills with me, though obstacles (such as cost, language) made them abandon their plan of studying abroad...I believe most Japanese students

are still interested in studying abroad and they would study abroad if they had a chance. As proof, I also know they still keep interacting with international students in Tohoku University. They are ‘outward looking’ rather than ‘inward looking.’”

The results from the Global30 project are also promising, at least at the 13 institutions that received funding, but the long-term impact of the efforts of the Japanese government and individual institutions to internationalize Japanese higher education remains to be seen. There has been some concern expressed in the Japanese media that on one hand, the initiatives were too narrowly focused on numerical targets and English language, and on the other, that the funding only focused on institutions that were already extremely advanced in their internationalization efforts.

One challenge of the current funding scheme is that it benefits larger universities. McMichael notes that smaller institutions such as Fukushima University would benefit more from smaller-scale funding schemes because they currently lack the administrative resources to manage large grant programs. “What some rural universities such as ours really want is not programs supporting radical reform involving millions of yen of support...

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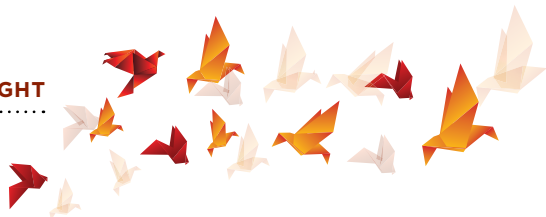
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but rather, smaller-scaled funding schemes that will help us set in place the very foundations for making such radical reform and larger-scale monetary investments possible," he says.

Ken Isogai at AIU believes that there is an unfortunate perception that some Japanese universities have been left behind. In his opinion, the creation of a culture of internationalization will be the true test for all institutions.

"The impact of MEXT's series of initiatives has been huge and effective enough to promote internationalization of Japanese higher education as a government-led movement. However, I am a little concerned that the MEXT initiatives created a perception of winners and losers among Japanese universities, which I do not think represents the true situation. I wonder if there will be another shuffle even among the universities which have been considered winners so far."

He believes that some institutions have pushed internationalization simply to remain competitive. "If universities adopt the trappings

of internationalization, such as conducting courses in English or mandating study abroad, but do not back them up with substantial content or the genuine commitment of faculty and staff, they cannot create effective programs. I think international students will be quick to see through such attempts." The coming shuffle will be the test of universities' levels of commitment to internationalization."

McMichael also agrees that true internationalization will take time, and is not simply determined by mobility figures: "It is important to avoid becoming too results-driven, and in particular, too focused on increasing numbers such as English scores and meeting the 2020 targets of doubling inbound and outbound students. The true value of international education, in the minds of many including myself, is not something that can be measured in immediate results or by the numbers, and that sustaining a non-sporadic, long-term investment into education is key to pervading the virtues of global competency." **IE**

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ENDNOTES

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