

Clemson

and the

World

Engaging Japan 1940-2024



Engaging Japan 1940-2024

A more complete account of the events outlined here can be found [here](#).



1981

1980s-90s: Trade competition between United States and Japan peaks.

1981-1982: Clemson hosts a Japanese film series (*The Tiger*).

1982-2005: Yuji Kishimoto serves as Director of [Southeast US-Japan Architectural Exchange](#) (SUJAE).

Dec. 1982: Clemson football defeats Wake Forest University 21-17 at Mirage Bowl in Tokyo, Japan.



1985: The **Southeastern Association of Teachers of Japanese** (SEATJ) established, in part by Toshiko Kishimoto.

1987

1987: Decision to offer intensive courses in Japanese taught by Toshiko Kishimoto beginning 1988 announced (*Clemlang*, Fall 1987 and Spring 1988).

1987

1987-88: Two groups from Japan visit to discuss establishing a Clemson branch campus in Japan and a joint research endeavor in biochemistry.



Participants from Japan attended the 1987-88 session of **Clemson's annual Nonwoven Fabrics Forum**, marking the first time in its 19-year history that the event included non-western nations.

1988: Toshiko Kishimoto joins Clemson faculty to teach Japanese language, having previously taught at the Japanese school in Atlanta, Furman University, and the University of South Carolina Upstate.



1988

1988: Toshiko Kishimoto presents an award at the first **Japanese Speech Contest** at the Consulate of Japan in Atlanta that October; Clemson students Kim Brown and Renee Green competed (*Clemlang*, Fall 1988)



1988: Japan-America Association of South Carolina (JAASC) forms to serve large influx of Japanese-owned businesses into South Carolina.

1989

1989: State of South Carolina establishes an office in Tokyo to attract Japanese investment.



1989: **Greenville Area Japanese Saturday School** established to serve families of Japanese businesses. Toshiko Kishimoto serves as its principal until 2003.

1989: Yuji Kishimoto receives Governor's Economic Development Ambassador Award from Governor Campbell of South Carolina.

1990: **FujiFilm Corporation** donates \$500,000 establishing an endowment that has since supported Clemson students' studies abroad in Japan, including the BioEngineering Summer Study Abroad Program.



1990

1992

1992: Clemson football defeats Duke University 33-21 in Coca Cola Classic in Tokyo.



1995: **Emperor and Empress of Japan** visit Charleston, SC and Japanese Embassy in Washington, DC. Yuji and Toshiko Kishimoto are selected to meet them.

1996: Yuji Kishimoto is named special assistant to the Clemson University president for U.S.-Japan relations.

1996: National Science Foundation selects Christopher Evans, a master's candidate in entomology at Clemson, to participate in its summer institute in Japan.

1996

1996: **U.S.-Japan Alliance at Clemson** (UJAC) forms to develop relationships between Clemson and Japanese-owned Upstate businesses.



1998: Clemson President Curris and university faculty visit Japan on a week-long cross-cultural exchange led by Yuji Kishimoto.

