



## **KAKEHASHI Project (United States)**

### **Visiting Japan Program for Asian American Youth Report**

#### **1. Program Overview**

##### **【Objectives and Overview】**

From March 12 to March 18, 5 Asian American youth recommended by the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies (APAICS) from across the United States were invited to Japan to deepen their understanding of Japanese politics, economy, society, culture, history, and foreign policy, and to strengthen networking among themselves. They visited Tokyo and Aomori, where they learned about cutting-edge technology and were exposed to Japanese culture through homestays, deepening their overall understanding of Japan. Each participant also disseminated information about the attractions of Japan and what they learned from the program.

**【Participants】** Total: 5 participants (5 Asian American Youth (undergraduate students and graduate students))

**【Locations】** Tokyo, Aomori

##### **【Schedule】**

##### **■ Online Pre-study Program:**

Mar. 6 (Fri) **【Pre-departure Orientation】** Project objective and mission, rundown of the schedule, overseas travel warnings, precautions of infectious disease, etc.  
Set Period Prior to Arrival **【Video Viewing】** “Lecture on Japan” (Choose on Web Japan)

##### **■ Invitation Program:**

Mar. 12 (Thu) Arrival at Narita International Airport  
**【Post-arrival Orientation】**

Mar. 13 (Fri) Travel from Tokyo to Aomori  
**【School Exchange】** Hachonohe Gakuin University  
**【Meeting with the Host Families】**

Mar. 14 (Sat) **【Homestay】** Nanbu Town

Mar. 15 (Sun) **【Farewell Party with the Host Families】**  
**【Cultural Experience】** Local performing arts experience  
Nanbuhishizashi (traditional Nanbu diamond embroidery), Nanbu hand dance, Japanese Drum  
Travel from Aomori to Tokyo

Mar. 16 (Mon) **【Courtesy Call】**  
Mr. ONISHI Yohei, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs  
**【Company Visit】** Toyota Motor Corporation  
**【Observation】** Meiji Jingu, Harajuku

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mar. 17 (Tue) | <b>【Courtesy Call】</b> Mr. OUE Sadamasa, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister<br><b>【Observation】</b> Tokyo Skytree Town® Campus, Chiba Institute of Technology<br><b>【Observation】</b> National Diet Building                                      |
| Mar. 18 (Wed) | <b>【Workshop】</b> Preparations for the Reporting Session (summarizing program findings, preparation of action plans)<br><b>【Reporting Session】</b> Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plans<br>Departure from Narita International Airport |

## 2. Program Photos

### Invitation Program

|                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     |                                    |
| March 13, 2026 <b>【School Exchange】</b><br>Hachonohe Gakuin University                               | March 13, 2026 <b>【Meeting with the Host Families】</b>                                                               |
|                   |                                  |
| March 14, 2026 <b>【Homestay】</b> Nanbu Town                                                          | March 15, 2026 <b>【Farewell Party with the Host Families】</b>                                                        |
|                   |                                  |
| March 15, 2026 <b>【Cultural Experience】</b><br>Local performing arts experience<br>(Nanbuhishizashi) | March 15, 2026 <b>【Cultural Experience】</b><br>Local performing arts experience<br>(Nanbu hand dance, Japanese Drum) |



March 16, 2026 【Courtesy Call】 Mr. ONISHI Yohei,  
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs



March 16, 2026 【Company Visit】  
TOYOTA MOTOR CORPORATION



March 16, 2026 【Observation】 Meiji Jingu,  
Harajuku



March 17, 2026 【Courtesy Call】 Mr. OUE  
Sadamasa, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister



March 17, 2026 【Observation】 Tokyo Skytree  
Town® Campus, Chiba Institute of Technology



March 17, 2026 【Observation】  
National Diet Building



March 18, 2026 【Reporting Session】



March 18, 2026 【Reporting Session】 Group photo

### 3. Voices from the Participants (excerpt)

#### ◆ Graduate Student

I was especially impressed by the homestay experience in Nanbu Town, Aomori. The experience felt incredibly comprehensive and well-supported. We not only met with our homestay families, but we were also warmly welcomed by the friendly staff of the Nanbu government. It is evident that the Nanbu officials worked hard to accommodate our stay and immerse us in their local culture and customs. For example, when the Hachinohe Gakuin University president expressed that our group ought to visit Nanbu's famous shores, the staff agreed and made amends to our schedule to give us that experience. In addition, after finishing our homestay, we participated in many activities directly at the City Hall/Town Center, where we were met warmly by many members of the performing arts community as well. Of course, I am also incredibly amazed by the hospitality with which we were welcomed by our homestay families, who invited us into their homes as though we were family. Our homestay trip to Nanbu felt like a community effort and welcome, which left me with an incredibly positive impression and seamless experience. I am incredibly honored by the experience of my Nanbu homestay, which I will forever cherish.

