

Recommendations

VERONICA ONOREVOLE

U.S.-JAPAN HIGHER EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT STUDY (USJP HEES)

These recommendations are part of a larger study by the American Council on Education (ACE) . These recommendations and the accompanying live, interactive database, real-time analysis, case studies, fact sheets, and infographics provide a foundation to capture U.S.-Japan higher education institutional partnership activities.

The goals of USJP HEES are to improve mutual understanding and cooperation within the U.S.-Japan higher education community and to capitalize on its strengths within the global higher education context.

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Visit www.acenet.edu/usjp-hees to learn more about the project.

The U.S.-Japan Higher Education Engagement Study (USJP HEES) has provided insights on various partnership activities occurring between U.S. and Japanese higher education institutions. Although this was an exploratory study, confidence in the generalizability of the findings is enhanced by the high level of consistency in the findings, which were obtained using multiple methods, and the notable consensus among interviewed U.S. and Japanese higher education stakeholders.

The predominant partnership activities identified should not be considered as discrete but as overlapping and complementary issues. They also embody a range of subthemes that represent topics for future research and/or intervention.

The following recommendations are based on the study's findings with consideration toward ways to strengthen bilateral and global higher education engagement for colleges and universities, policymakers, businesses, and other stakeholders.

Student Exchange

High-Impact Student Experiences

Student exchange and study abroad programs that incorporate applied global learning opportunities—such as project-based group activities, service learning, student-faculty research, peer mentoring, and internships—can positively affect student confidence and competence in becoming successful change agents across a wide range of settings, both locally and globally.

U.S. and Japanese partner institutions with existing student exchange and study abroad programs should work together to incorporate applied global learning opportunities regardless of the length and level of study of their program. A growing body of research indicates that short-term exchange and study abroad programs, if carefully planned and designed, can achieve high-impact student learning, growth, and development.

Greater Inclusivity of Diverse Institution Types

While the volume of existing student exchange and study abroad partnership agreements between higher education institutions in the United States and Japan is impressive, gaps in sustainability, access, inclusion, and reciprocity are ongoing within both countries. In the United States, the study's data show there are significantly few formalized Japanese partnerships happening with U.S. community colleges, minority serving institutions, and women's colleges. In Japan, there is a considerably low number of national and public universities engaged with student exchange programs with the U.S.

To solve shared global problems, the United States and Japan urgently need to more fully bring to the table a diversity of experiences and perspectives. America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) have made deeply impactful and widely exosystemic contributions to the economy in the United States, and are particularly poised to create comprehensive and interconnected collaborative learning, resource, and student exchange networks. Moreover, they play a key role in identifying higher education's potential to address education and social equity gaps beyond the institutional partnership.

Given both the rising number of Japanese students studying at U.S. community colleges and, conversely, the desire to increase the number of American students studying in Japan, investments in U.S. community college exchange programs will improve student success and contribute to growing a stronger, more prosperous, and more inclusive middle class for both countries.

Continuing the Realignment of Academic Calendars

Further advancement with aligning academic calendars will make it more possible for both Japanese and American students to study abroad in the summer and then re-enroll in their home institution in the fall. Many major Japanese universities have adjusted their student exchange programs with their U.S. partner, but participation numbers in these programs is still an ongoing concern.

Transfer Articulation Agreements

A greater attention to resource sharing between U.S. and Japan institutions with existing student exchanges will allow for an increased number of reciprocal international transfer articulation agreements. Having more transferability will provide a vehicle for more targeted international student recruitment as well as help students by allowing seamless transfers of course credits from their exchange experience.

FACULTY EXCHANGE

Supporting Innovative Teaching and Learning Exchange

Many colleges and universities in the U.S. and Japan rely heavily on faculty initiative to nurture and sustain teaching and learning improvement. Evidence-based faculty development approaches that are student-centered and support active, intercultural learning can help close the gap between internationalized teaching and research. However, few faculty receive course release time or financial incentives to pursue professional development for their teaching.

As the diversity of students enrolled at U.S. and Japanese higher education institutions intensifies, both U.S. and Japanese partner institutions should create faculty training and development opportunities, particularly in terms of working with—and ensuring the success of—students of varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

To develop a strong financial foundation from which to support collaborative faculty exchanges between the U.S. and Japan, institutional leaders should assess current funding sources, types, and allocations that support intercultural teaching and learning initiatives. Providing small monetary compensation, creating recognition campaigns, tying promotion and tenure packets, and requiring graduate coursework on teaching methods are all examples of good practices that are shared by the global higher education community to foster a culture of sustainable collaborative teaching and learning on campus as well as with global partners.

