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Joel Hensley

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Study Abroad Programs at Miyazaki Prefectural Nursing University



Joel Hensley
Miyazaki Prefectural Nursing University
joel@mpu.ac.jp

Here at Miyazaki Prefectural Nursing University (MPNU), where we have a single Department of Nursing and only 400 students, there are two types of short-term study abroad programs organized by our International Exchange Committee: a one-week group program hosted, at least in part, by partner institutions, and an individual several-weekscholarship program.

Group Programs

Participation in each group varies by year, and has ranged between three and 20 students (plus an accompanying faculty member). Usually, though, there are around 10 students per program. All the programs include MPNU students giving a presentation about Japan, Miyazaki, and our university, as well as a cultural exchange or performance, such as a traditional dance. These programs can also be used as elective credits toward foreign language courses. Regardless of whether students choose to use the trip as a credit (most do), there are a series of classes to help them prepare for the program. Then, while students are abroad, we ask them to note any instance in which they perceive a

cultural difference or are left with an impression from some experience. Groups discuss these notes with the accompanying faculty member while abroad, and then use them upon returning as a basis for writing an individual report and making a group poster about their experience. The posters are then put up in the hallway outside the Language Lab throughout the school year as well as displayed as part of the school festival. However, since none of the programs are exactly alike, I will introduce each in turn.

Chiang Mai, Thailand

Our longest-running and most successful program is an exchange with the Chiang Mai University (CMU) Faculty of Nursing in Thailand. This is a reciprocal exchange, and we usually host a group of CMU students for a week at the end of May.

While at MPNU, the Thai students stay with student volunteer hosts and attend lectures on the national health care system, nursing education, and the labs/practice courses at MPNU. We also take them on site visits to hospitals, health care facilities, and community centers. Then in late August a group of MPNU students are hosted by CMU, where the program events run similarly.

One major difference is that our MPNU students stay in a dormitory on the CMU campus while in Thailand, as opposed to being hosted by CMU students. This is because many of the CMU nursing students live in campus housing and do not

have the space to accommodate guests. Both of these programs usually run from weekend to weekend, with most of the academic and nursing content held Monday through Friday. Student exchanges and cultural activities usually take place in the evenings and on the weekends, including student exchange parties and sightseeing.

What helps make this program so successful is the overlap between MPNU students who host CMU guests in May, and then visit Chiang Mai themselves in August; when the MPNU group arrives in Chiang Mai, a large part of the group already knows their Thai hosts, some of whom greet the MPNU group at the airport. This reunion of sorts allows the week to begin with a group cohesion already in place and allows the students to go out and experience the culture with their Thai counterparts from day one. This program typically costs students around ¥110,000.

South Korea

Another increasingly popular program is a visit to South Korea in two parts. While the schedule varies from year to year, this year's program will begin with an exchange at Chosun Nursing College (CNC) in Gwangju, with which we also have a reciprocal program (they will send a group to Miyazaki in December). Our MPNU students will be visiting CNC in the first part of a week in late August/early September, learning about the nursing program there over two days. For the

second part of the week, our students travel to Seoul, where they participate in a homestay with Korean host families. This latter part is much more culturally-focused and includes a visit to the Demilitarized Zone, as well as independent days, which students plan with the aid of teachers and program organizers. For these days, we recommend students visit sites related to traditional medicine, such as local markets selling herbal remedies. Sometimes host families join students on these independent excursions as well. This program also usually costs students about ¥110,000.

San Jose, California

We also send a group annually to San Jose, California, and, while the order varies, this program usually includes a visit to the nursing and/or Japanese program at San Jose State University, cultural exchange with the Japanese language program at a local high school, and volunteering at a retirement home for Japanese Americans. This program is entirely homestay-based, and also includes "host family days" at the beginning and end of the week. As travel to America is more expensive, this program usually costs students about ¥280,000.

Jakarta, Indonesia

This year, a newly established program will begin in Jakarta, Indonesia, organized by a former MPNU faculty member currently working at a hospital there which also dispatches Indonesian nurses to Japan. It is



shaping up to be a mix of history, culture, and nursing study. Our students will visit the Museum Batik Danar Hadi, and Mie Gakuen to learn about Indonesia's religious and cultural history, as well as the Japanese people who remained in Jakarta after World War II. Interested students will also take an optional tour to Yogyakarta and learn about Indonesia's complex religious history. There will be a cultural exchange with students at the foreign language university STBA LIA. Nursing study will include learning about the nursing licensure requirements in Indonesia and visiting STIKES IMC Bintaro, a nursing university, Kaiko-kai Clinic Senayan, part of a Japan-based hospital group, and a senior club, as well as participating in community activities organized by a local health center. The final cost for this program has not yet been finalized, but we estimate it will cost students around ¥100,000.

Individual Scholarship Program

The second type of study abroad program at MPNU is an individual scholarship-based research trip. Students apply for this

program individually by working one-on-one with a faculty member (usually an English teacher who is also a member of the International Exchange Committee) to devise a clear purpose for their trip related to their nursing study as well as a detailed plan as to how they will go about achieving that purpose. They then write an essay in English detailing the same. Typically, four or five students initially express interest in the program, with two or three ultimately completing the plan and essay. That being the case, usually two students are chosen by the International Exchange Committee to be awarded the scholarship, of which there is a total of ¥500,000 available to be allotted according to the students' plans, lengths of trip, and destinations. Students often start the application process with only a general idea of where they would like to go or what they want to research, for instance, wanting to learn about the universal health care system in a Scandinavian country or volunteering in a children's home. Students conduct research and formulate their plans during the regular semester, so it can take weeks or months for them to finalize a plan,

including travel arrangements, lodging (sometimes homestays), appointments for interviews, permission to visit sites, etc. In recent years, students have traveled to Finland, Hungary, New Zealand, America, and Nepal for a variety of research purposes including maternity health care, preschool education and day care facilities, and a home for children born with HIV.

My Impressions

We are a small university, but working hard to provide study abroad opportunities for any and all students that might be interested. Personally, as I am still relatively new to the university, I have only accompanied one study abroad trip, which I did last year to Chiang Mai, Thailand. My perspective as an English teacher is different than that of a faculty member specialized in nursing, of course, but I saw a marked increase in the interest and attitudes of the students toward intercultural communication and the possibility of interacting with patients from different cultures in the future. Our students are not English majors, so approaching communication with a positive attitude is paramount, especially when dealing with someone from another culture. In that regard, even one-week study abroad programs can have quite an impact.