

LETTER

GraSPP
THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO

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GraSPP Student Council Activities



Student Council members with Dean Iida and Prof. Nishizawa

With the commencement of the autumn semester, we began our work as the GraSPP Student Council 2022/23. Finally, after more than two years of the pandemic, most students were able to return to campus. We accommodated the new hybrid campus life as well, organizing our events online and offline.

To give all students the opportunity to network at the beginning of the semester, we hosted an orientation event online in September. We were able to build on the great work of the previous generations of Student Council: we again organized a peer mentoring system where second-year master's students could sign up to be a go-to person for new students. Furthermore, we revised the Student Guide to keep all information as up-to-date as possible for the upcoming academic year.

In October 22, we hosted the Students & Alumni Day in conjunction with Professor Nishizawa and the GraSPP Office in a hybrid form. It was great to get to talk with graduates from past years, and it became especially clear here that GraSPP is not only a place of learning but also functions beyond studies as a network all over the world.

To also fully embrace offline student life, we organized an in-person social event. During a beautiful weekend fall day, we all got together for a big picnic in Yoyogi Park. Furthermore, we hosted a movie night in the Student Lounge. To ring in the new year together, we held a games night, with board games as well as video games.

It is great to see the campus so alive again. We really enjoy the interaction with the students and plan to organize many networking events in the coming semester. In the semester break as well, we will continue to be available via social media, email, and on-site to answer students' questions.



Events organized this semester

GraSPP Alumni & Students Day 2022 Report

More than a hundred GraSPPers gathered for GraSPP Alumni & Students Day 2022 on the evening of Saturday, October 15, with its hybrid reunion mode enabling alumni participation from around the world. This report shares with the reader memorable moments for the alumni to rekindle friendships, reconnect with the school, and meet new people.



Following the hybrid plenary session

"1092 days. That's how long GraSPPers have had to wait since they were last able to interact face-to-face. While the innovative virtual events filled the void in the interim, GASD 2022 leveraged the best of both worlds. In-person attendees were able to meet and mingle personally, but the event did not shed the gains of recent years by incorporating alumni from around the world. This year marked a first with local gatherings abroad, from Delhi to Berlin and London. What a great event!"

Sandeep "San" Rajgopal, President, GraSPP Alumni Association (Class of 2015)

"GraSPP Tatsuoka-kai New Delhi Branch launched! I have been stationed in India since April 2021. Two Indian and two Japanese



↑ Japanese hybrid session ↓ English hybrid session



alumni here in New Delhi meet occasionally. On Homecoming Day, I hosted a gathering at my house, and we all participated online and connected to Tokyo. Anyone involved in GraSPP, please come and say hello whenever visiting New Delhi!"

Kunro Hino, former President, GraSPP Alumni Association (Class of 2013)

"I served as a coordinator for the Japanese sessions. We made it thanks to the participants' good response and the support of Morita-san, an alumni coordinator. I hope it is a good opportunity for everyone to interact with their peers and meet new people. I hope to pass on what I learned this time to next year's coordinators and to make GraSPP Alumni & Students Day even better in the future."

Tomokazu Sasaki, Student Council representative (first-year student in Economic Policy Program)

"Our Homecoming Day since 2007 celebrated its 16th anniversary this year. We had a hybrid offering for the first time this year following the two virtual gatherings during the past two years under COVID-19. Regardless of where they were, our alumni reunited with one another, enjoyed new encounters and reconnected with their alma mater. I can't wait for the next Homecoming Day to see you all. GraSPP Alumni & Students Day 2023 is scheduled for Saturday, October 21!"

Emi Kimura, GraSPP Alumni Desk



Attendees from Berlin and New Delhi



Students and alumni chatting session



Student Interview

No. 38

Yuma Endo

(Public Management Program / 2nd year)

— You're balancing both your job in corporate management with graduate school study.

After graduating, I worked for Google Japan, engaging in advertising consulting, search and analytics for small and medium-sized businesses. I had always wanted to start a company one day, so after about a year-and-a-half I left Google and set up my own company. Currently, our main line of business is providing marketing support to large companies, support for new businesses, and providing our own services. Although we are still a small company, with just four or five employees, we are now entering our ninth year in business. We are concentrating on recruitment activities and shifting our focus to management. I joined GraSPP in 2021 at the height of the pandemic, so I'm focusing on online lectures and concentrating my classes on two days a week, trying to make up the time that way, but it's quite a challenge.

— What prompted you to enroll at GraSPP?

One area that I consider to be part of my life's work is as an election-related writer. As we engage in election forecasting and election support activities, we have many opportunities to speak with mayors, governors, and other municipal leaders and politicians. These interactions made me think that I wanted to work more in the fields of non-profit and public policy in the future, so that's what prompted me to return to learning about government policy. It was also a time when due to the global pandemic there were extremely limited opportunities for new encounters, which is why I decided to enroll at GraSPP, because the idea of learning new and unfamiliar things really appealed to me.