RESEARCH

Lowering Barriers on Private Sector Investments in Research

The U.S. and Japanese government's bilateral Science and Technology Agreement was last updated in 1988 and will expire in 2024. Both governments should consider the higher education sector's access to public and private sector research and development investments in new energy technologies, supercomputing, and critical materials technologies. There is currently a significant imbalance, particularly in U.S. private sector investment in Japan higher education consortiums, which should be considered for future bilateral government discussions on science and technology priorities. These discussions should include leadership from higher education and the business sector to strengthen the collaborative infrastructure in select strategic areas.

Enhancing Virtual Research Collaboration

Virtual research environments (VRE) and digital collaborative platforms enable collaboration across continents, time zones, and disciplines. VRE and digital collaboration technology tools can also allow international scholars to overcome many of the traditional barriers that have hindered them from physically taking on a research position or collaboration with a colleague at an overseas university. These tools make more valuable research contributions possible and increase the depth and diversity of research perspectives held within an array of academic disciplines. U.S. and Japanese partner institutions should consider further investments in technology tools that build on developing international and cross-disciplinary consortia capabilities to better collaborate, share, and publish. Fostering national and international collaborative research is increasingly becoming a priority for both U.S. and Japan's government funding agencies.

Greater Visibility of Research Programs

Many of the U.S. and Japanese collaborative research programs identified in the study were difficult to find on both U.S. and Japanese university websites. In many cases, they were often only anecdotally referenced in university news media releases. Institutions that produce public information about their international collaborative research agreements that tie together the university partnership, faculty, and student perspectives have a better chance of attracting and selecting international faculty and graduate students for their PhD or postdoctoral programs.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Promote a Culture of Mutual Flexibility

Universities and colleges should have the flexibility to pursue different approaches to incorporating experiential learning and learn from what works best. Initiatives between U.S.-Japan partners should be about testing out new ideas. Different approaches should be encouraged. Allowing colleges, universities, and faculties to have their own designated staff to coordinate their curricula with the curricula of partner institutions to integrate experiential learning into study and research exchange programs is important and will greatly enhance both the process and outcomes.

Timing of Internship Programs

The most valuable time for both U.S. and Japanese students to complete an internship is during the second semester of their junior year, the following summer, or the first semester of senior year. By this point, students already have studied their concentrations or major disciplines in depth, including studying at an intermediate/advanced level of Japanese or English languages, and are ready to apply what they have learned in real-world settings. Although students benefit most from study abroad experiences that last for a semester or more, not all students can be away for that long. Therefore, creating internship abroad opportunities that are shorter and delivered during summer months from mid-May through June may be ideal for rising sophomores and juniors.

Expanding Student Credentials

U.S. and Japanese partner institutions should consider accrediting international internship experiences as a component of their degree programs or as an employability credential (badge) that purports to validate smaller units of learning, such as global competency-based education. These interoperable learning records would interweave global experiential learning programs as part of student coursework, providing a more realistic representation and recognition of student accomplishments and skills both on- and off-campus.

Build on Public-Private Partnerships

Higher education and businesses benefit from having a common desire for an educated and skilled populace, world-class infrastructure, and a commitment to research and innovation. Collaborating with trans-multinational private sectors can build the capacities of universities and colleges to expand and innovate curricular and extracurricular programs.

Revisiting U.S.-Japan Visa Policies

Both the U.S. and Japanese government should consider new regulations that would make it possible for visiting Japanese and American foreign nationals, many of whom are recent graduates from universities, to more easily live and work in each other's host country if they can raise funds to start new companies. For example, a solution may be an entrepreneurial visa that permits immigrants to remain temporarily in the country on an annual basis if they have raised enough seed capital to launch a new company and to remain permanently if the company succeeds.

DEGREE PROGRAMS

Tuition Parity

Both U.S. and Japanese partner institutions should consider greater tuition parity in their reciprocal programs and make it known to prospective students up front on their program websites. For dual degree programs, both partner institutions should try to ensure equitable tuition and scholarship opportunities when significant disparities exist between each partner institution's annual tuition rates.

Curriculum Development

U.S. and Japanese higher education partners should incorporate a curriculum development program to provide faculty with professional development opportunities to integrate global competencies in courses accredited for the dual and joint degree programs.

Blended Learning Models

U.S. higher education institutions should strongly consider including more online learning or blended course delivery models for fulfilling general education requirements of undergraduate dual degree programs that inbound Japanese/international students could take in advance of the in-person study component of programs.

Creating a Value Proposition

Increase coordination between U.S.-Japan partner institutions to generate more visible promotion campaigns that articulate the value of international degrees for workforce development. Highlight alumni of dual and joint degree programs and their career paths, employers of alumni, etc. to help incentivize faculty and students to better realize the benefits of dual and joint degree programs.