



Manchester says ‘Kon’ichiwa’ to Visitors from Japan

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Staff Writer

From Feb 8–12, five students of Hokusei Gakuen University in Japan visited the Manchester campus as part of the Bilateral Exchange Program between the two schools.

While on their three-month long spring break, senior Ayaka Fujiwara, junior Nanako Nakamura, senior Natsumi Tamate, senior Sachiho Iikawa, and junior Mone Sakata were accompanied by Professor Toru Kataoka of Hokusei Gakuen University on a trip to Manchester University.

On their final day in North Manchester, Kataoka gave a presentation about the history of the Manchester and Hokusei Gakuen exchange program and gave additional information to students who expressed interest in studying abroad in Japan.

The two schools have been in collaboration since 1988 when Dr. Allen Deter, former Manchester University president, was searching for a university in Japan to become sister schools with. This is when he met the former president of Hokusei Gakuen, Dr. Nobuo Dobashi, who studied peace studies. The two realized they had a connection through a mutual colleague, Dr. Phillip West, who was Deeter’s student and Dobashi’s friend from International Christian University in Tokyo.

Though this incidental connection certainly helped the relationship between the two schools, Kataoka ultimately believes that it was their shared appreciation of peace that brought the universities together. “The peace studies connection is what made this possible,” he says.

Along with Manchester, Hokusei Gakuen has partnered with 17 schools, including colleges and universities located in China, Switzerland,

South Korea, the United Kingdom and many more countries. Founded in 1965, their International Program continues to grow, as Hokusei Gakuen is working to expand the opportunity to schools in many more countries.

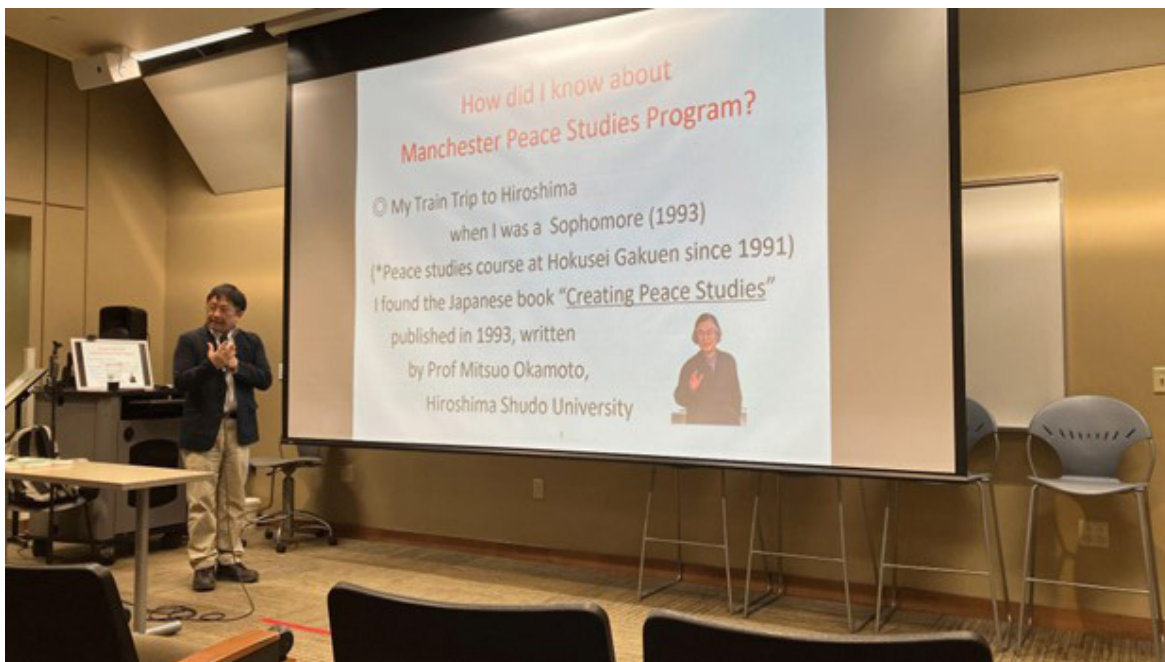
After detailing Hokusei Gakuen’s history with Manchester, Kataoka shared his own connection to the university. As a student of Hokusei Gakuen, Kataoka studied abroad at Manchester, from January to December 1995. Kataoka was inspired to travel to Manchester for its peace studies program. He still remembers the basement of Schwalm where he stayed and his work as a dishwasher at the Union (now renamed Haist Commons).

