

LETTER

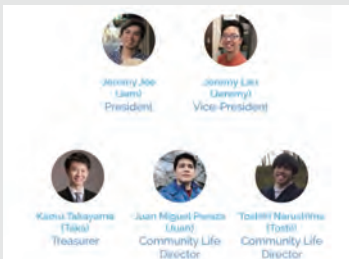
GraSPP
THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO

Contents

- 1: GSC Recap for Autumn 2020 (President of the GraSPP Student Council)
- 2: Message from new faculty member
- 3: Student Interview!
- 4: Online Events Held with ANU and University of Cambridge / TOPICS

GSC Recap for Autumn 2020

Jeremy Lee (President of the GraSPP Student Council)



2020/21 GraSPP Student Council started our term over the summer break, and our goals revolve around onboarding new students, improving communications, and trying out new initiatives.

For new students, we wanted to implement a more structured orientation experience so that they could have their questions answered before arriving in Japan, as well as being able to meet new friends in their cohort. Thus this year, we reached out to new students much earlier, in July as opposed to the usual meeting on the first briefing session at GraSPP.

We set up an online Q&A system where new students could ask their questions online over a week, and compiled this into a FAQ document which we emailed out to them.

Additionally, we created a “Student’s Guide to Life at GraSPP”, which is a comprehensive guide to everything from how the academic system works in GraSPP to securing accommodation and a phone line in Tokyo.

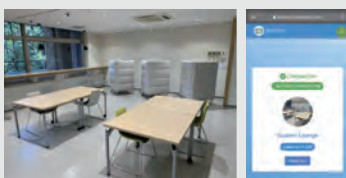
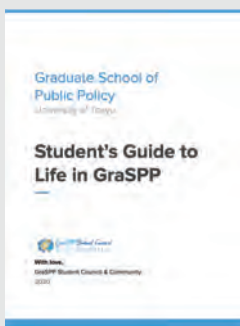
We also instituted a Peer Mentorship System where senior students can volunteer to take new students under their wing. The idea was to provide as many points of contact, and platforms for students to get their questions answered.

At the GraSPP Social Orientation, students came together for a day of social bonding and games. Splitting students into various orientation groups, students got to play ice breakers as well as online games. We hope that students would be able to take this chance to make new friends online, and hopefully out of the classroom as well.

In terms of new initiatives, this year we set up a Discord server to become a one-stop communications platform for GraSPP Students. Rather than having multiple platforms such as Facebook Messenger group, Line Group, and others, we created a single destination for everything. The Discord server reposts Student Bulletin Board messages, as well as hosts a module chat for every module in GraSPP, allowing students to exchange information about classes and arrange group work easily. It also has community forums where people could ask questions about housing, visa matters, and discuss the latest news too.

We also spent a great deal of time at the start of the semester getting student facilities back up and running during this COVID pandemic. This included implementing safe distancing measures, such as limiting the maximum capacity in lounges and distancing furniture away from one another. We also instituted an online check-in and check-out system, where students could scan a QR code and indicate which room they would be in.

We are looking to continue promoting our module review system so that students can make more informed decisions about classes. Look forward to our online social event to celebrate the end of the semester! If the COVID pandemic comes under control, we hope to also be able to do some in-person events next semester, including the annual GraSPP trip.



Message from new faculty member

Stacey Chen



I'm a Professor of Economics at GraSPP and a Taiwanese citizen. My research focuses on the causes and consequences of inequality and the evaluation of public policy. Before coming to Japan, I taught at the University of New York at Albany and the Royal Holloway University of London. My recent working papers examine whether social ties can mitigate agency problems in medical care systems, the causal effect of maternal education on child health in Africa, and how university opening affects female education and career decisions.

To our students: We have entered the era of big data. The world has become radically transparent, with data widely available. Integrating data and unearthing insights by testing/evaluating all policy decisions has fundamentally changed how nations compete and prosper. As future leaders, GrasPP students should be well-acquainted with quantitative analytical methods to capitalize on it through investments and forward-looking instinct.

Kazuto Suzuki



Hello, everyone. My name is Kazuto Suzuki, arrived at GraSPP in October 2020. My research focuses on the dynamic relationship between technology and international security by looking at space policy, economic security, sanctions, nuclear safety, European integration and other things related to this subject. I served as a member of the Panel of Experts for the sanctions on Iran at the United Nations from 2013 to 2015, and currently serving as a member of space security sub-committee in the National Space Policy Committee, and the President of Japan Association of International Security and Trade.

In a globalized world where previous measures of policy making, such as "catching up" or learning from other countries' experiences, are no longer effective, the policy experts who can be innovative and creative for policy making and create new values in policies are needed more than ever. I hope you would learn methods and knowledge for building such capabilities, and become more creative in adding new values for policies.