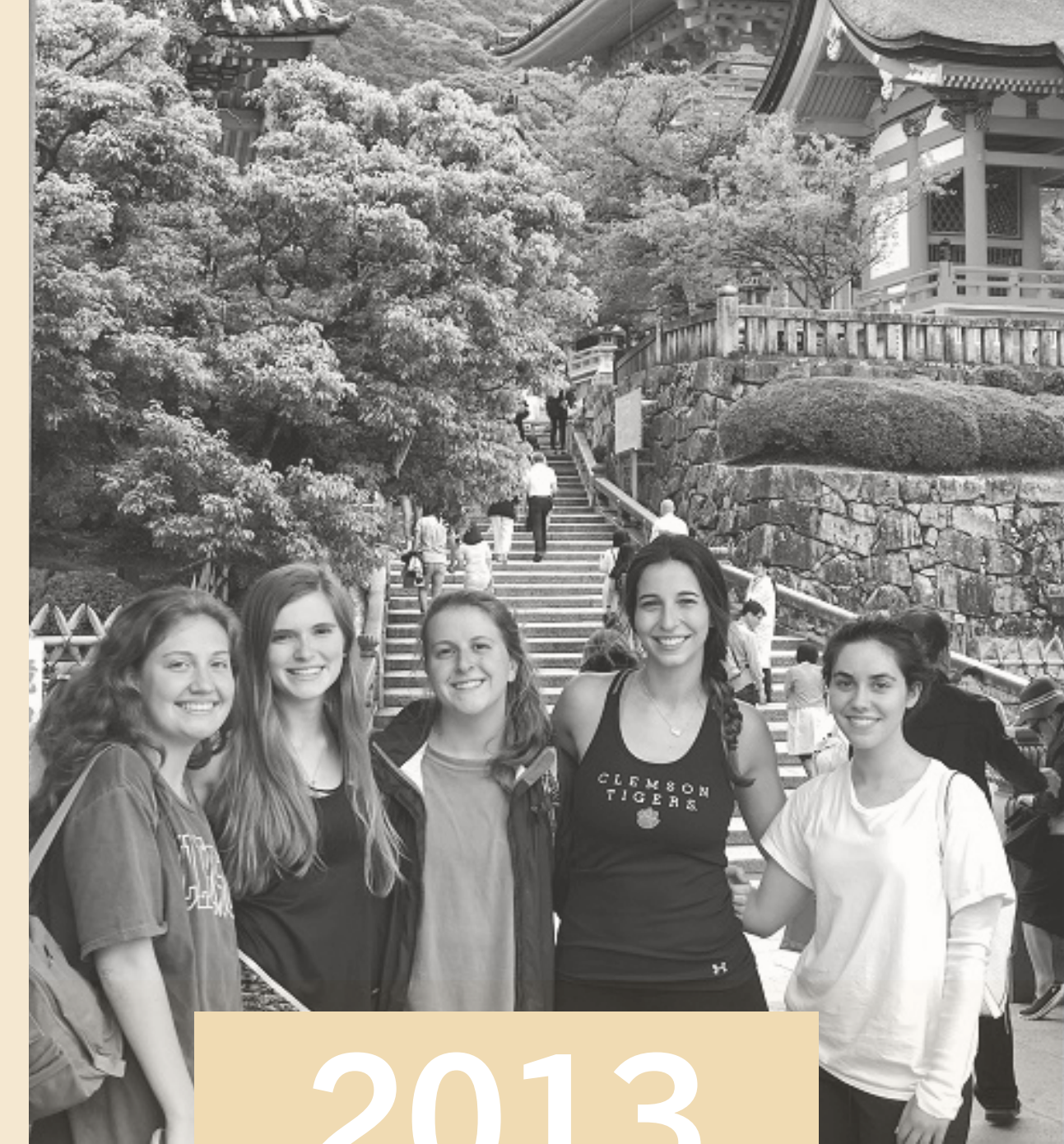
2004: Toshiko Kishimoto establishes **Bilingual Forum for Mothers of Bilingual Kids**.

2008: Creative Inquiry class about US-Japan economic relations established by Toshiko Kishimoto (*The Clemson Polyglot*).

2009: Clemson hosts Dr. Tesuji Atsuji of Kyoto University for presentation on the ancient language of Kanji organized by Yuji Kishimoto (*The Tiger*, Oct 30, 2009).

2012: Clemson hosts a Japanese teachers' conference for the third time (*The Clemson Polyglot*).

2012: Toshiko Kishimoto receives the National Scholars Award of Distinction and takes two Clemson students to Japan to present their research



2013

2013: Four undergraduates travel to Japan for the first iteration of the **BioEngineering Summer Research Program** led by Dr. Jiro Nagatomi in partnership with universities in Osaka, Tokyo, and Nagoya and supported in part by the FujiFilm grant.

