



Prospects of KAKEHASHI Roundtable Discussion with Experts and Alumni Follow-up Program Report

1. Program Overview

【Objective】 This program was conducted to visualize the achievements of the KAKEHASHI Project through a panel discussion between experts and representatives of past KAKEHASHI Project participants (alumni), and to obtain suggestions and advice from these experts and alumni for future operations of the KAKEHASHI Project. By bringing together alumni from the U.S. and Canada for online networking, the event also aimed to strengthen the alumni network and maintain their continued interest in Japan.

【Implementation Date】 Friday, March 22, 2024

【Location】 Tokyo

【Participants】 Total: 47 participants – 3 experts, 2 project contributors, 42 alumni

- Panelists

《Experts》

1. Ms. Sarah Belousov (Education and Exchanges Officer, Embassy of the United States of America in Japan)
2. Mr. Steven Lapointe (First Secretary, Public Affairs, Embassy of Canada in Japan)
3. Dr. Nkemjika Ofodile-Carruthers (27th Mansfield Fellow, Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Policy and Program Advisor, U.S. Department of Education)

《Project Contributors》

1. Mr. Frank Jannuzi, President and CEO, The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation
2. Ms. Siân Jones, Program Manager, KAKEHASHI Project, Central Canada Office, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

《Alumni Representatives》

Total: 6 FY2023 program participants (4 programs) from the U.S. and Canada

1. Ms. Jayda Fountain and Ms. Gloria Sung, Curtis High School (Program for High School Students the 7th Slot)
2. Ms. Natalie Friedman, Cornell University (Program for Young Researchers in the 2nd Slot)
3. Mr. Terrence Sim, Newmarket High School (Japan Bowl Program (Canada))
4. Ms. Ashley Jeong, CEO Osheru Education/Tree Garden Society, and Mr. Franco Ng, Co-Founder, Porte Global Consultancy (Program for Canadian Young Leaders)

- Total: 36 KAKEHASHI Project alumni (FY2016-FY2022 participants)
Breakdown: United States 25, Canada 11 (High school students to working youths)

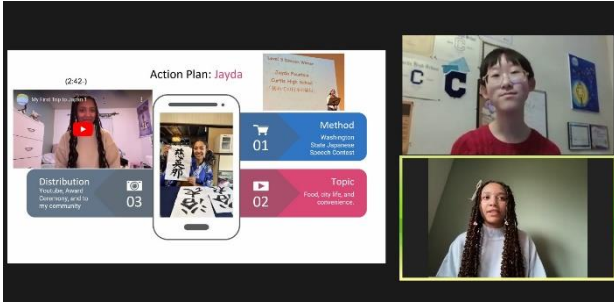
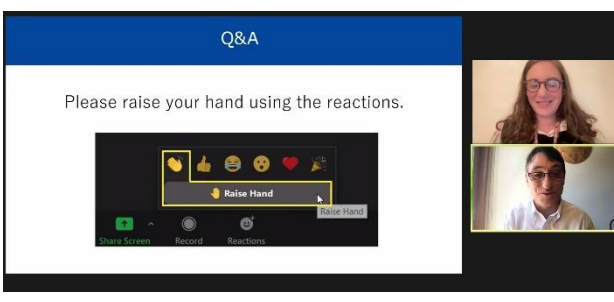
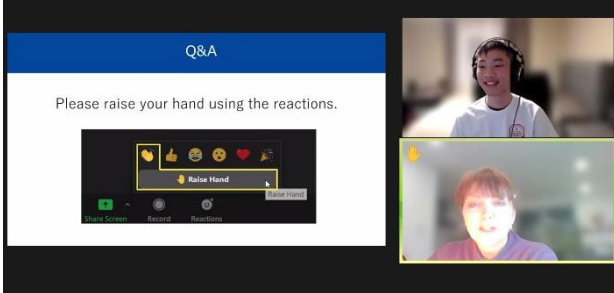
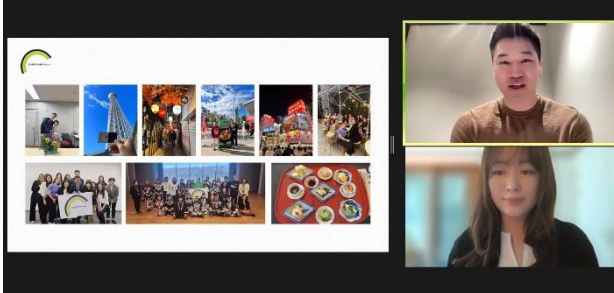
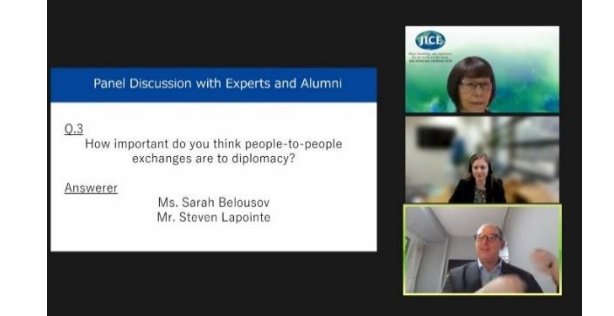
Agenda