Taisuke Nakata



Hello, everyone. My name is Taisuke Nakata. I moved from the U.S. to Japan last April to join the Graduate School of Public Policy (GraSPP) at the University of Tokyo as an Associate Professor.

I grew up in Japan. After graduating from a high school in Japan, I moved to the U.S. for college education. I graduated from the University of Chicago in 2003, My first job was economic research as the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. After obtaining a Ph.D. in Economics from New York University in 2012, I spent the next 8 years as an economist at the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System where I worked on various policy analyses and conducted academic research on monetary policy.

At the GrasPP, I would like to share with you my knowledge of economics as a practical tool and, more generally, how to use mathematical models as a partner in decision making in various circumstances. I look forward to meeting you, teaching you what I love, and learning new things from you.

Yusuke Masaki



I am Yusuke Masaki. I arrived as an associate professor in August 2020. I have worked for the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the Cabinet Office, Yamaguchi Prefecture, and Kumamoto Prefecture, where, as the director of the finance division, I organized the recovery and reconstruction budget in response to the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake. After working for Kumamoto Prefecture, I studied political science and economics at Harvard University, and most recently, I was in charge of digitizing local government administration at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

GraSPP's mission is to train policy practitioners who could combine various specialized knowledge such as law, political science, and economics to envision ways to solve problems that cannot be solved in a single academic field.

When studying theories in each field, I would like you to always be aware of how the theory can be combined with theories of other fields and what kinds of practical problems the theory can help solve, to prepare for your future career involved in policy practice.



I always enjoy reporting on major international meetings (G20 Summit held in Argentina in 2018)

Student Interview

No. 35

Motonao Uesugi (Professional Degree Program, International Public Policy / 1st Year)

— Tell us about how you came to study at GraSPP.

Having worked as a journalist at Nikkei for about 20 years, I have seen the industry undergo dramatic changes over the past decade. With basic news items now delivered over the Internet, the role of newspapers is shifting toward the publication of more in-depth articles. This in turn has transformed the role of my profession, away from simply seeking out news and toward providing readers with a “point of view”. It goes without saying that investigating what is going on in the world demands a certain level of knowledge and quantity of information. Realizing that I needed to acquire a new mindset and analytical capabilities different to those I had cultivated as a reporter, I decided to take the GraSPP entrance exam based on a recommendation from one of the newspaper’s more senior staff.

— How are you enjoying student life?

Just as I felt my studies were finally getting started, the coronavirus pandemic struck. My new life as a student began in unusual times, with faculty closures and the declaration of the state of emergency. All of my spring semester classes were taken online and at first I struggled with my lack of familiarity with Zoom. With all of the other major universities still dithering through the spring of 2020 about when and how to hold classes, I was grateful for the early decision to go fully online. It wasn’t until the fall semester when a single seminar-style class was able to be held face-to-face that I got to go to the campus itself. I went for a walk around the campus before and after class just to remind myself what a great place it is.

— What challenges do you want to take on during your time as a student?

As I very much enjoy going out for a drink with my colleagues, I hope I will get the chance to do that with my new university friends sometime soon. Even though it is all happening online, I can sense from the back-and-forth of class and so on that there are a lot of unique and fascinating people among my classmates who are full of enthusiasm. I would especially like to hear what those who have come to study at GraSPP from overseas have to say. One of the great things about GraSPP is how it brings together students of various different ages and nationalities. People I would have been unlikely to encounter in my work as a journalist, so I look forward to going out to have a proper drink together once the pandemic finally recedes. I hope you will join me!

— How do you expect to put your experiences at GraSPP to use in the future?

It is probably a rather boring answer, but it will mostly be about writing better articles of higher quality. I want to be able to write better articles tomorrow, ones that are better than that in a year’s time, and even better still in five years’ time. I am confident that my studies at GraSPP will nourish that goal. It is not just that study at GraSPP will equip me with new knowledge and insights; I also believe that by regularly exposing me to things I previously knew nothing about, it will teach me to realize my own ignorance. By stimulating me in that and other ways, I believe it is providing me with a very valuable experience.



Covering changes in leadership at financial institutions and the announcement of financial results through the press club at the Bank of Japan



Speaking and listening to a wide variety of people around the world to get a sense of what is happening on the front lines of the economy (at an emerging business in Southeast Asia). Mr. Uesugi is second from the right.

Online Events Held with ANU and University of Cambridge

Nobue Nachi (Graduate School Office, GraSPP)

Along with its Campus Asia partners Peking University and Seoul National University, GraSPP is utilizing the Strategic Partnerships Project* to participate in programs with the Crawford School of Public Policy at The Australian National University (ANU) and The Centre for the Study of Existential Risk (CSER) at the University of Cambridge.

