



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

1. Program Overview

【Objectives and Overview】

Through presentations by representatives of this year's KAKEHASHI Project participants and panel discussions with experts, this event was intended to visualize the results of the KAKEHASHI Project and to obtain suggestions and advice from experts and alumni for future project management.

By bringing U.S. and Canadian alumni together online for networking, the event also served to maintain their interest in Japan, strengthen connections among alumni, and motivate them to become “bridges” between their countries and Japan.

【Participants】 Total: 26 participants – 2 experts, 2 project contributors, 22 alumni

■ Panelists

《Experts》

1. Ms. Sarah Belousov, Education and Exchanges Officer, Embassy of the United States of America in Japan
2. Ms. Sirine Hijal, Consular, Embassy of Canada in Japan

《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: 3 FY2024 invitation program participants from the United States and Canada

1. Ms. Delilah Laurance Shahbazian (United States, Invitation Program for Armenian American Young Leaders)
2. Mr. Tanor Rinjigaro Hondo Morinaka (United States, Invitation Program for Sports (Judo))
3. Mr. Kim Kent Aban (Canada, Invitation Program for Canadian Young Leaders)

■ Total: 22 KAKEHASHI Project alumni (FY2015-FY2023 participants)

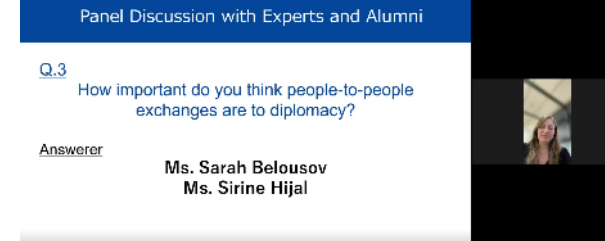
(Breakdown): United States 18 (5 undergraduate/graduate students, 13 working youths)
Canada 4 (2 undergraduate/graduate students, 2 working youths)

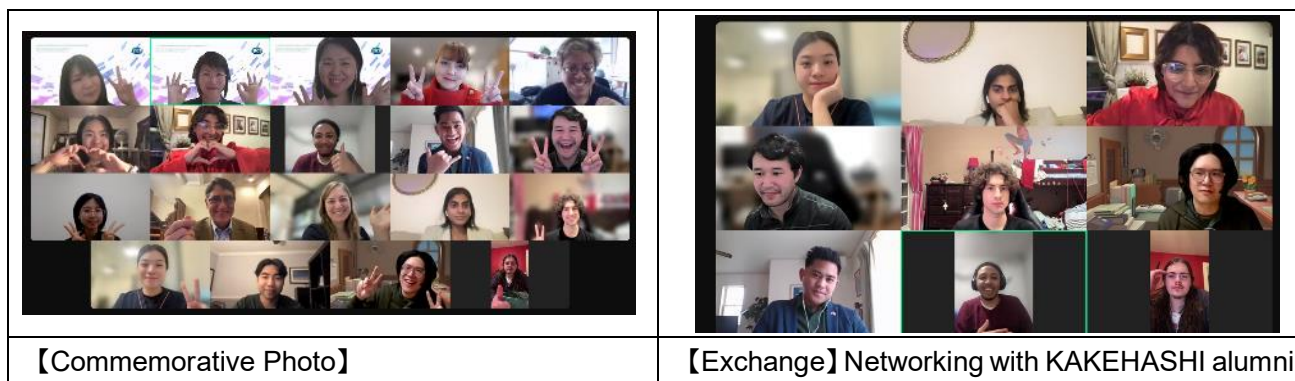
【Schedule】

- Online Expert's Meeting: March 26 (Wed), 2025
- 1. Introduction of Experts and Project Contributors (Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE))
- 2. Address

Mr. NAKAYAMA Daisuke, Researcher, North America Exchange Division, North American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
- 3. KAKEHASHI Project Overview and Report on this Fiscal Year's Projects (JICE)
- 4. Presentations 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. Commemorative Photo
- 8. Closing Remarks
- 9. Networking with KAKEHASHI Alumni

2. Program Photos

	
【Presentation by Alumni Representatives】 Ms. Delilah Laurance Shahbazian	【Presentation by Alumni Representatives】 Mr. Tanor Rinjigaro Hondo Morinaka
	
【Presentation by Alumni Representatives】 Mr. Kim Kent Aban – Q&A session	【Panel Discussion】 Experts and alumni



3. Comments from the Panel Discussion (excerpt)

■ What the KAKEHASHI Project means to alumni

- The KAKEHASHI Project is not only an opportunity to deepen our understanding of Japan, its culture, and its people, but also an opportunity for us, the participants, to reflect on ourselves and think about our own countries. By becoming bridges between our respective countries and fostering friendships, we the alumni were able to learn about each other's cultures and values and deepen mutual understanding.

