

LETTER

GraSPP
THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO

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Welcome to GraSPP! 84 New Students Welcomed in April 2019



New entrants getting to know each other at the GraSPP Olympics

Orientation for the 2019 student intake was held over Wednesday the 3rd and Thursday the 4th of April, 2019. This April saw 84 new students starting at GraSPP. Following some words of welcome from Dean Akio Takahara, the agenda for the Wednesday included information about life at GraSPP and a tour of the facilities. Thursday morning was spent at the Gotenshita Memorial Arena on the Hongo Campus participating in the “GraSPP Olympics”, an event put on by the student council to welcome new entrants. While there was a degree of awkwardness among the students to begin with, the games soon had the teams talking amongst themselves with Japanese students explaining how they worked to the overseas students. Coming together in a collective effort made for a convivial time with enthusiasm and laughter all around.



84 new entrants started at GraSPP in April 2019



Prizegiving for winning group of the GraSPP Policy Competition

Thursday afternoon saw a change in pace in the form of an indoor group-work exercise called the GraSPP Policy Competition. The three topics for discussion were: “1. How to encourage Japanese students to study abroad?”, “2. How to stimulate the interaction between international students and Japanese students?”, and “3. How to encourage students to study SDGs?” The new entrants formed into groups to engage in heated debate after which they presented their conclusions. Judging and voting on the presentations took place at a social event held that evening, with the winning group being awarded a prize.

Unique experiences students had overseas to be shared



Kentaro Sakamoto

I spent a year at Peking University and a half-year at Seoul National University through the Campus Asia program. What I gained most from studying overseas was connections with people. Not that I went into it thinking in terms of building connections, rather it was about working with my classmates and teachers, taking part in the discussions, and also having some fun along the way. The end result, however, was that strong bonds were built between us. Given that both Peking University and Seoul National University are full of people with ambitions to become politicians, administrators, entrepreneurs, academics, and so on, it would be no surprise at all if some of those I met go on to become well-known figures in the future. With the growing prosperity of Asia, especially China, looking like a certainty, I look forward to seeing how these connections will play out a few decades down the track.

I realize there may be some people who would like to study overseas but worry it will affect their job prospects. On the other hand, by making the most of overseas career forums after having first improved your skills in the local language, as well as in English, and having acquired good interview technique, it is not unusual for people to collect a large number of offers over a short period of time (in some cases just a single day!). Very few Japanese people can say they have graduated from a leading Chinese or Korean university. To be able to do so is without doubt an asset. It proved true in my case, and I have taken a job at a policy think tank. As this think tank happens to be one with which one of my teachers at Peking University is involved, the connections I built up as a student have already paid dividends.



Anaïs BRIAULT

In 2017, while I was studying at The University of Tokyo as an exchange student during my undergraduate studies, I decided to apply for the dual-degree program between Sciences Po Paris and GraSPP. In April 2017, I received the admission email and a year and a half later, I was back in Tokyo.

The dual degree was a great opportunity to combine the study of the French defense environment at Sciences Po and the study of international relations with a focus on security issues at GraSPP. Besides attending classes, I was selected to represent The University of Tokyo at this year's Global University Challenge at the World Government Summit in Dubai – a memorable experience – and produced a research paper on Japan's defense industry with the help of my peers, teachers and colleagues at Crisis Intelligence.

In June 2018, I was lucky to meet a Japanese company named Crisis Intelligence at Eurosatory, France's biggest defense and security exhibition. Back in Japan, I joined them as a part-time employee in charge of international accounts. This allowed me to visit the Japanese Ministry of Defense, the National Police Agency and Tokyo's metropolitan police agency as well as to travel abroad. After graduating, I will continue working there as a full-time employee before going back to France to hopefully work in the same sector.

I believe this experience at and outside GraSPP allowed me to have a clearer view of the professional goals I would like to pursue in the future.



Kazuma Yamamoto

I spent nearly a year at the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) at Columbia University as part of the double degree program. I would like to express my deepest thanks to everyone who helped me gain this valuable experience, including the people at GraSPP, friends, Rotary, and JASSO. While my main subjects of study at SIPA included development economics and big data analytics, one of the things that left a particularly strong impression was my Capstone project. This is a project in which a group of five or so students undertake consulting work for a company, NGO, or other such organization. Entitled "Disruptive Technologies to Improve Lending for Agriculture in East Africa" and with the World Bank as our client, my project looked at

how the latest technologies such as the IoT, AI, and blockchain can be used to improve access to

finance for smallholders. While working with group members from diverse backgrounds to address a topic that was both difficult and at the cutting edge was far from easy, I learned a lot from my involvement. In the future, I hope to work at a consulting company on tasks such as strategy development support or M&A advice for companies looking to set up operations in developing nations. My hope is that, by drawing on the knowledge I gained at SIPA and GraSPP, I will be able to contribute in some way to progress in such countries.



Student Interview

No.

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Choe Siah

(Economic Policy Course, Year1)



Standing in front of the Yasuda Auditorium

— You started at The University of Tokyo as a Year 1 undergraduate?

My parents had urged me to study overseas, and in my third year in high school I applied for a program run by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. As I was lucky enough to qualify, I did a year of preparatory study learning Japanese at The Tokyo University of Foreign Studies before starting at the Faculty of Economics, The University of Tokyo, which features excellent researchers and teachers together with a well-stocked library. One of the things that surprised me the most when I started as an undergraduate was how few women there were. Added to that, because my department had only 5% overseas students, I felt myself to be very much in a minority, being both a woman and from overseas. In contrast, this sense of being part of a minority all but disappeared when I started at GraSPP this year and found myself among people from a wide range of backgrounds, including different nationalities and ages. I like the comfortable atmosphere where you feel free to talk to people even if you don't yet know their name, such as commenting on how hard the day's lesson has been. I also find it interesting how many students have an awareness of the issues, having heard recently that a voluntary group for female empowerment has been started by students.

