

# Serving an International Campus in Heart of Japan

By Gretchen SHINODA

## IUJ: 30 Years in International Education

The International University of Japan (IUJ) is a graduate school featuring a beautiful campus with dormitory facilities at the foothills of Mt. Hakkai. It is the “original” International University of Japan and earns its name by hosting students from about 50 nationalities and offering all courses in English. In addition, the IUJ faculty has vast experiences overseas, most having received their PhDs from programs in the US and the UK. IUJ, now nearly 30 years in operation, boasts seven master’s-level degrees with cross-registration for a tailor-made education.

IUJ was founded by business and political leaders such as Mr. Sohei Nakayama, former chairman and advisor of the Industrial Bank of Japan, and Dr. Saburo Okita, former minister of foreign affairs, to name but a few. The founding goal of IUJ is to “foster global leaders who have a high level of specialized knowledge and skills, and a deep understanding of, and respect for, different cultures, and can thereby contribute to the development of international society.”

Today, IUJ enjoys a strong global network of over 3,000 alumni in 110 countries serving in all parts of governments, world organizations, businesses and academia. They often gather for both social interaction and professional collaboration in a fashion unique to the close-knit IUJ family.

## Globally Represented Campus

*Students from overseas* are drawn to IUJ because of its all-English campus with the level of course work competitive on the international market. This gives international students

Photo: International University of Japan



*Close-knit friendships made at IUJ are enjoyed for many years after graduation.*

Photo: Tony McNicol



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a chance to get a foothold in Japan without first knowing the language. Here they can develop their Japanese language skills and professional networks within the country, and graduate with both strong professional qualifications and deep friendships not only with Japanese but with people from every corner of the globe.

*For Japanese nationals*, IUJ provides a richly diverse cultural experience where they naturally take leadership roles as the host nation. They can learn about many cultures at the same time, and on a daily basis. They can become globally skilled communicators and culturally sensitive leaders on a campus surrounded by *koshi hikari* rice and *yairo suika* (watermelon). Indeed, they face the challenge of explaining Japanese culture to the foreigners, thus helping them to truly learn how Japan is seen by its Asian neighbors – this is a unique part of their IUJ experience that helps them grow into a special type of leader for Japan that they cannot gain in other settings so readily.

## Supporting Students' Special Needs

The know-how to support these groups – Japanese nationals and students from over 50 countries – as they merge into a harmonious campus family was developed over time. Now with nearly 30 years of experience, IUJ feels confident to provide this support. The staff, nearly all from the local area, is a bilingual team that has been working with our very diverse student body for many years. Being situated outside of a major city brings special needs for IUJ. The staff has faced challenging questions, concerns, problems and crises of a vast array, and developed various guides, information resources, responses and communication tactics to provide the support this special audience requires.

Support for both Japanese and non-Japanese begins before the students arrive on campus. Info kits are sent out, online groups are established, and communication routes between not only the staff and student, but among the incoming students themselves are built up. This helps answer questions and concerns, and, as importantly, helps IUJers become IUJers even before arrival. New people get to campus with friends and a support unit already at work.

Those without jobs awaiting them after graduation find one-on-one support from a Western-style career counselor. Workshops, one-on-one career coaching, on-campus recruiting, application support, and networking with alumni, company recruiters, and headhunters, plus advice for approaching overseas world-organizations effectively for internships and jobs, are all a natural part of the IUJ career center offerings.

Most of the IUJ campus, students, faculty and staff alike, are not native English speakers. But it is the common language and the promoted language on campus. The English-language faculty provide specialized training before the academic degree programs start (eight-week intensive program in the summer), and supplemental courses throughout the year. As English is the common professional language in our globalizing society, IUJ sees this skill as a core fundamental for its graduates to truly master.

For those with strong English skills already, a demanding Japanese language program is offered as an elective. The ability to work with Japanese in their language is an important career tool helping to bridge any divide between their country and Japan.