2014: Clemson selected to participate in the [Kakehashi Project](#), a youth exchange program of Fulbright Japan (*The Clemson Polyglot*).

2016: Clemson and Kansai University initiate virtual exchange programs.



In rare honor, Fulbright Japan selects Clemson for second iteration of Kakehashi Project. 23 students and several faculty participate.

2010: Four Clemson students participate in **20th Annual Japanese Speech Contest** hosted by Japan-America Society of Georgia, Consulate General of Japan in Atlanta, and Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Georgia.



April 2015 & 2018: Clemson hosts
Japan-U.S. Biomaterials Symposium
organized by Jiro Nagatomi.

2017

2017: Yuji Kishimoto is
awarded the **Order of the
Sacred Treasure, Gold
Rays Medal** by the Emperor
of Japan in ceremony at the
Royal Palace in Tokyo.



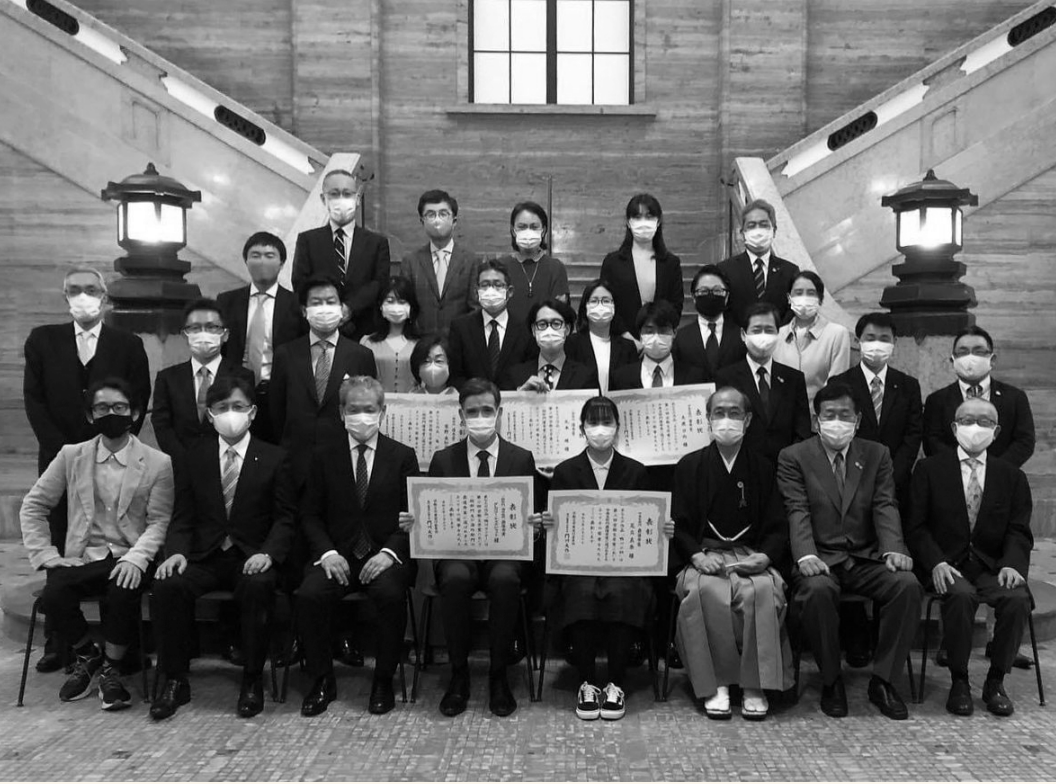
2018

2018: Toshiko Kishimoto is
awarded the **Order of the
Sacred Treasure, Gold and
Silver Rays Medal** by the
Emperor of Japan in a
ceremony at the Royal
Palace in Tokyo.



March 2020: Clemson
recalls students from
study abroad in Japan
in response to Covid-19
pandemic. Arrangements
are made for students to
complete their academic
programs virtually.