Part 1 - Roundtable Discussion with Experts and Alumni

- (1) Introduction of Experts and Project Contributors
- (2) Opening Remarks
- (3) KAKEHASHI Project Overview and Report on this Fiscal Year's Projects (JICE Secretariat)
- (4) Presentation by Alumni Representatives / Q&A Session / Comments from the Experts and Project Contributors
- (5) Panel Discussion
 1. What the KAKEHASHI Project means to alumni
 2. What is necessary to strengthen alumni networking
 3. The importance of people-to-people exchanges to diplomacy
 4. What aspects are essential for the continuation of the KAKEHASHI Project
- (6) General Review/Comments from the Experts and Project Contributors
- (7) Closing Remarks
- (8) Commemorative Photo

Part 3 – Networking with Alumni

2. Program Photos

	
Presentation by Ms. Jayda Fountain and Ms. Gloria Sung, Curtis High School	Q&A session with Ms. Natalie Friedman, Cornell University
	
Q&A session with Mr. Terrence Sim, Newmarket High School	Presentation by Ms. Ashley Jeong, CEO Osheru Education/Tree Garden Society, and Mr. Franco Ng, Co-Founder, Porte Global Consultancy
	
Panel discussion with experts and alumni	Commemorative photo

3. Comments from the Panel Discussion (excerpt)

■ What the KAKEHASHI Project means to alumni

- The KAKEHASHI Project is about "responsibility." The KAKEHASHI Project has given me an opportunity to reconsider my own role as a global citizen. I believe that bilateral cultural exchange is very important for world peace and to strengthen the bond between Japan and the U.S. I also believe that we have a responsibility to take action as people who have been given rights and live in this global age. As an example, the U.S. provided assistance to Japan in the aftermath of

the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 as part of "Operation Tomodachi." It encouraged me to want to visit Japan. I think it is very important to study and share completely different cultures.

- The KAKEHASHI Project is about "connections." From the preparation for and participation in the program, to the implementation of the Action Plan after returning home, I realized that everything was connected by people. Looking back on this experience, I realize how the KAKEHASHI Project has connected me to so many people. It was truly an amazing experience to connect not only with high school students from other states, but also with all the different people I met in Japan. I had always wished to have Japanese friends to help me study Japanese, and now I have many. People around the world grow up in different places and different cultures, and the KAKEHASHI Project has connected me to such people.

- I see the KAKEHASHI Project as an opportunity to deepen ties and understanding with Japan and to improve the relationship between Japan and Canada. Being able to participate in a program in Japan, which I loved even before I went, was a wonderful experience. My mission to disseminate information did not feel like a mission at all. I would also like to thank the KAKEHASHI team and the KAKEHASHI alumni committee for all their hard work. The KAKEHASHI Project has given me new friends, perspectives, experience, knowledge, networks, and vision for the future. The KAKEHASHI Project has connected us to Japan and provided us with fulfilling and meaningful experiences.

