

LETTER

GraSPP
THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO

Contents

- 1: Messages from March 2017 Graduates (Kaori Kabata / Yusuke Kawashima)
- 2: My Memorable Trip to Paris (Ilia Beloly) / 2017 GraSPP Olympics (Akito Goto)
- 3: International Student Interview No. 8 (Lisa Hartwig)
- 4: International Field Workshop (Toshiro Nishizawa)

Messages from March 2017 Graduates



Kaori Kabata
Class of 2017, International
Public Policy Program

teammates told me that “it was thanks to you that the team came together and eliminated the discrepancies in our views,” I felt assured that I was making a contribution, both in my own way and in a Japanese way.

GraSPP is a place where you can achieve anything if you speak up and take the initiative. It is overflowing with opportunities, so much so that I believe there were many more things I could have done had I chosen to take them on. Rather than following a conventional predetermined career path or life plan, I urge those of you who have particular interests to become a GraSPPER. My only regret is that I didn't get to use the new school building and I envy the campus life of future students. As a graduate, I plan to do my utmost in future to strengthen connections with students both past and future. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my parents, teachers, bosses, and friends who have supported me and helped me get where I am now.

Rich in experiences and opportunities to meet new people, these two years have gone by so quickly. I still recall all the worries I felt during exam time as if it were just yesterday. Although I never expected that I would end up living and working in Chicago, which is where I am writing these words, my dream of graduating from GraSPP and working overseas has come true.

I enjoyed many experiences with an international flavor during my two years at GraSPP. Being able to participate in a Double Degree Program with the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University was a huge opportunity, allowing me to experience the best of both schools. Having been sent to the APEC meeting in Lima, Peru as a Japanese student representative, I also had the opportunity to experience for myself what it is like to be a Japanese participating in international society.

The impression that remains with me more than any other from my time as a student is of group work. I had never before encountered anything more difficult than reconciling the views of students with completely different cultures and ways of thinking and coming up with the best output we could. Although there were times when I doubted I was making much of a contribution to group work, when one of my



Yusuke Kawashima
Class of 2017, Legal Policy
Program

students with specializations that were entirely different from my own. I was able to engage in discussions with all sorts of different people, from students at the Faculty of Law through to students studying nuclear power, students-cum-staff from private-sector companies and students-cum-government employees from Southeast Asia who had come to Japan to study, providing numerous opportunities for me to broaden my own viewpoints and fields of interest. One of my reasons for wanting to work at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications was that, rather than focusing rigorously on a single specialization, I wanted to work from a broad overview that included dealing with a wide variety of actors. I also want to hold on to the values at work I developed at GraSPP.

Looking back at what I learned at GraSPP, I see it as at last getting to the starting line of my career, but that it is only from now on that what I learned there will be put to the test. Keeping to the desire I set out with to bring a broad outlook to my work, I want to value the links with students and teachers that I built up at GraSPP so that we can continue to feed off each other in the future.

My Memorable Trip to Paris

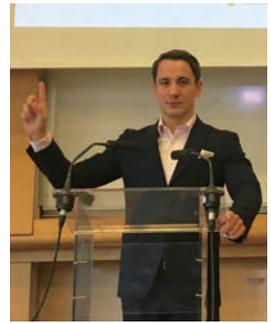
Ilia Beloly, Year 2, MPP/IP

My trip to Paris started at GraSPP Policy Challenge introduction seminar. During introduction, all our hopes to form team with friends and work on desired topic was destroyed by Professor Shiroyama, who enthusiastically explained the system of random team composition. However, two words popped up in my mind: “チャレンジ” and “がり勉”. I decided that it would be an interesting chance to meet new GraSPP people, so I signed in. My team members were from Peru, Japan, China – and me from Russia. I didn't know any of them, so at first meeting I was trying to speak less in order to look smarter. Our team chose the topic on Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Sexual Education as we believed that topic is not getting enough attention from policymakers. Our next challenge was how to suggest truly innovative solution that will be attractive enough to send us to Paris. At that time, I was surprised when my team members humbly concluded there are no thoughts, but during two hours of enforced one-to-one brainstorming they generated many brilliant fresh ideas.

Before the GraSPP presentation, we felt our topic in one way or another would shake up the jury, and we strongly believed in our idea; so we were able to defence. However, we were not sure about jury's attitude to our topic. Presentation went fine, but we knew that competition would be fierce; so when in late December, as a Christmas gift, we received a congratulation letter to inform that we were chosen to make a presentation for GPPN Conference at Science Po in Paris, we were overdelighted.