Summers 2020- 2023:
BioEngineering Summer
Research Program remains
on hiatus for two years due
to cessation of travel during
the COVID 19 pandemic.
Resuming in Summer 2023
, participants were required
to mask while in Japan and
comply with intensified
visa rules due to continued
pandemic.



2020

April 2022: Alumni and award-
winning novelist Gregory
Khehrnejat lectures to Japanese
language and literature students
entitled, “Writing Between
Languages: Transnational
Currents in Contemporary
Japanese Literature.”

Summer 2023: Study
Abroad programs in
Japan resume with 39
participants, surpassing all
previous year enrollments.

Fall 2023: Representatives
of the Japanese Consulate
in Atlanta visit Clemson to
discuss potential academic
collaborations and
exchanges.

2023

Fall 2023: Ann Marie
Alexander, Assistant Vice
President for Strategic
Corporate Partnerships
represented Clemson at
the Southeastern US Japan
Association meetings in
Tokyo connecting with
many of Clemson’s valued
Japanese corporate
partners.



Yuji and Toshiko Kishimoto

The arrival of Yuji and Toshiko Kishimoto in 1981 was a major turning point for Clemson. Together the Kishimotos built relationships that span academia, industry, states and local communities. They have influenced a generation, or two, of Clemson alumni - a network that continues to thrive. Yuji, renowned in architecture, established numerous partnerships with Japanese universities, assisted the state in the recruitment of Japanese foreign investment and secured substantial scholarship funding. Toshiko founded the Japanese language program at Clemson and played a pivotal role in establishing the Greenville Area Japanese Saturday School. Together, the Kishimotos have left a lasting legacy of cultural and economic collaboration between Japan and Clemson University.

Yuji Kishimoto, Professor of Architecture, was the catalyst for many of Clemson's partnerships with Japanese universities and businesses.

Served as special assistant to the Clemson University president for U.S.-Japan relations, leading delegations and establishing a network for bilateral collaboration.

Secured \$500k gift from FujiFilm foundation to support student travel and study in Japan.

Awarded the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Gold Rays Medal by the Emperor of Japan in a ceremony at the Royal Palace in Tokyo.

Served as special assistant to the Clemson University president for U.S.-Japan relations, leading delegations and establishing a network for bilateral collaboration.

Chaired the Japan Liaison Committee of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.



Toshiko Kishimoto, Instructor of Japanese Language, was a pioneer in Japanese language instruction at Clemson and across the South East.

Awarded the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Gold and Silver Rays Medal by the Emperor of Japan in a ceremony at the Royal Palace in Tokyo.

Established Clemson's Japanese language curriculum, including the first intensive courses in 1988.

Published on language pedagogy, bilingualism among Japanese Children in the U.S. and curriculum development.

Received the Excellence Award in Teaching by Clemson University Student Government in 2008 and the National Scholars Award of Distinction.

Recognized by the Consulate General of Japan in Atlanta for her contribution to US-Japan relations, especially as founder and principal of the Japanese Saturday School in Greenville, SC.



The Kishimotos were selected to meet the Emperor and Empress of Japan during a state visit to Charleston, SC and the Japanese Embassy in Washington, DC.

An Expanding Network of Japanese Language Alumni



Many students have passed through Clemson's Japanese language program since its establishment in 1987. Some majored or minored in Japanese, others in Language and International Business with an emphasis in Japanese. And, of course, some took Japanese for other personal or professional reasons. It's impossible to say where they all are today. But we do know what many of them went on to do and where. As the list below shows, this is a diverse network of alumni reaching from Tokyo to Clemson, in a full range of careers.

