



KAKEHASHI Project (United States)

Invitation Program for Hispanic American Young Leaders Report

1. Program Overview

【Objectives and Overview】

Four Hispanic American young leaders were invited to Japan from January 29 to February 4 to further deepen their understanding of disaster prevention and multiculturalism, and to play active roles in strengthening future Japan-U.S. relations. The participants visited Tokyo, Kanagawa, and Wakayama, where they stayed with host families and experienced Japanese culture, learned about cutting-edge technology, and deepened their understanding of Japan. The participants also disseminated information on the attractions of Japan and its foreign policies on social media and other platforms.

【Participants】 Total: 4 university students from Florida, U.S.A.

【Locations】 Tokyo, Kanagawa, Wakayama

【Schedule】

■ Online Pre-study Program:

Jan. 24 (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:

Jan. 29 (Wed) Arrival at Haneda Airport

【Post-arrival Orientation】

Jan. 30 (Thu) **【Exchange】**

Students from Gakushuin University and Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

【Observation】 Harajuku (Japanese pop-culture), Meiji Shrine

【Observation】

TEPIA Association for Technological Excellence Promoting Innovative Advances

【Observation】 Imperial Palace

【Courtesy Call】 Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs ERI Arfiya

Jan. 31 (Fri) Travel from Tokyo to Wakayama

【Cultural Experience】 Kishu Makie Lacquerware Experience

【Courtesy Call】 Wakayama Prefectural Office

【School Exchange】

Wakayama University (students) at the Wakayama Prefectural Office

【Observation】 Wakayama Castle

	【Meeting with the Host Families】
Feb.1 (San)	【Homestay】
Feb. 2 (Sun)	【Farewell Party with the Host Families】
	Travel from Wakayama to Tokyo
Feb. 3 (Mon)	【Observation】 Tsurumi International Lounge
	【Observation】 Tokyo Fire Department Disaster Prevention Education Center (Honjo Disaster Prevention Hall)
	【Observation】 Asakusa
Feb. 4 (Tue)	【Workshop】 Preparations for the Reporting Session (summarizing program findings, preparation of action plans)
	【Reporting Session】 Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plans
	Departure from Haneda airport

2. Program Photos

Invitation Program

	
January 30, 2025 【Exchange】 Students from Gakushuin University and Tokyo University of Foreign Studies	January 30, 2025 【Observation】 TEPIA Association for Technological Excellence Promoting Innovative Advances
	
January 31, 2025 【Cultural Experience】 Kishu Makie Lacquerware Experience	January 31, 2025 【School Exchange】 Wakayama University at the Wakayama Prefectural Office

	
February 1, 2025 【Homestay】 Visiting the Dojoji Buddhist Temple in kimonos	February 3, 2025 【Observation】 Tsurumi International Lounge
	
February 3, 2025 【Observation】 Tokyo Fire Department Disaster Prevention Education Center (Honjo Disaster Prevention Hall)	February 4, 2025【Reporting Session】Group photo

3. Voices from the Participants (excerpt)

◆ University Student

Honesto, it is difficult to pick—this entire experience has been phenomenal. I suppose if I had to choose one, it would be the home stay in Wakayama; it was a very special experience getting to stay inside an authentic Japanese home and connect with local people outside of a tourist-driven area.

◆ University Student

The most impressive part to me was the home stay. I enjoyed staying in a traditional Japanese home. Also getting to wear the kimonos and learn about a famous temple was awesome. Our host mother was very caring and that made the experience unforgettable.

◆ University Student

Spending time with my host family, and exploring the shrines, temples, and Wakayama castle was amazing. Learning about history behind Wakayama Castle with Ootosan was so fascinating. In particular, learning about the gods of the cardinal directions, the destruction and reconstruction of Wakayama Castle, and seeing the Samurai armor and weaponry was unforgettable.