Upon arrival, we were warmly greeted at Science Po by volunteers, totally charmed by Science Po Graduate School of Public Policy Dean's English accent, thrilled by a conference moderator, and overall, excited. More than 50 teams from all over the world presented their projects, which varied in policy area and level of execution. For me, most interesting was reading the short biographies of all team members in the Conference brochure. As usual, I compared my own achievements in life with others', and that plunged me in abyss of depressive self-abasement (joke) – it motivated me to network actively and try to learn from others' experience. After first day, our team was selected for the next stage, so that evening we had to further prepare for the longer presentation and possible questions. Because of that, we were unable to benefit from an evening social program organized by Science Po student council; but it let us develop our project, and we felt the responsibility since we were the only team chosen from GraSPP. The next day, the project competition was more about implementation and feasibility of the project; so the strongest one deservedly got the first prize. Nevertheless, we were delighted that our project, even though just in a concept stage, was highly evaluated and we were given a chance for the Final. That evening was highlighted by a networking party, where we surprisingly spent most of the time chatting with unexpectedly friendly Dean Iizuka. (Yes, he is also human as us).

Looking back, we had amazing days in Paris, as we met many new interesting people, got fresh “outside of Japan” view on the policymaking dialogue; but more importantly, we connected better with GraSPP members. Finding way from hotel to Science Po on a first day, taking an evening boat trip on la Seine, lunchtime tour to Jardin du Luxembourg, asking too many questions at OECD headquarters – all that great memories that I cherish are inseparable from my fellow GraSPP students who were there with me. I believe events like this are working positively on building deep connections between professors, present students, future alumni; and this is essential for our young but brilliantly shining department.



2017 GraSPP Olympics

Akito Goto, Year 1, MPP/IP

While the Rio Olympics in Brazil are starting to fade from memory in Japan, there are only three more years to go until the Tokyo Olympics. So it was that, on April 4th, with the cherry trees in full bloom, a large number of new entrants and overseas students could be seen that morning filling up the Gotenshita Memorial Arena at the Hongo Campus. They were there to attend the 2017 GraSPP Olympics, organized by the GraSPP Student Council both to welcome new students and to get to know overseas students. It was an Olympics in name, but in reality it was more like an elementary school's sports festival with

three events, comprising tug of war, tairi (a type of ball game), and long rope jumping. The aims were to take the Japanese new entrants back to their childhoods, and to give the overseas students a taste of the games played on sports days at Japanese elementary schools.

The first event, tug of war, tested teamwork. Each team did their best to win, with some people demonstrating natural leadership and others contributing to the team through their strength. The second event, tairi, called for strategy. It involved a different approach, with one person from each team being chosen to run around with a basket on their back while everyone else chased after them trying to throw balls into the basket. While this might look cute when the participants are children of elementary school age, having it played by adults of twenty or more turns the place into a battlefield. The person with the basket on their back made desperate efforts to run away from the pursuing players as though they were saber-toothed tigers, recalling the law of the jungle. Balls rained down like artillery shells on the basket-carrier. So concerned were the Student Council observers that they changed the rules part way through. It was a narrow escape that no one ended up getting injured. The final event, long rope jumping, tested the ability to get everyone working together. Getting a bunch of people who had only just met to all jump up and down together was a near-impossible undertaking. Nevertheless, within just three minutes some of the teams had succeeded in racking up more than 40 consecutive jumps.

The prize for the winning team was to have first choice of topic at the afternoon's policy challenge; everyone got to start using their heads rather than their bodies from the afternoon.

International Student Interview

No. 8

Lisa Hartwig
(Year 2, MPP/IP)



Lisa with her mother on a month-long visit back to Japan in October 2016

—What sort of work do you hope to do in the future?

While my hope in the long term is to work in development in Asia, I first need to gain specialized skills through work experience in the field. For example, I have heard that the average age of staff hired for the ADB is 39, and this means I have about ten years to gain some kind of specialization in order to be competitive for positions in the development aid field. I hope to work for empowerment of women, especially in reproductive health and rights. I became aware of these problems since working as an intern at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) last year. Whereas I was looking into working in economic policymaking prior to that, I have come to realize since then that my skills are better suited for working in social policy issues. It is too bad that there are so few courses at GraSPP that cover these topics. However, I was able to look into it for myself and shape the final reports in classes to cover ideas such as reproductive health legislation in science policy, for example.

My master's thesis is about how the problem of declining birthrate and women's rights are interlinked, with the possibility that this poses risks for Japan's future security. Professor Heng is my thesis supervisor as he is well versed in security issues, but I still struggle with the difficulty of finding the links between these two issues as gender and security are not typically viewed as related to one another. Lately I spend about 12 hours a day holed up at the university writing my thesis. On weekends I spend one day at the university library and the other day at a café near where I live to continue working. Though this work process may not be the most efficient as I find myself easily distracted by other things I would prefer to read for research rather than writing.

—I understand your father is American, your mother Japanese, and that you have lived in Saudi Arabia?