Teaching English in Japan

The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET) is a competitive fellowship program for US citizens to live and teach English in Japanese Schools, is a common first stop after graduation. Clemson alumni that have participated in JET include:

Regina Arlauckas '90, *English and Journalism*

Gregory Khezrnejat '07, *BA English & Computer Science, Minor in Japanese*

Meredith O'Toole '13, *BA English Literature*

Jeffrey Logan Hines '22, *Japanese Language*

Jaison Carl '22, *BS Biochemistry, Minor in Japanese*

Chris Shumard '23, *MA History, JET*

Matthew Corbett '23, *Language and International Trade*

Graduate Studies and Employment in Japan

Gregory Kheznejat '07 earned a Ph.D. in Japanese Literature from Hosei University and is now professor at Doshisha University and winner of the Kyoto Literature Award for his Japanese novel "Kamogawa Runner."

Justin Prescott '09, Economics and Japanese, received his MBA from Nanyang-Waseda and has worked for Ernst and Young in Japan, Indonesia, and Singapore.

Samuel Green '18, now works for Synnex Japan in Tokyo.

Alex Young '18, MFA, is an environment artist at Coyote 3DCG Studios in Tokyo

Emily Richards, '18 BA Japanese Language, studied in the Japan in Asia Cultural Studies Graduate Program Nagoya University.

Rebecca Hough '20 went on to work at Kinder Kids in Osaka.

Kevin Burgess '21, Language and International Business, now teaches for ALTIA in Japan.

Applying Language and Culture Expertise in US Employment

Paul Wright '09 Language and International Trade, has worked Meiji, Orihiro and Synnex.

Kalon Davis, '14 Japanese Language and Literature, a former Clemson athlete is now the director of esports at Providence Day School

Kayla Murdaugh, '14 Chemical Engineering, is the co-chair of the Southeast US Japan Association and works for NICCA USA where she regularly uses her Japanese language.

Marshall Epps '23, Microbiology, employed by NOVA

Jay Klugo, Entrepreneur, credits the Japanese community in Clemson and his language training in helping him open 356 Sushi in Clemson and Sole Sushi Grill in Seneca.



Visiting Scholars and Students

Japanese student enrollment at US universities grew steadily after World War II reaching close to 50,000 students in 1997, but then plateaued alongside the Japanese economy. By 2019 fewer than 20,000 were studying in the US. Nonetheless, every year since 2000, Japan has been one of the top ten leading countries of origin for international students studying in the US and for Japanese students, the US is the top study abroad destination. Clemson’s Japanese student and scholar population has always been modest. Between 2017 and 2023, Clemson hosted 11 undergraduate exchange students, 17 visiting scholars from Japan and fewer than 10 full degree seeking students, among them a few student athletes.



Ryuhei Azuma

Originally from Osaka, Ryuhei Azuma joined Clemson as a student athlete in 2020. Prior to coming to Clemson he had earned significant recognition in the world of Tennis— in July of 2019, he won the ITF J2 in China, qualifying him for participation in both the Australia and US Open Junior Championships. At Clemson, his prowess on the court earned him ACC Doubles Team of the Week in 2022, ACC Player of the Week in January of 2023, and 2024 Third-Team All-ACC. Graduating in the spring of 2024, Azuma’s journey exemplifies determination, resilience, and a commitment to excellence in his sport.

Yuki Kihara

Currently associate director of the Pam Hendrix Center for Education Abroad at Clemson, Yuki Kihara came to Clemson as a visiting student in 2008 while pursuing a master’s degree in international education from the School for International Training. While studying at Clemson she taught Japanese language and worked as a Cultural Resident Assistant. She later served as a Senior Coordinator of International Education at Fukui University and Assistant Professor at the Tokyo Metropolitan University, only to find her way back to Clemson in 2016. Having now served in multiple roles within Global Engagement and completing her Doctorate in Higher Ed Leadership at Clemson, there is no doubt that Ms Kihara’s initial sojourn as a visiting student at Clemson has had a profound effect on her life and those of many of our students.

Yusuke Homma

Yusuke Homma completed a three-month research fellowship at Clemson in the Fall of 2023. Currently pursuing his master’s degree in polymer chemistry at Nagoya Institute of Technology in Japan, Yusuke’s research focuses on constructing nanocapsules for Drug Delivery Systems (DDS), with potential applications in cancer treatment. While at Clemson, Yusuke used image analysis to study the process of tactoid formation, achieving a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. Yusuke’s academic pursuits demonstrate a commitment to advancing polymer chemistry and biochemistry, with promising implications for therapeutic strategies and material science.