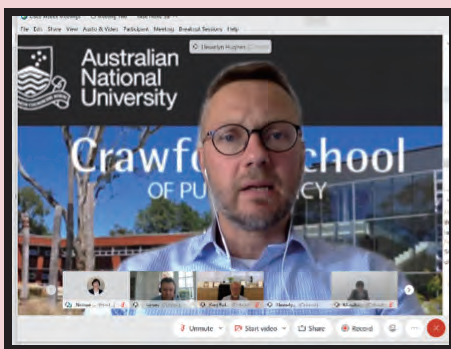
On December 3, a workshop was held with ANU on the topic, "Japan and Australia's National Hydrogen Strategies – A Conversation." The workshop discussed the nations' respective hydrogen energy strategies, with invited participants from both nations including government officials and researchers from industry and academia. A number of presentations were given: on the Japanese side by Director Toshiyuki Shirai of the Advanced Energy Systems and Structure Division of the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy at the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and Professor Masakazu Sugiyama of the Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology at The University of Tokyo; and on the Australian side by James Hetherington of the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources and Professor Kenneth Baldwin of the ANU Energy Change Institute (with Associate Professor Llewelyn Hughes of the Crawford School of Public Policy as facilitator).

On November 19, a webinar was held with the University of Cambridge as part of the faculty-wide UTokyo-Cambridge Voices program on the topic, "East Asia at Risk: Regional Insecurity and the Future of Alliances." Lectures were given by Professor Kiichi

Fujiwara of the Graduate Schools of Law and Politics at The University of Tokyo and Dr. John Nilsson-Wright of the University of Cambridge. (with Professor Yee Kuang Heng of GraSPP as facilitator). Another webinar was held on November 30 on the topic, "Global Risks of Public Policy." Lectures were given by Professor Heng of GraSPP and Professor Clarissa Rios Rojas of CSER (with Professor Hideaki Shiroyama of GraSPP as facilitator).

In this time of pandemic, when practices from pre-covid times are no longer viable in so many different areas, the 2020 academic year has also brought changes to how international exchanges are conducted as people resort to online ways of meeting where once they took for granted the ability to gather physically across borders. Being easier for organizers and participants in terms of both costs and logistics, while still allowing for meaningful debate, online events have the advantage of efficiency. Although they bring new challenges, including technical difficulties and the proliferation of webinars, they have also given an insight into new possibilities for how international exchange might take place in the future.

* The Strategic Partnerships Project is an inter-departmental initiative involving all areas of The University of Tokyo, promoting international education and research collaboration together with diverse and interdisciplinary exchanges. The project aims to enhance the mobility of the university's staff and students by facilitating exchange programs with designated "strategic partner universities" with which it has special relationships that go beyond the usual inter-university academic exchange agreements.



2020.12.3 Workshop with ANU
Associate Professor Llewelyn Hughes of the Crawford School of Public Policy



2020.11.19 Webinar with the University of Cambridge
Dr. John Nilsson-Wright of the University of Cambridge (top) and Professor Kiichi Fujiwara of the Graduate Schools of Law and Politics (bottom)



2020.11.30 Webinar with CSER, University of Cambridge
Professor Yee Kuang Heng of GraSPP (top) and Professor Clarissa Rios Rojas of CSER (bottom)

TOPICS

- "HTA (Health Policy & Technology Assessment) Expert Training Program" is recruiting new students. Please check the following website for details.
<http://www.pp.u-tokyo.ac.jp/HPTA/news/index.html>
- "Discover GraSPP", an event for potential applicants, is scheduled to be held on Saturday, March 13, 2021. Please check the website below for details.
<http://www.pp.u-tokyo.ac.jp/events/2021-02-12-28551/>
- International Program (MPP / IP) published a new brochure.
<http://www.pp.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/mppip/mpp-ip-brochure-2021-2022/>



Editor's Postscript

In the midst of Japan's second declaration of a state of emergency, the Common Test for University Admissions went ahead on January 16 and 17 in place of the National Center Test for University Admissions that had been held in the past 31 years. Further afield, Joe Biden was inaugurated as the 46th President of the United States from the Democratic Party on January 20, with Kamala Harris becoming the first African-American and Asian-American woman to be appointed Vice President. While the new year has seen all sorts of changes happening both at home and abroad, this newsletter will continue reporting on GraSPP. (Editor)

vol.

61

NEWS LETTER

(Editor & Publisher) Graduate School of Public Policy, The University of Tokyo
(Date of Publication) March 16, 2021

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/>