4. Voices from the Receiving Parties (excerpt)

◆ Exchange School Student

It was an opportunity to learn about the disaster preparedness of a different country and to reaffirm the awareness of disaster prevention in my own country. Not only did the American students learn about the evacuation drills and government support systems in Japan, but they also shared with us the importance of individual initiative. We were also able to improve our language skills and deepen our multicultural understanding by engaging in discussions in English with them.

◆ Host Family

The participants were polite, and I was amazed at how much they knew about Japanese culture. I would definitely like to see them again.

◆ Observation Destination Representative

Thank you so much for the invaluable opportunity you gave us the other day.

We are glad that the participants became interested in Tsurumi's multicultural activities.

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

	
January 31, 2025 (Instagram) University Student Incredibly glad I got to visit TEPIA to learn more about Japan's efforts to effect positive change. I was super impressed by all the efforts being made by Japan towards achieving the sustainable development goals. Not only that, but their dedication to safety along with innovation, especially creating things like the Tokyo Skytree.	January 31, 2025 (Instagram) University Student After lunch, we colored some lacquerware – a traditional art form in which metallic powder is brushed into lacquer to form a design.



February 3, 2025 (Facebook)

University Student

The Wakayama castle and the area surrounding it were so beautiful! So interesting that it was controlled by the Tokugawa clan during the Edo period!



February 4, 2025 (Facebook)

University Student

Learning about developing technologies at the TEPIA's advanced technology exhibit was amazing. Seeing versatile robots and eco-friendly technologies was very insightful about both the present and future of technology.



February 3, 2024 (Hidaka Shimpo)

"KAKEHASHI Project – University Students from the U.S. Visited the Dojoji Buddhist Temple"



February 4, 2025

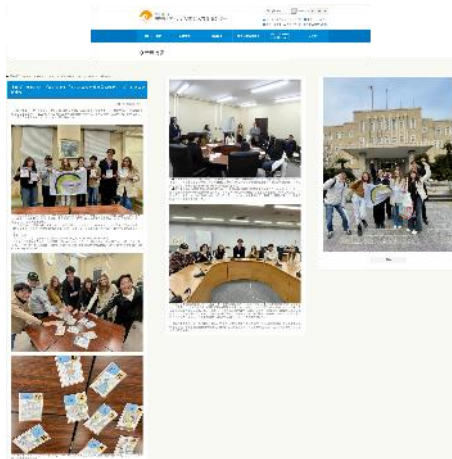
(Tsurumi International Lounge's Instagram)

The university students from the "KAKEHASHI

On January 1, three female university students from Florida, U.S.A., who came to Japan as part of the Japan's Friendship Ties Program, "2024 KAKEHASHI Project," promoted by the Japanese government, visited Dojoji Buddhist Temple in Hidakagawa Town. The project is targeted at youths in North America, and aims to deepen their interest in and understanding of Japan, as well as to expand Japan's diplomatic base by having the participants absorb and disseminate the attractions of Japan they experience through the program. Fitted with gorgeous kimonos, the three young students moved to the Engi-do Hall and listened to a humorous picture scroll narrative in Japanese by ONO Shunjo, the temple's head monk. Afterwards, they visited the main hall, which houses a Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara, and the Shoin Hall, which was built more than 300 years ago by the Kishu Clan, while listening to an English explanation by head monk Ono.

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Project" (U.S.) 2024 Hispanic Young Leaders Invitation Program visited Tsurumi International Lounge! I had the opportunity to talk to the students who came from Florida, U.S.A. about multicultural coexistence in the Tsurumi area. I hope they will become a bridge between Japan and the U.S. in the future.



kishutaken • フォロー
kishutaken アメリカ・フロリダから来た学生さん3人が和歌山県にきてくれました！
English below
2月9日
コメントを公開...