Shuhe Morita

Shuhe Morita earned a master’s degree in mathematics from Clemson in 2023 specializing in statistics at Clemson University. His master’s project focused on using mathematical models to estimate the likelihood of surpassing the world record in the Olympic 400m event. After completing his master’s degree, Shuhe returned to Japan and now works as a software engineer for Bosch, an automotive company. His experiences abroad have proven invaluable in navigating a multilingual work environment and have greatly contributed to his professional growth.



Summer Undergraduate Research In Japan

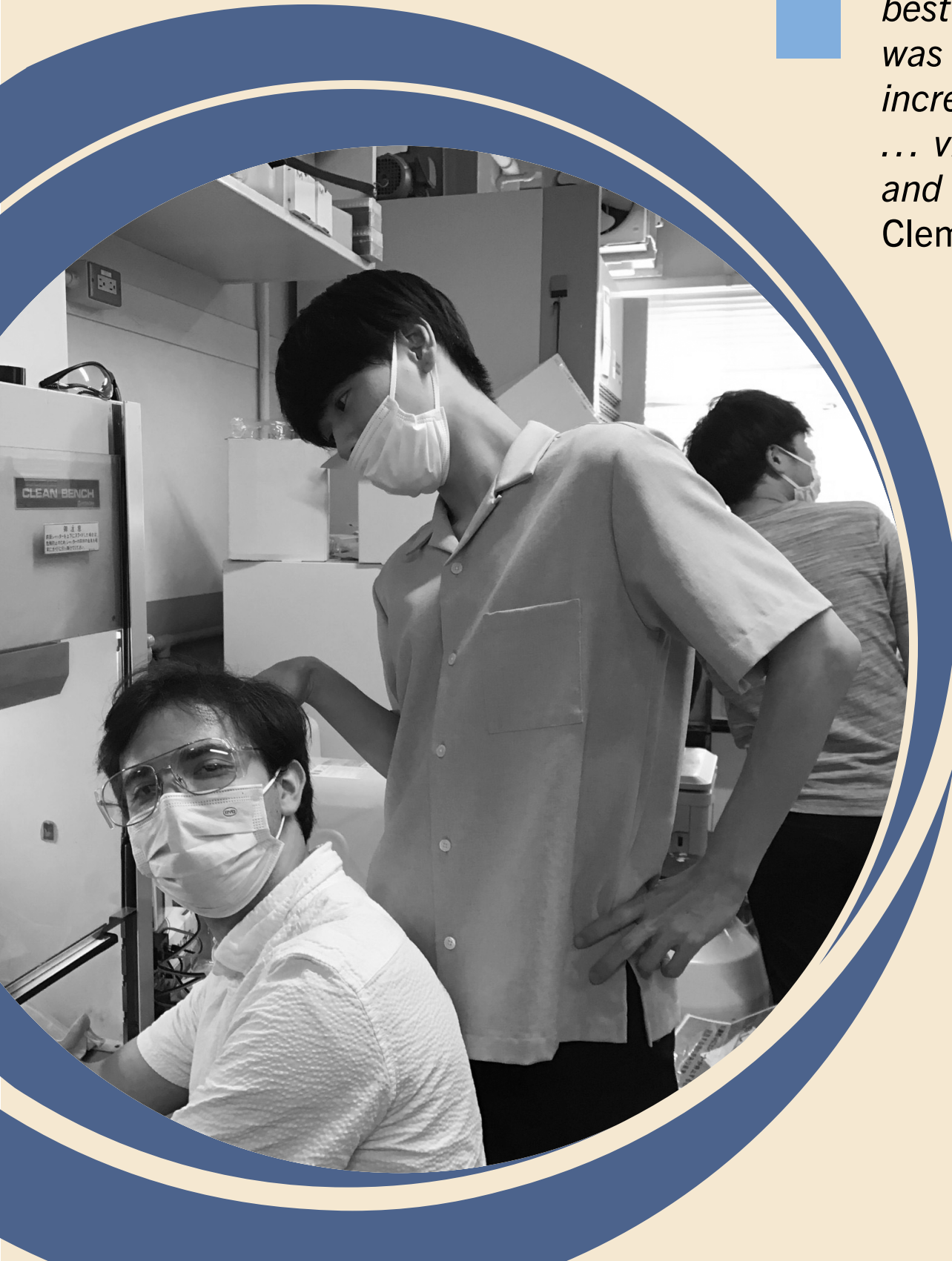
Since 2013, Clemson bioengineering students have been spending the summer working in world class research facilities in Japan. Students conduct comprehensive bioengineering research gaining rich experience in their field and a deep understanding of the global nature of scientific research. Clemson students work alongside research mentors in the laboratory, visit corporate and national labs, and explore other aspects of Japanese culture and society.