Kataoka’s trip to Manchester had a huge impact on him. “It changed my life,” he said.

Kataoka was inspired to continue his education in peace studies following his stay in Manchester. After graduating from Hokusei Gakuen, he attended the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom before returning to his alma mater as a professor. He is currently a department chair and professor of education and peace studies as well as working in the departments of psychology and applied communication. Kataoka now shares his life-changing experience with others by helping students find a way to go on their own adventure.

In the fall and spring semesters, two Manchester students are admitted into the Bilateral Exchange Program with Hokusei Gakuen, located in Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan’s fourth largest city. The stays are three months each—lasting from September to December in the fall and April to July in the spring.

Any student is eligible to attend regardless of their mastery of Japanese. Hoku-



SHARING PEACE Professor Toru Kataoka gives a presentation on the Bilateral Exchange Program on Feb. 12. The program is open to two Manchester students in both the fall and spring semesters. Photo provided by Megan Pierce.



JUMP FOR JOY The students of Hokusei Gakuen University pose in front of Cordier Auditorium. The five visited the Manchester University campus during their spring break. Photo by Mone Sakata.

sei offers a variety of Japanese courses for students of all ability levels “We have six levels of classes,” explains Kataoka. “Level one is for beginners, and level six is the advanced class.” Daniel Barbre and Adrian Allen are Manchester students who studied abroad at Hokusei Gakuen during the Fall 2023 semester. They shared details about their time living in Japan. “We knew barely any Japanese, we could say, like, two phrases,” says Barbre. “But a lot of the international students already speak English. And if you take the intensive Japanese

course, it’s very easy to pick up on everything.”

“Now, we can hold a basic conversation for a solid 20 minutes or so,” adds Allen. Students will either stay in a student dormitory—called a kirari— or participate in a homestay, where they live with a Japanese host family. Courses consist of studies of Japanese language, economy and history, as well as major-related classes and electives. Credits earned abroad can be transferred to Manchester.

Dr. Pamela Haynes, assistant dean of Academic Affairs, addresses reservations students may have about studying abroad.

“A lot of times for students, the main concern is cost,” she says. “But right now, to go to Hokusei, you would be paying what you would here for tuition.”

Haynes explains that the living expenses are similar to those for Manchester. “Room and board is the same as it is for a double in Garver,” she says. “Anything you’re getting in aid and outside scholarships apply to that too.”

The only additional fees students will need to cover are plane tickets and any other amenities.

If more financial aid is needed, study away scholarships are also available to help alleviate some of the costs. Haynes plans to open applications by the end of February, and the winners will be chosen in April.

Following Kataoka’s presentation, the five students of Hokusei Gakuen shared their experiences traveling and staying in America.

Upon their arrival at Manchester, their first impressions were quite positive. “The culture here is so beautiful,” Fujiwara says. “Everyone is friendly.”

However, they did notice some differences in the way that people interact with each other, such as greetings. “In

Japan, when people meet, they hug,” Iikawa says. “But here they say ‘hi,’ no hug.”

Although the weather was quite chilly, the students had the chance to explore the campus as well as the town of North Manchester. With majors running from education to communication studies and psychology, the group worked on their projects while on their visit. In addition to rooming in Oakwood Hall, they observed Manchester University classes, visited the Manchester Elementary School, and enjoyed American cuisine. “Good food,” Fujiwara says. “Hamburgers, French fries, I loved it all.”

After her visit to American schools, Sakata points out the way classes are run differs from what she is used to. “The people here have opinions and share them,” she says. “In Japanese school, when you have an opinion, you don’t say it. It’s a different education system.”

On Feb. 13, the Hokusei Gakuen students and Kataoka left at 4 a.m. for their long journey back to Sapporo. After commuting to the Fort Wayne International Airport, the group took connecting flights to Atlanta, then Toronto and Tokyo before finally landing in Sapporo. “I’ll be watching a lot of videos on the way!” Sakata says. When asked about the possibility of returning to the United States, the group said they would, if ever given the chance. Fujiwara even expressed that she would come back to Manchester. “It’s so nice here,” she says. “Friendly people.”

This March, Fujiwara, Tamate and Iikawa will graduate while Nakamura and Sakata will return to classes at the end of Hokusei Gakuen’s spring break in April.



LOCAL SIGHT SEEING The students of Hokusei Gakuen University tour the town of North Manchester. Their visit to the United States, a part of their school’s International Education Program, lasted from Feb. 8–12. Photo by Mone Sakata.