■ What is necessary to strengthen alumni networking

- The alumni meetings themselves serve as kinds of “bridges” and connect different regions. There are alumni associations in various areas in the U.S., and connecting these associations and having them work together will lead to inter-regional exchanges and the development and expansion of alumni associations and their activities. I believe that with more connections and exchanges among the various regions in the U.S., alumni networks can become stronger.
- I believe that one of the reasons why alumni associations in Japan and Canada are so active is thanks to the role young leaders play. The KAKEHASHI Project has thousands of alumni, and by actively involving young leaders in the alumni associations in each region and having them take charge of event planning and information dissemination, I believe that the ties among alumni can become stronger, leading to the expansion and globalization of the alumni associations.

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

- There is great value in people-to-people connections and exchanges. This is because different people in different positions play different roles. I hope that many exchanges will unfold at the Osaka-Kansai Expo as well.
- The people-to-people exchange concept is extremely important. It can be the first step in building trust, cultivating mutual understanding, and establishing ongoing international relations. In fact, it can be considered the cornerstone of all such relations. It is an essential element of any form of exchange.

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

- Each person who has experienced the KAKEHASHI Project needs to be an inspiration to those who have not. A good example would be disseminations through one's inner passion, or voices that come from the heart. The old must guide the new, and the path alumni set needs to be compelling.

- The experiences that the program participants all say were the best were the interactions with the Japanese people, especially the homestay experience. What is essential for the continuation of this project is for the programs to focus on individual experiences, and for each person to become a "bridge." It is important to maximize the limited budget and time as much as possible for each individual experience. I also think promoting alumni meetings is essential.

4. Voices from the Alumni (excerpt)

◆ Working Youth (U.S.)

The presentations were great, the comments from the guests were excellent, and the event was an amazing learning experience. I learned a great deal and came away with a clearer picture of the wonderful connections we have with Japan and the powerful impact that the KAKEHASHI Project can have. I am now more motivated to pursue my goals and even more committed to my dream of building bridges between the U.S. and Japan. I would like to thank the organizers, and everyone involved in this program from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to be part of such a valuable event.

◆ Working Youth (U.S.)

I did not have any specific expectations going into this event, but I was looking forward to the exchange, the learning experience, and exploring ways to get involved in the community and contribute to U.S.-Japan relations. I was also looking forward to learning how alumni were making an impact in their respective communities. The actual event far exceeded my expectations. The presenters shared wonderful stories, and I was thrilled to learn about the diverse programs the KAKEHASHI Project has to offer. It was very inspiring to see how each initiative has made a significant impact on the participants and various communities. Everything was meticulously planned and executed without a single issue, and it was truly a wonderful event.

◆ Undergraduate Student (Canada)

I liked how two of the alumni talked about their own experiences and backgrounds and connected them to Japanese culture and lifestyle. It was very interesting and made me realize that even though our cultures may be different, there are many commonalities. I was also impressed by the outstanding communication skills of the third presenter. I could clearly understand the proactive efforts being made to maintain ties between the cultures of Japan and ASEAN/Canada. I was greatly inspired by all the presenters and felt that I, as one of the alumni, should make further efforts to strengthen the ties between our countries.

5. Disseminations by the Participants (excerpt)

Had the pleasure of connecting with some incredible leaders and changemakers, including Sirine Hijal (Consular - Canadian Embassy in Japan - Foreign Affairs), Frank Jannuzi (President & CEO, The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation) Siân Jones (Program Manager, Takehashi Project, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada) representatives from the U.S. Embassy, and fellow Takehashi delegates from across North America! As the only Canadian representative It was an honour to showcase how Calgary and Canada can continue to build strong bridges with Japan. With so many exciting opportunities and collaborative events on the horizon, ** I'm hopeful that the projects we've been working on will spark even more cross-cultural inspiration between our nations. There's still a lot of work ahead in strengthening ties across the Indo-Pacific — and I'm committed to doing my part at the local level here at home to make a difference. Huge thank you to Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE), Government of Canada, Japan - The Government of Japan, The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation and Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada for this great opportunity! Let's keep building together! 頑張りましょう！🇯🇵🇨🇦 #TakehashiProject #JapanCanada #Indopacific #PublicDiplomacy #InternationalRelations #YouthLeadership #BridgeBuilders #takehashi #takehashiproject 🇯🇵 🇨🇦 JICA 🇯🇵 	March 28 (LinkedIn) Working Youth (Canada) Had the pleasure of connecting with some incredible leaders and changemakers, including Sirine Hijal (Consular - Canadian Embassy in Japan - Foreign Affairs), Frank Jannuzi (President & CEO, The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation) Siân Jones (Program Manager, Takehashi Project, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada) representatives from the U.S. Embassy, and fellow Takehashi delegates from across North America! As the only Canadian representative It was an honour to showcase how Calgary and Canada can continue to build strong bridges with Japan. With so many exciting opportunities and collaborative events on the horizon, I'm hopeful that the projects we've been working on will spark even more cross-cultural inspiration between our nations. There's still a lot of work ahead in strengthening ties across the Indo-Pacific — and I'm committed to doing my part at the local level here at home in Canada to make a difference. Huge thank you to the Government of Canada, the Government of Japan , The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation and Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada for this great opportunity ! Let's keep building together! 頑張りましょう！
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Implementation Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)