

Tatem Hughes
JASWDC Tanaka and Green Scholarship Essay

While in Japan, I had an unforgettable experience. Over the year, I had not only improved in my Japanese proficiency, but I had improved as a person as well! I had made both invaluable friends and memories. I had learned new things about myself, and about Japanese culture I couldn't have learned if I had not gone. I remain eternally grateful I was blessed with such an opportunity to study abroad in Japan and to attend Kwansei Gakuin University.

My first few months studying abroad were a bit rocky, as I had to adjust to the many differences Japan has compared to the U.S. While incredibly convenient in the long run, getting used to the trains and other forms of public transportation in Japan did make me anxious in the beginning. However, now, I so deeply miss them (mostly because back home there isn't very well-developed public transportation, and I do not own a car). I had to get used to the somewhat slight differences in how courses are handled in Japan, but once I had gotten the gist of it all, I excelled easily! I am still very grateful no serious issues arose during my stay there.

Besides the typical goal of improving my Japanese proficiency, I had wanted to learn more about Japanese history and linguistics (courses not offered at my home university), and I was thrilled to be taking such courses! My favorite class was Japanese Art History, which I took for both semesters while there. It was a wonderful class, learning about Japanese art all the way from the Jōmon period to modern times; about the general history of each period to understand better why or how some works were made; and to better comprehend *why* people make art. Thanks to both that class, and all the other classes I had at Kwansei Gakuin University, I have better my understanding of not only Japanese as a language, but Japan as a country and culture. I couldn't have been more blessed that Kwansei Gakuin University was just the perfect university for me to have attended.

Along with great classes, Kwasei Gakuin University had blessed me with friends I couldn't have been thankful to have met. I would go out with them often, and through them learned all the cool and fun locations in Japan that only locals would know. I had made friends with not only Japanese students (who were more than kind enough to help me with my Japanese from time to time), but other exchange students and international students while there. I got to study with them, vent with them, and really get to know more about other countries than I had initially expected. It was actually through one of my chats with my friends that I had really changed me and influenced what I would do after I graduate.

Before, I was always wavering over what I should do when I graduate. I had spent my junior year while abroad, and by the time I got back the clock would be ticking on what I'd inevitably decide on doing with my life once I graduate. However, I had decided, through my love of linguistics, I would continue pursuing such a subject and apply for graduate schools. I had fallen in love with the idea of examining how languages affect one another and how they change over time, and want to study that more and more in graduate school. Such a discovery of hidden passion within me was monumental, and could have only occurred while I was abroad.

I am indescribably thankful to have received the Tanaka & Green Scholarship, which helped fund my study abroad, and to as a result receive such indispensable memories and experiences. I couldn't have grown and learned as I did without their help.

ありがとうございました！