Student Testimonials

"I was fortunate to have the opportunity to delve into mechatronics research at the University of Tokyo through Clemson's bioengineering study abroad program. This experience proved to be incredibly fulfilling and impactful, allowing me to work with a diverse group of students in highly ground-breaking research. Because of both Clemson and University of Tokyo staff, I was able to integrate seamlessly into a new and unfamiliar environment and thrive in my research." — Matt Porzio, Mechanical Engineering '25

"My time in Japan was some of the best months of my life! ... The lab work was engaging, and the country was incredibly beautiful. I lived in Tokyo, ... visit(ed) Osaka, Kyoto, Hiroshima, and hiked Mt. Fuji!" - Michaela Cattell
Clemson University '20

"A wonderful research opportunity in Japan! I never would have imagined how much I now know from just eight weeks of hands-on research in a medical polymers lab!" - Lance Alexander Sweatt,
ECE Senior, Clemson University '19



"International Virtual Exchange (IVE) broadened my scope of the bioengineering field beyond the US..the similarities and differences between medical devices in our two countries taught me that we all have the same goal: to advance human health via research and technology." - Claudia Wong, Bioengineering '20



Program Champions

- Jiro Nagatomi, Professor BioEngineering, Clemson University
- Kazuhiko Ishihara, Professor Emeritus of Biomaterials Science at The University of Tokyo
- Yasuhiko Iwasaki, Professor of Materials and Bioengineering at Kansai University

Starting with 4 students in 2013 and reaching a record enrollment of 27 in 2023. A virtual engagement for pre-departure team building was added 2019 that by 2021 engaged more Japanese than US students.

For more information:

Click [Here](#) and [Here](#)