## Attracting Foreign Students

IUJ enjoys extensive partnerships with scholarship-providing world organizations, various governments and universities, and companies mostly in Japan that help reach out to very interesting people to which IUJ can add value through its educational programs. Many students come as “sponsored” students, with funding provided by companies, governments or organizations like JICA, World Bank and IMF. They return to their place of work after their IUJ education. Other students are private students, some who receive scholarship support from ADB and MEXT, who also help us recruit them, and various Japanese companies and organizations as arranged through IUJ, plus the IUJ scholarship program. Several more are self-funded. IUJ attracts them through many methods but appreciates the word-of-mouth support from its alumni network, and enjoys a place in the top 100 *Economist* business school ranking list, the only business school in Japan to make it on that list for eight consecutive years.

Key websites and social networks are used to reach out to a global audience, and where the IUJ staff and faculty cannot go, the alumni are there to support.

Other special programs include linkage programs (dual-degrees) with key universities in Indonesia and various training programs (degree and non-degree) for government officials from Indonesia.

## Providing Japanese Students with Overseas Experience

IUJ's Japanese students enjoy an internationally immersive atmosphere on our Niigata campus. They are instantly surrounded by professionals from about 50 nationalities in an all-English environment. While this “overseas” feeling often suffices for them to experience the world, IUJ also promotes a vast network of exchange programs with about 45 similar graduate schools overseas. They may study for about three months in various overseas institutions. To help them select from the offerings, IUJ students who attended those schools last year and students from these universities currently at IUJ offer information sessions.

## Who IUJ Would Like to Serve in Future

### Overseas Audience

IUJ is promoting “Linking Japan to the World” as a running slogan. Under that umbrella, IUJ hopes to attract more students wishing to bridge into the Japanese culture for business activities, governmental relations, academic pursuits, or even to find their roots. IUJ is an excellent entry or re-entry point for Japanese nationals who have been outside their country for many years and want to ease back into the culture, or those whose ancestry may include Japanese relatives. IUJ is proud to support them.

IUJ also hopes to work even more closely with governments and universities throughout Asia, modeled after the extensive relationship with Indonesia, to help provide degree and non-degree training for officials that will help shape Asia.

### Domestic Audience

Similarly, and still under the slogan “Linking Japan to the World,” IUJ will serve the business community. IUJ shares the concern with corporate Japan that Japan cannot fully join the global stage in its business activities until it nurtures a trained Japanese work-force that is both comfortable and competent to work overseas. IUJ wants to be a solution. By both preparing Japanese business-people for international leadership careers, and providing to corporate Japan skilled human resources from throughout the region as interns and employees, IUJ hopes to provide a vital service to Japan, which in turn will help the development and interactivity of Asia.

To this end, IUJ has created two new dynamic programs: the Global Partnership Program and the Global Leadership Program.

The Global *Partnership* Program puts major companies in Japan into a partnership with IUJ focusing on human-resource challenges. Currently, there are 37 companies partnered with IUJ. IUJ will not only train those already employed and provide access to a human resource pool of candidates, but also support the chief human resource officers of partner companies with their global HR issues through networking, information-sharing, and problem-solving interaction.

The Global *Leadership* Program trains company employees slated for overseas leadership roles in programs lasting about five to 10 days. They interact on campus with non-Japanese students in English, with a highly experienced faculty guiding the learning process. The all-English environment, with classes of cross-industry participants facilitated by IUJ students of mixed nationalities, covering both hard and soft skills, is a life-changing experience for the participants. They leave with new confidence and are ready to take on the challenge of leadership and management roles in a diverse work setting.

“Where the World Gathers” – a small countryside community, not unlike the United Nations and the WTO combined – this is IUJ. **JS**

*Gretchen Shinoda is a manager of the Office of Student Services and also serves as the in-house IUJ career counselor. She and her team at IUJ's Student Services run all aspects of students' non-academic needs from before arriving through post-graduation.*