■ **What is necessary to strengthen alumni networking**

- Alumni are engaged in various fields and on different paths such as philosophy, art, think tanks, scientists, and so on. It would be great if an alumni event could be held near where the alumni live, connecting Japan with the fields in which the alumni have pursued. For example, an event where artists can learn about traditional Japanese dyeing. Such alumni events would help to further strengthen the network among alumni.

- After participating in the KAKEHASHI Project, I became aware of my own interests in Japanese society and my field of study. Specifically, I learned about educational programs for immigrants and aboriginal peoples through opinion exchanges with Tokyo Metropolitan Government officials and exchanges with other participants. If mid- to long-term programs on topics that participants have a common interest in can be organized, participants themselves can contribute to the programs with their knowledge and skills, thus building even stronger bridges.

- One thing I found important after participating in the KAKEHASHI Project is to "not be afraid to ask questions" to fellow KAKEHASHI alumni and others who are involved in the project. There is so much to be gained by relying on, listening to, and asking questions to others, and as a participant, it is very important to give back what we received. I was able to put on a great event with my fellow program participants, and that was only possible because we were able to trust and cooperate with each other. As others have mentioned, KAKEHASHI alumni are diverse and come from many different backgrounds, so we have a lot to contribute to the program. I also

believe there are other connections that can be made, so my hope is that the alumni relationship will continue to be one of mutual trust and support.

■ **The importance of people-to-people exchanges to diplomacy**

• All of us at the Embassy, including myself, recognize the value of people-to-people exchanges to our diplomacy. We on the U.S. side are also very much looking forward to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to the United States in a few weeks. I enjoyed listening to your presentations today and look forward to learning more about the KAKEHASHI Project. Today's session made me keenly aware of the contribution that short-term programs can make to the long-term development of US-Japan relations, and we are always thinking about what we can do to "support the US-Japan pipeline." I believe that what the U.S. and the Japan should do at the government level is to create more opportunities like the KAKEHASHI Project for students and working youths in Japan and the U.S. to interact and connect with each other.

• People-to-people exchanges are very important for diplomacy. Currently, most people-to-people exchanges between Japan and Canada are based on old diplomatic forms, such as sister-city exchanges. However, the KAKEHASHI Project targets a larger number of youths, and I believe that this is where we can benefit the most, as Canadian youths visiting Japan and Japanese youths visiting Canada can strengthen the ties between the two countries.

■ **What aspects are essential for the continuation of the KAKEHASHI Project**

• I have three suggestions: first, the value of people-to-people exchange programs like this needs to be recognized not only by governments and educational institutions, but also by private organizations. Many companies, such as Panasonic, have hosted group visits, which can truly have an impact on the careers and future of the participants. Second, as can be seen from your presentations, the importance of social media and how it has contributed to the growing effectiveness of the KAKEHASHI Project is evident. For the younger generation, social media is an indispensable tool that should be utilized more. Third, networking. Many alumni spoke today about the importance of networking, and I believe that having a KAKEHASHI alumni network can create connections to other networks, such as the JET Programme, the Fulbright Program, and other cultural exchange programs, which will make the KAKEHASHI Project even more effective. For example, in Washington, D.C., there is a monthly gathering of working youths who get together to discuss their experiences and memories of Japan over sushi. It would be wonderful if the KAKEHASHI Project could be connected to such networks.

• I think it is very important to get the private sector more involved and to strengthen networking among alumni. On a monthly basis, many alumni, including some from nearly 10 years ago, contact me asking, "How can I get more involved in the KAKEHASHI Project as an alum?" We were able to strengthen the alumni network during the pandemic. We have a wonderful group of skilled and talented alumni from a variety of careers and fields. I think such relationships among

alumni are very important to maintain. Many other alumni have also asked me, "What should I do to work or get an education in Japan?", "Is there anything I can do now as an alum?" Therefore, I believe that the next step for the KAKEHASHI Project is to consider programs that can guide such people and further deepen the relationship between Japan and Canada.