February 10, 2025 (Website of the Center for Disaster Science and Resilience Collaborative Development, Wakayama University)
Report on the Exchange with the KAKEHASHI Project's "Hispanic American Young Leaders"
Through this exchange, participants learned about the differences in disaster awareness between

February 9, 2025 (Kishu Experience Exchange's Instagram)
"From Florida, U.S.A. to Hidaka, Wakayama!"
January 31 – February 2, 2025
3 students from Florida came to visit us here in Hidaka, Wakayama.
The students enjoyed the culture and people of

Japan and the U.S., which provided them with a valuable experience that they can apply to their future disaster prevention activities back home. We are now even more confident that continuing exchanges with international perspectives can lead to better learnings for all students involved.

Hidaka, and spent a special day immersed in Japanese tradition.

6. Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plan at the Reporting Session

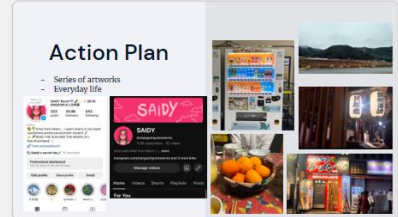
Locations: Tokyo, Kanagawa, Wakayama – Presentation by 1 group



Steps toward Balance

Potentially Sustainable Technologies

- Construction Materials made from fruit and vegetable waste
- Power generator utilizing thermoelectric modules
- Soil enriching biodegradable paper
- Low energy/multipurpose robots



【Results of the Program】

◆ Learnings from the Program:

-Culture:

In America, without doing external research like we ourselves do (since we are learning Japanese), most people's preconceived notions of Japan come from media such as anime, manga, and the news. However, the culture in Japan is so much more than what media in the West cares to show. First, the treatment of strangers and foreigners is amazing here. During our trip, we were received by everyone with nothing but kindness. During our time at the homestay, the host families treated us like one of their own and showed us sides of Japan we could not have every experienced without having joined this program.

Along those lines, it is also important to note how other cultures are very important to Japan. When we went to Tsurumi, we learned about how so many different cultures, like Korean, Nepalese, Brazilian, Okinawan, etc., shape the region and how things as a result have been adapted for these people to be able to live comfortably in Japan.

-Technological Balance / Modern & Old:

Initially, we viewed most technologies as an object only affecting the present, with little regard for their effects on the environment or culture. However, upon visiting the Meiji Jingu Shrine, in Harajuku, and later the TEPIA Association's Advanced Technology exhibit, we learned that technology has advanced to not only protect the environment, but also to preserve history and traditions such as through construction methods and recording traditions.

Traditional clothing is worn, and art like by Katsushika Hokusai is still popular in Japan. Even houses over 100 years old are still used in Japan, but cannot be accessed in the U.S.

Learnings about “Disaster Prevention”

-My Otousan (dad of the host family) explained a hanging scroll he had in house that said, “The sound of water is endless”. This was somewhat reassuring to me along with the history behind many Japanese castles, shrines, and temples being reconstructed after almost complete annihilation. I realized there's always a chance to rebuild and preserve, even if the sounds of water are weak or non-existent, the act of remembering is the first step in preserving something forever .

Finally, a part of culture that we never even considered was their innovation and safety measures. Because of past natural disasters, the country really demonstrates a dedication to safety and ensures that everyone is prepared in case of typhoons and earthquakes. The mindset in America regarding natural disasters is so different, it was impressive to see how they attempt to prepare citizens even from a young age using card games to conduct frequent emergency evacuation drills

【Action Plan】

Each member of our group has been disseminating information on social media, and will make more in-depth posts after returning to Florida. Apart from this, we will do the following.

- Post series of artworks inspired by what we saw and experienced in Japan.
- Use Japanese to explain what we experienced in Japan at our Japanese classes/clubs.
- Proactively participate and help coordinated Japanese related events such as festivals.
- Create a website dedicated to the history of Wakayama and things to do there.
- Work with volunteer groups at our universities to create disaster prevention workshops or activities making it easier to learn about what is necessary to be prepared for natural disasters.
- Learn more about Japan and the Japanese language, such as taking extracurricular classes on the Japanese Tea Ceremony.

Implementation Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)