— It's certainly true that GraSPP has students from many different countries and age ranges.

While it is always the case when a large number of people get together that their opinions will differ, I find it constructive that such differences can be overcome through mutual discussion. While there are all sorts of definitions of what it means to be "international", for myself, communicating with people in ways that do not discriminate or judge on the basis of each other's nationality is a major component. Obviously, being Korean and a woman are both aspects of who I am, but even so, the best relationships in my view are those in which you can talk to each other without impressions being filtered by the person's nationality or gender. While these things differ from person to person, one example is how much I prefer being introduced to someone I haven't met before not as an overseas student from Korea but as a "tomodachi" (friend). While it is not unusual for the subject of nationality to come up when getting to know someone for the first time, I look forward to developing a mutual understanding

with the person in the hope that I will be able to talk to them further. Given that there is still so much I don't know about Japan despite having lived here for six years now, I am in no position to pass judgment about Japanese people having particular traits or to say that things are done in such and such a way in Japan. Likewise, one of the benefits of having been an overseas student in Japan is that it has freed me from stereotypical thinking about how things are in places like China or America.

— Why did you choose to major in economics?

It was participation in volunteer work as a high school student that first prompted my interest in the subject. Out of concern for the problem of poverty, I joined a project to provide footwear to children in Africa who were prevented from going to school by the simple physical problem of lacking shoes. As collecting donations to buy new shoes for sending to the recipients was fraught with all sorts of problems during delivery, sometimes resulting in the shoes never reaching the children, our project involved drawing an attractive design on white shoes and sending these. I acquired my interest in development economics by thinking about questions such as why poverty happens and why past attempts to overcome it have proved ineffective. As my undergraduate studies did not go far enough, I chose to go on to graduate school. Right now my aim is to study hard and grow as a person, while in the future my hope is to find work that is beneficial to society.

(Interview and text by the editor)



Traveling with friends



Class photograph

GraSPP Student Council Activities

Shusei Yamamoto (MPP/IP)

2018-2019 GraSPP Student Council Public Relations Director

The current batch of GraSPP Student Council have kicked off in April 2018, with 5 fulltime members. We started off with a goal to further enhance the ties between students at GraSPP, as we felt that there was lack of events to bring together students outside of the classroom setting. With our aim in mind, we hosted numerous events in order to increase the interaction among students. One of the strongpoints of GraSPP is its diverse student population. I strongly believe that diversity is one of our strongest assets, therefore I made sure that our events were all hosted in both English and Japanese to further enhance connections and bonds between our students. As an officer in charge of public relations, I have made sure to attract as many students as possible, both Japanese and international. Therefore, I made a decision to introduce various social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook in order to further reach out to the GraSPP student body.

Furthermore, we have also decided to introduce a survey to the students for the first time since the establishment of GraSPP Student Council. As an officer in charge of public relations, I felt that it was important to incorporate the needs and wants of the students in order to improve the overall academic and social life at GraSPP. With this survey, we have successfully managed to lobby the GraSPP Office to introduce a booking system at all discussion rooms, introduce hygiene products at the GraSPP lounge, as well as activating the card readers at entrances of GraSPP shared facilities area to improve security.



Our first event "Akasaka Trip" May 9th, 2018 @ Akasaka Palace

In terms of our activities, our first ever event was a bilingual quiz night. We split up the students into 8 different teams, with each group consisting of students of different policy streams and nationality. Around 70 students participated in this event, and it was a great success!

Our next event was a visit to the Akasaka Palace. This was a first ever excursion trip hosted by the GraSPP Student Council, and the turnout was very high! Once again, students from diverse policy streams and nationality attended this trip, and it was a wonderful opportunity for the students to further enhance the knowledge on history of Japanese politics and culture.

In terms of our academic events, we also hosted a joint seminar on security issues in East Asia with the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, based in Washington, D.C. The GraSPP Student Council also invited three professors from GraSPP: Dean Takahara, Prof. Takeuchi and Prof. Heng. This was a great opportunity to exchange different views regarding contemporary security issues surrounding East Asia. Many frank exchanges were made among students of GraSPP and SAIS, and we hope that this exchange will continue to the next generation of Student Council!



2018-2019 GraSPP Student Council Team Members



GraSPP-SAIS Joint Seminar on January 16th, 2019 @ SMBC Hall, UTokyo

TOPICS

(1) Applications are open for the MPP/IP course for 2020. Please visit the following website for details.

<http://www.pp.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/mppip/>

(2) GraSPP Alumni & Student Day (a University of Tokyo Homecoming Day event) will be hosted jointly with the Alumni Association (Tatsuoka Kai) on Saturday October 19.



Editor's Postscript

This newsletter has focused a spotlight on students and overseas study. GraSPP has put a lot of effort into "internationalization" and I believe that this latest issue gives a sense of how much progress has been made. GraSPP students are equipped with knowledge from their studies, deep inquisitiveness, and the dynamism to put ideas into practice. In the heat of this 2019 summer, they have given me an appreciation of how we can make a better future for Japan and the world. (Editor)

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LETTER

(Editor & Publisher) Graduate School of Public Policy, The University of Tokyo
(Date of Publication) September 25, 2019

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