



KAKEHASHI Project (United States)

Visiting Japan Program for Inouye Program Report

1. Program Overview

【Objectives and Overview】

The Inouye Program is a mutual exchange program between university students from Japan and the United States.

Eleven undergraduate and graduate students from the Illinois Institute of Technology, College of Architecture visited Tokyo, Nara, and Kyoto from March 11 to March 17.

Through site visits and company visits, the participants deepened their understanding of Japanese architecture, history, and culture, while university exchanges, homestays, and courtesy visits fostered mutual understanding between Japan and the United States. In addition, interactions with relevant organizations strengthened networks, and participants promoted the appeal of Japan.

(Note) Inouye Program is one of the programs of KAKEHASHI Project which is dedicated to university students in the United States, taking place in cooperation with U.S.-Japan Council. Students learn the accomplishment of the late Senator Daniel Inouye, who made efforts for developing Japan-U.S. relationship.

【Participants】 Total: 11 participants (9 undergraduate and graduate students, along with 2 chaperones, from Illinois Institute of Technology, College of Architecture in the U.S.)

【Locations】 Tokyo, Nara, Kyoto

【Schedule】

■ Online Pre-study Program:

Mar. 5 (Thu) **【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. 11 (Wed) Arrival at Haneda Airport

【Post-arrival Orientation】

Mar. 12 (Thu) **【Observation】** Meiji Jingu

【Company Visit】 SANAA office

【Observation】 Lost and Found Center, Metropolitan Police Government

Mar. 13 (Fri) Travel from Tokyo to Nara

【School Exchange】 Nara Women's University

【Meeting with the Host Families】

Mar. 14 (Sat)	【Homestay】 Nara City 【Farewell Party with the Host Families】 【Observation】 Naramachi Travel from Nara to Kyoto
Mar. 15 (Sun)	【Observation】 Katsura Imperial Palace, Tofuku-ji Temple 【Observation】 Nishiki Market 【Observation】 Kyoto Sento Imperial Palace Travel from Kyoto to Tokyo
Mar. 16 (Mon)	【Courtesy Call】 Mr. ONISHI Yohei, Parliamentary Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs 【Company visit】 Sou Fujimoto Architects
Mar. 17 (Tue)	【Workshop】 Preparations for the Reporting Session (summarizing program findings, preparation of action plans) 【Reporting Session】 Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plans 【Observation】 Odaiba Departure from Haneda Airport

2. Program Photos

Invitation Program

	
March 12, 2026 【Observation】 Meiji Jingu	March 13, 2026 【School Exchange】 Nara Women's University
	
March 14, 2026 【Homestay】	March 14, 2026 【Observation】 Naramachi

	
March 15, 2026 【Observation】 Katsura Imperial Palace	March 15, 2026 【Observation】 Tofuku-ji Temple
	
March 15, 2026 【Observation】 Nishiki Market	March 15, 2026 【Observation】 Kyoto Sento Imperial Palace
	
March 16, 2026 【Courtesy Call】 Mr. ONISHI Yohei, Parliamentary Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs	March 17, 2026 【Reporting Session】 Group photo

3. Voices from the Participants (excerpt)

◆ Undergraduate Student

Entering the approach through the first torii gate felt like walking into a different world - the calm brought on by the canopying trees and the pebbles under your feet. Learning about waka poetry was also inspiring; I have been incorporating haiku poetry into my architecture projects since the start of my graduate school program, so I will be incorporating waka poetry into my own future projects.

◆ **Graduate Student**

The most impressive experience for me was doing the homestay with the Japanese family. There I learned the most about daily life in Japan and got to learn directly from the source about their culture. The food prepared for us was amazing, and the family's hospitality was very touching.

◆ **Undergraduate Student**

All the students were very welcoming and we were able to relate to one another with similar hobbies. Learning about their lifestyles and goals made this feel like a very successful exchange and I hope to keep in touch with them.

4. Voices from the Receiving Parties (excerpt)

◆ **Host Family**

Seeing two architecture students start sketching, nearly in tears, over a simple garage near my home—calling it “the most beautiful architecture we’ve ever seen”—taught me a new way of seeing things. It also made me feel a deep sense of pride in my local community.

◆ **Host Family**

I always wanted to study abroad once I became a university student, but having guests from the U.S. for the first time and to interact with them in our house broadened my dream of studying in the U.S. We made takoyaki together, played games, and were able to communicate beyond language barriers.