Yes, I was born in Chicago. We lived in Saudi Arabia up until 2002 because of my father's work at an oil company. That year the question of whether I should do high school in the U.S. or a Swiss boarding school came up, as the importance of high school education matters for when trying to enter university in the future. Since I didn't want to be separated from my family, we all moved to Austin, Texas together. While living in Saudi Arabia I went to the American international school during the main school year and to Japanese school during the summer holidays.

I normally speak English to my father and Japanese to my mother, who was born and raised in Nagoya until she married my father. My parents both inspire me so much, but it is my mom's lively spirit in

particular that taught me to continue pursuing new opportunities like the one at GraSPP for graduate school. In order to be more connected to my mom because of how much she means to me, I spent half a year as an overseas student at Sophia University studying Japanese during undergrad. Before that, I realized I could not communicate with her in her native Japanese well and heavily relied on English. This happened when we played a language game when visiting my father's relatives in Illinois for Christmas in 2010. My mom's team would always lose because she couldn't express herself to her teammates as a result of feeling nervous and being unable to think in English. When we complained, "Mom, when we are on your team, we always lose!", she replied, "Sometimes I just don't want to speak English." Hearing her saying this, I felt it would be unbearably sad if my sisters and I could not take care of her once she becomes old and possibly forgets how to speak English. So I made the decision to learn Japanese properly.

My mom is spending three months in Panama learning Spanish. It looks like she is thinking about moving there with my dad in the future to start a second life. Panama is close to Texas and easy to get to from the States. Because it is tough on my mom when my dad spends all day at home, he works seasonally at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) during tax season from January to June. After he completes his work for the year, he will join my mother in Panama when she goes again in the fall.



Family photographs: Around 2003 (above), 2014 (below)

International Field Workshop

Toshiro Nishizawa, Project Professor

“GraSPP is the world in microcosm.” This is the phrase I always use when telling people about GraSPP. The increasingly international character of the school over the last few years could be described as remarkable with education programs that extend overseas and the International Field Workshop (IFW) having stepped up a level. While my own practices and innovations are part of this, more than anything else the major factor behind it is the way that students have responded. This article looks back at the IFW earlier this year.

A visit to the East Coast of the USA was made by a team of eleven students of various nationalities and with different topics and specialties, including five from GraSPP. The first day saw a session with Richard Bush, director of the Center for East Asia Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC, and Mireya Solis and Jonathan Pollack, both senior fellows. This was followed by a discussion session with staff from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Steve Clemons, Washington editor at large for The Atlantic, a political magazine. On the second day, a wide-ranging discussion at the World Bank that covered health insurance systems, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and education, and electricity sector reform was followed by a meeting with Ana Revenga, Deputy Chief Economist at the World Bank Group, where we shared views on contributing to research and public policy. The final meeting of the day was with Kazuhiko Koguchi, Executive Director for Japan at the World Bank, who gave the aspiring students some encouraging words about careers at that institution.

Networking, too, is an important activity. Nicolle Aya Konai, a graduate now working at the World Bank, organized a happy hour get-together. The chance to chat with professionals active at a variety of different institutions was a boost to motivation.

The discussion with Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who had a central role in the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), was a miraculous event. Moving on to New York, we had two stimulating

meetings: a session at the Office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and a group discussion on the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change with Jimena Leiva Roesch, Research Fellow at the International Peace Institute.



IFW is more than just a tour of research institutions and international agencies. Students submit topics in advance and only those chosen get to work on preparations and participate in the tour. They send requests to the places they want to visit and have to wait nervously until confirmation comes back that their request has been granted. The students who take on this role serve as facilitators on behalf of their team, and they lead the discussion.

IFW is just one example of an international activity. As a member of the Global Public Policy Network (GPPN), GraSPP is becoming more involved with other schools every year, including the offering of Double Degree Programs. These partners include the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, London School of Economics, Sciences Po, and Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at National University of Singapore. It has also become a routine practice for us to send a team of students to the APEC Voices of the Future held each fall.

GraSPPers who move on from here after participating in these activities should be ready to play an active role throughout the world. Now it's time for preparations for IFW Asia in August to get underway in earnest.



Editor's Postscript

I actually got to see for myself the GraSPP Olympics that Akito Goto reported on so humorously. The juxtaposition of calling it the Olympics when the events were taken from elementary school sports days was amusing. Having said that, don't underestimate elementary school events; the students involved all took it very seriously. What I found most interesting was the long rope jumping. I don't think they have rope jumping overseas, let alone with a long rope. The eyes of the international students went wide as they watched on at the miracle of a large number of people all jumping together, but when their own turn came they went about it happily, earnestly twirling the rope and jumping high in the air. I really wanted to join in, but I held myself back, thinking it would be a shame to get in the way of the younger folk. (Editor)

vol.

48

NEWS
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7-3-1, Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, 113-0033 Japan
E-mail grasppnl@pp.u-tokyo.ac.jp
<http://www.pp.u-tokyo.ac.jp/>