- I believe there are two essential aspects: first, we need to promote the significance and effectiveness of the KAKEHASHI Project. Many people do not know about the KAKEHASHI Project, so it is important to raise awareness of the project and appeal to policy makers on social media. We need to have "grounds" that the KAKEHASHI Project is important when policy and budget decisions are being made. The wonderful alumni representatives who have taken the stage today are one such example. We need to think about how to demonstrate this clearly to policy makers. Second, the way in which alumni are connected to the program afterwards is very important. Providing them with opportunities for further people-to-people exchange is what strengthens the pipeline and makes the world a better place. In order to create such opportunities, we should provide data rich in quality and quantity that clearly demonstrates that these wonderful youths are taking actions that contribute to a safer, more stable, and tolerant world, and that their participation in the KAKEHASHI Project serves as a catalyst for such actions.

4. Voices from the Participating Alumni (excerpt)

◆ Working Youth (U.S.)

I really enjoyed hearing from the alumni of the KAKEHASHI program! It was particularly interesting to hear from the high school students and their perspectives as younger people visiting Japan. I also liked the story about the robotics in Japan! All the presenters were very good and presented nice pictures and stories about visiting Japan and what it meant to them. I also got to reconnect with a couple other alumni in the chat that I had met before. I appreciated the program very much, arigato gozaimashita!

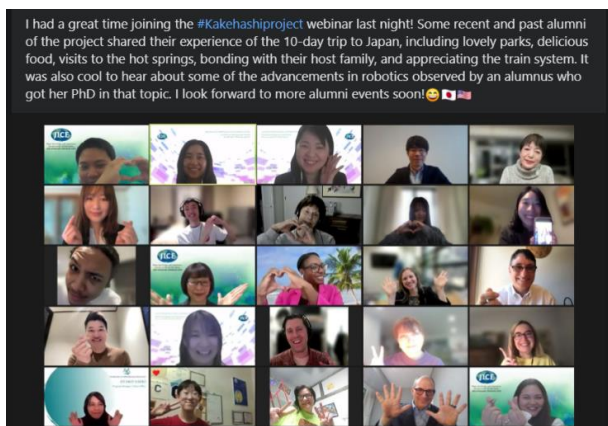
◆ University Student (U.S.)

I found the Alumni event to be very interesting because of the experiences that were shared during the alumni presentations. Each one presented a unique point of view regarding their trips to Japan, and I was able to relate to some of their experiences because of my own trip, which made their presentations even more enjoyable. I also liked how the hosts of the event conducted the meeting, it felt very organized and friendly.

◆ University Student (Canada)

KAKEHASHI alumni leaders were able to share their experiences of promoting and sharing their personal experiences of visiting Japan under the KAKEHASHI project and how they want to take their experiences further in their future careers, lives, .etc.

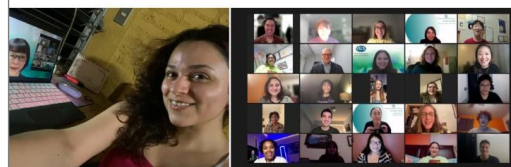
5. Disseminations by the Participants (excerpt)



March 23, 2024 (Instagram)

I had a great time joining the #Kakehashiproject webinar last night. Some recent and past alumni of the project shared their experience of the 10-day trip to Japan, including lovely parks, delicious food, visits to the hot springs, bonding with their host family, and appreciating the train system. It was also cool to hear about some of the advancements in robotics observed by an alumnus who got her PhD in that topic. I look forward to more alumni events soon!

This past Thursday (22/03) I was fortunate to join Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)'s "Prospects of KAKEHASHI: Roundtable Discussion with Experts and Alumni" virtual event. Here I had the opportunity to learn from the individual experiences of Kakehashi alumni that recently completed the program (#Kakehashi2023). As a (#Kakehashi2022) alumna myself, it was astonishing to acknowledge that these most recent participants of the Kakehashi project were left with the same sentiment upon finishing the program, as us, participants of past year's. This is a sentiment of closeness and willingness to further contribute to strengthening the important US-Japan relationship. In other words, to use our knowledge and understanding of both cultures to BRIDGE over any differences that may prevent this valuable international cooperation. Furthermore, as a Latin woman who attended this virtual event from my home country, Nicaragua, this aim of being a bridge through cultures couldn't resonate harder with me. Thank you, JICE for these opportunities that contribute to enriching our cultural understandings. #JAPANMOFA



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Implementation Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)