#### ◆ Undergraduate Student

The most impressive part of the experience was the homestay in Aomori. I really enjoyed being able to immerse in the culture in many ways- in the food we ate, practicing mindfulness (making the futon every night, cleaning the house up), and engaging in activities like soba making and kimono. More so than the experiences themselves, I loved talking to our host family. I got to ask a lot of questions and really understand aspects of language/culture I wouldn't have otherwise. They were very kind and showed me a side of Japan that I wouldn't have understood if we had only gone to sightseeing spot like Tokyo or Kyoto.

### 4. Voices from the Receiving Parties (excerpt)

#### ◆ Host Family

We wanted to share Japanese culture with the participant, so we practiced calligraphy and kendo together. We also wanted him to experience snow, so we took him to a ski resort and went sledding. At first, we were a little worried about whether he would enjoy his stay since we were hosting one boy, but he ended up being very happy, which made us truly glad.

### 5. Disseminations by the Participants (excerpt), Articles, etc.

|                                                            |                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                            |                                                       |
| <p>March 18, 206 (Instagram)<br/>Undergraduate Student</p> | <p>March 18, 206 (Instagram)<br/>Graduate Student</p> |

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| <p>Meeting the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs was very informative!</p> <p>Discussing Japan-US relations shed a light on the current geopolitical situation as well as the ways that AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) students can get involved in international relations and work! I found this to be so interesting!</p> | <p>Through the KAKEHASHI Project, one of the “Japan's Friendship Ties programs”</p> <p>I recently had the unique opportunity to speak with the members from the Toyota Motor Corporation at the Tokyo, Japan office.</p> <p>We engaged in an immersive discussion around how the Toyota Motor Corporation approaches its international research, development, and manufacturing. I learned that cross-cultural teamwork isn't always easy and straightforward but creating "bridges" through robust teamwork and acceptance of local customs helps streamline international business. Reflecting on my experience through the KAKEHASHI Project, I was excited to learn that collaboration occurs at Toyota Motor Corporation both vertically and horizontally. Not only does such a mindset streamline logistics, but it encourages innovation.</p> <p>As an HCI researcher, I was also excited to learn more about “Woven by Toyota”, an innovative project led by researchers from around the world. It's incredibly exciting to learn that Toyota is pioneering such exciting initiatives, and I hope to be a part of such innovative research as I continue my human-AI Interaction research at the College of Information (INFO), University of Maryland.</p> |
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| <p>March 18, 2026 (Instagram)</p> <p>Undergraduate Student</p> <p>Over the past week, I had the opportunity to travel across Tokyo and Aomori Prefecture from policy conversations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan to cultural immersion in small communities like Nanbu Town.</p>                                                         | <p>March 18, 2026 (Instagram)</p> <p>Undergraduate Student</p> <p>As a participant of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' “KAKEHASHI Project,” an exchange program to promote understanding of Japan, I am honored to have the opportunity to attend a courtesy call with the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister,</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

Some moments I'll carry with me:

- Engaging in discussions on U.S.- Japan relations and leadership
- Visiting the Toyota Motor Corporation headquarters and seeing innovation up close
- Experiencing traditions like Nanbu hand dance and embroidery firsthand
- Living with a host family and understanding daily life beyond what you see as a visitor

“KAKEHASHI” means bridge and that's exactly what this experience was about.

Not just traveling, but building mutual understanding.

Not just observing but connecting.

Not just learning but carrying those insights forward.

This experience truly reminded me that global perspective isn't abstract... it's personal. As someone from the AAPI community, this experience firsthand reinforced how powerful it is to move between cultures, space, and identities—and to use that perspective to build bridges.

Grateful for this opportunity and excited to carry these lessons forward in my academic and professional journey.

Sadamasa Onoue. Through this visit, I reflected on the importance of building US-Japan relations through people-to-people diplomacy. As an Asian American, understanding U.S. relationships in the Indo-Pacific is crucial to my aspirations in increasing mutual understanding between the U.S. and its allies.



April 14, 2026 (APAICS's Instagram)

Take a look inside a day in the life of an APAICS KAKEHASHI Project participant! From exploring Japanese culture, to developing meaningful relationships through cross-cultural exchange, the participant shares a glimpse into this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The KAKEHASHI Project, in collaboration with Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE), is all about creating a “bridge” between the American and Japanese cultures—and this is just a snapshot of that journey!

## 6. Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plan at the Reporting Session (excerpt)

Locations: Tokyo, Aomori – Presentation by 1 group



### 【Results of the Program】

#### ◆ Results of the Program

- Japanese culture—friendliness, food, arts, language, etc.—is incredibly diverse
- Japanese culture is alive and nurtured in the hearts and minds of its people
- Importance of soft power and people to people exchange
- Being part of the AAPI community = a strength; our perspectives & values are unique and impactful
- Listening = just as important as speaking, especially in cross-cultural spaces

#### ◆ Application to Future Career

- Becoming open to international work experiences
- Understanding the value of collectivism, and practicing it
- Considering bilingual work contexts
- "People to people exchange" in Foreign Service
- Cultural sensitivity and adaptability

### 【Action Plan】

- Spread KAKEHASHI Project on social media
- Host an info session about the KAKEHASHI Project at university
- Offer 1-on-1 or small group meetings for interested students
- Build connections with campus organizations to promote the KAKEHASHI Project

Implementation Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)