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

 From Buddhist temples to Zen gardens - feeling the human scale of the carefully designed gardens and being inspired by the intricate wood joinery of larger-scale temples. These insights have been thought-provoking as we make our transition from architectural studies to real-world projects. The curiosity ever ends. @jice_exchange #kakehashiproject 7 seconds ago	 As our exchange program concludes, we have each been able to absorb and share our experiences through various perspectives - landscapes, intersections, and forgotten places. With the knowledge gained over the last week, along with our deeper understanding of the Japanese culture, our collaborative action plan is a commemorative one: planting a Japanese Maple tree in an often overlooked but highly trafficked area on our school campus. This, alongside a wooden bench crafted with traditional Japanese joinery in mind, will serve as a way to revive the “alleyway,” connecting the architecture students between their two primary working zones. The overarching goal is to maintain this budding relationship we at IIT have fostered with Japan. @jice_exchange #IIT #kakehashiproject #usjapanCouncil 9 seconds ago
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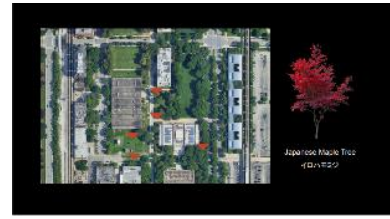
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6. Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plan at the Reporting Session (excerpt)

Presentations by a total of 3 groups

Group A	
	 
【Results of the Program】 ◆ Learnings from the program In Shinto, purification is highly valued; we learned the importance of cleansing one's hands and mouth at the hand-washing basin before praying. We also learned about the differences of university life and university holidays in the US and Japan, as well as how nature and man-made elements are uniquely and harmoniously combined. Additionally, we learned that dry landscape gardens represent a microcosm, and we gained insight into the differences in architectural materials, such as the extensive use of wood in construction in the U.S. and Japan. ◆ Individual Prospects When I start working, I want to design incorporating wood. I also hope to incorporate Japanese design elements into hospitals to help patients feel at ease. Since Japanese design is rarely seen in Chicago, I intend to incorporate the Japanese design principles I learned during this program into my own designs. 【Action Plan】 Since we will graduate this fall, our three groups will collaborate to plant trees on the IIT campus by the end of May. We plan to plant Japanese cypress, which has good aroma and is often used in temples, and maple trees, which are essential to Japanese gardens. Both seem well-suited to Chicago's climate.	

Group B



【Results of the Program】

◆ Learnings from the program

Observing Tokyo's infrastructure, public transportation, and the bustling crowds at intersections, we chose intersections as our theme. We encountered various combinations in Japan. For example, combinations of different materials, people, cultures, and traditional and modern elements.

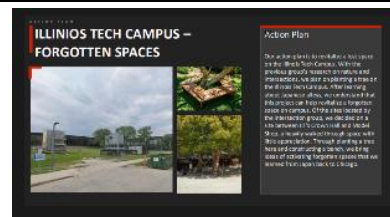
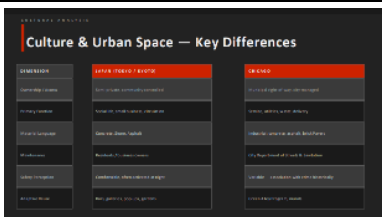
◆ Individual Prospects

Having learned Japanese architecture and its philosophy, I will create designs that emphasize a connection with nature. I also plan to explore how to incorporate Japanese architectural techniques. Furthermore, since I learned so much during this program that cannot be taught in university classes, I intend to apply these insights to my future work.

【Action Plan】

Since we will graduate this fall, our three groups will collaborate to plant trees on the IIT campus by the end of May. Through this tree-planting initiative, we hope to share our journey and experiences in Japan. By planting Japanese maple trees and inviting many people to view them, we hope to foster connections between people.

Group C



【Results of the Program】

◆ Learnings from the program

In Chicago, alleyways are used for garbage collection and other purposes, and are often used to keep things we don't want to see. In Japan, however, quiet alleyways are home to restaurants and, since there is no car traffic, they provide a pleasant space for walking.

◆ Individual Prospects

My host family accommodated us so nicely, so I would like to host students myself. I also hope to incorporate what I learned during this program into Chicago's urban planning and make better use of public spaces.

【Action Plan】

Since we will graduate this fall, our three groups will collaborate to plant trees on the IIT campus by the end of May. There is a neglected, forgotten space near the Crown Hall on campus, so we will plant trees there and install benches to create a place where people can sit down, thereby revitalizing the area.

Implementation Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)