— How has your student life been since enrolling at GraSPP?

Many of the teachers at GraSPP are well-known in their fields, the various programs are extremely interesting, and the classes are overall very interesting. I'm taking mostly classes in English, and the atmosphere in class is completely different from how it was when I was an undergraduate, which surprised me a little at first. There are many overseas students at GraSPP, and their commitment to participating in discussions is really very strong.

Seeing how they approached discussions stimulated me to get more involved and not to just stay quiet. Many of my classmates have a wealth of knowledge in various professional fields, so you always learn something in discussions, and they are also enjoyable. One thing I would have to say I regret is that I didn't have many opportunities to talk to or interact with my classmates, as most of the classes were online. I would like a few more friends, so I'm still looking to make some new ones! (laughs)

Although the schedule is tough, I will concentrate even harder this year and aim to graduate successfully!

— How do you plan on utilizing what you have learned at GraSPP in your work and life?

Thanks to my studies at GraSPP, the policy-making processes, which previously seemed nebulous and unclear, have been clarified and my degree of understanding has also improved. I've come to think that there is an interesting difference between being involved in politics at the practical level and being involved in politics as an academic discipline.

It can be quite difficult to connect business with public policy, but professional knowledge should be the key to being able to do this. My own strengths are in marketing and IT, so I will leverage those skills and take an approach that looks at public policy from a marketing perspective. Marketing concepts are important in everything I do, so I would like to do something that contributes to society while utilizing the expertise I possess.



Twenty years of “Development Studies”

Jin Sato / Professor (Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia)

A teacher can leave behind books and papers, but of their actual classes, nothing remains, except for perhaps vague recollections in the memories of students. It is unfair that no records of lectures remain when very often the teacher has put just as much effort into them as a book or paper. It was based on this somewhat self-serving logic that I decided to look back on the graduate course “Development Studies” that I have taught for the past 20 years.

The course is a series of classes that takes an interdisciplinary look at big questions, such as “What is development?” “What is a state?” or “What is poverty?” It’s what you might term the “first theory” of international development. I have focused particularly on Japan’s postwar development experiences, due to the fact that while many students focus on overseas, they do not know the details of Japan’s experiences. More than half of all class time is discussion based on an assigned reading list. Each reading list consists of about two papers, but the content is so dense that students require at least three-to-four hours of preparation time. The students submit their notes about the key points from the assigned reading lists and these notes are then reviewed and marked by fellow students following the class. Each time there is a person responsible for facilitating discussions who prepares questions for the class, but soon they find it not easy to set these questions clearly. If questions are well formulated this will help to focus discussion, but even if the questions are somewhat off the mark, this is enough to stimulate a rush of debate, and if there is a debate there will always be things to learn.

Teaching materials are not just academic papers and publications. I have come to also include press reports, novels and even films as materials. The reason is that fiction very often conveys more effectively the realities of the real world on the ground. Over the past 20 years of the course, 70% of the assigned reading has remained the same. Even if the same materials are used over and over again, you can still get a fresh perspective by re-reading them. That is the nature of classics. I have given preference to teaching materials that would challenge any preconceived notions students have about development. Omura Ryo’s *Mono iwanu noumin* [Silent Farmers], (Iwanami Shinsho), and E. F. Schumacher’s *Small is Beautiful* (Kodansha Gakujutsu Bunko) are standard texts.

It tended to be half of the auditing students from the Graduate School of Frontier Sciences and the other half from GraSPP, which has been interesting to witness. While the Frontier Sciences students are very often fieldwork oriented and used to being out in the field, the GraSPP students are more focused on theory and policy. It is very stimulating to hear the debate among students from these different academic backgrounds and the post-class lunches have also helped to further invigorate debate.

With the increasing specialization and segmentation at universities, the field of development has also been subdivided into areas such as economics, political science, and sociology. In my classes, almost as an antidote to such segmentation, I have placed emphasis on the students’ ability to draw on diverse perspectives and to set problems themselves, rather than solving a given problem. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all the teaching assistants over the years who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to give so generously of their time and effort. Thank you.



Lunch meeting following the final lecture



Enkai with course students

TOPICS

The application guidelines for the “Economic Security and Corporate Risk Management Special Lecture” program for working adults starting in May 2023 have been released.

<https://www.pp.u-tokyo.ac.jp/cregg/program/special/guideline.html>

Application deadline: May 9, 2023 (Monday) 17:00

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Editor’s Postscript

Due to the spread of COVID-19, Students were forced to take online classes for more than two years. Currently, almost all international students are in Japan. Face-to-face classes and student exchanges are increasing, and the campus is gradually becoming more lively. Many people are probably aware that while online convenience has increased, physical distance creates psychological distance between people. From this spring, I hope that there will be more days when I can actually see the smiles of students and faculty members. (Editor)

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