Tigers In Japan

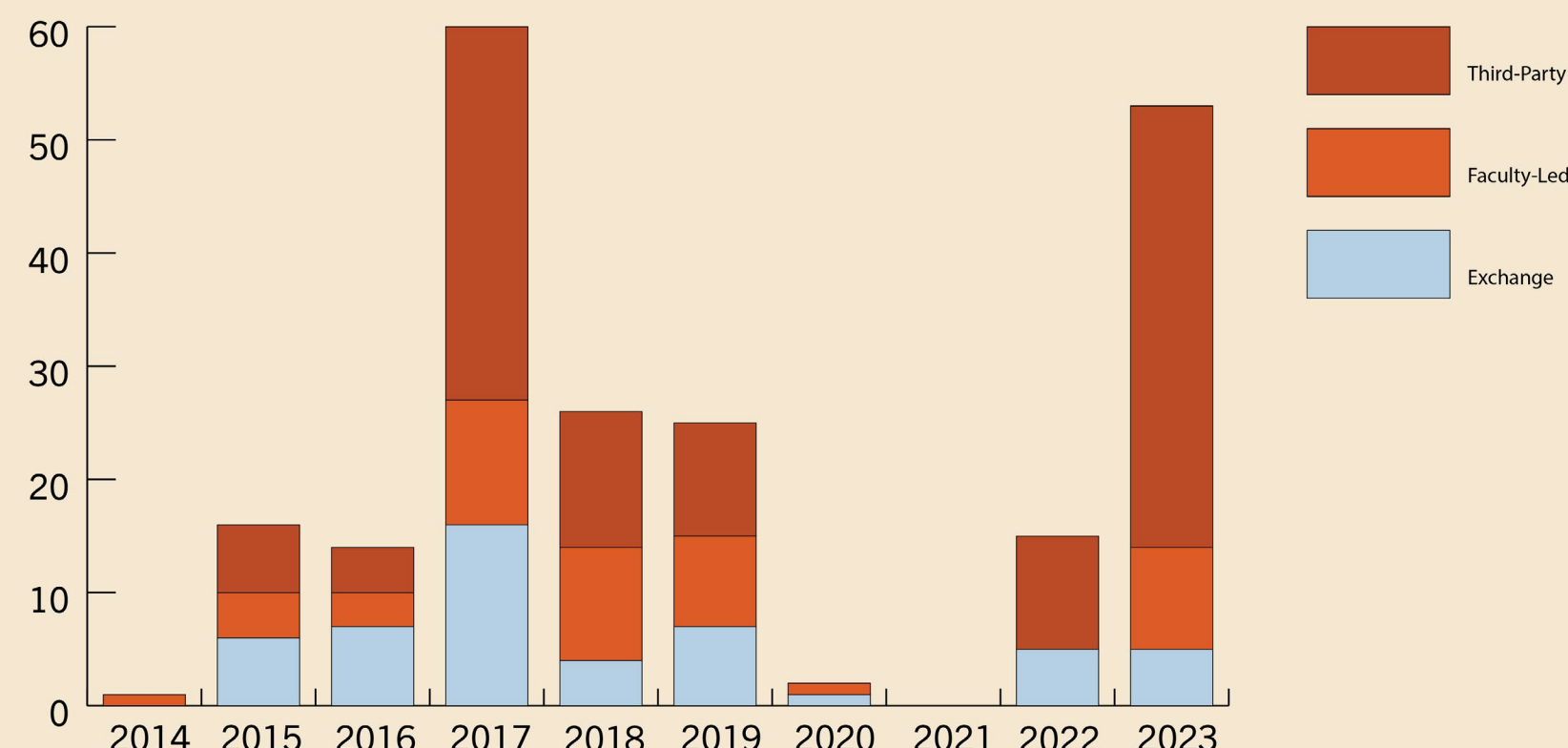
Through the years, many Clemson students have travelled to Japan to work, study or research. Some have participated in the bilateral exchanges between Clemson and its Japanese partner institutions, while others have travelled with faculty-led groups. Additionally, some have conducted research or taken employment in Japan after graduation.

Between 2014 and 2023, 212 Clemson students studied in Japan:

114 studied in Japan through Clemson Faculty Led Programs hosted by University of Tokyo and Kansai University.

51 participated in exchanges through Chukyo University, the University of Fukui, Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, Sophia University and Tohoku University.

47 studied in Japan through third-party programs including Semester at Sea, CIS Abroad in Yokohama, CIEE in Tokyo and USAC in Nagasaki.



Exchanges and Study Abroad Programs

Clemson has, at various times, exchanged students with many institutions in Japan. Currently, Clemson's most active exchange programs are with Chukyo University, located in Aichi, and University of Fukui, located in Fukui. As of 2023, 15 Clemson students have completed their exchange program with Chukyo University and 11 Clemson students have attended the University of Fukui.

Clemson faculty also regularly lead summer programs designed specifically for Clemson students. In addition to the Bioengineering program, Clemson Japanese language faculty have taken students to study and intern in Japan. In these programs, students often live with Japanese families, travel throughout the country, and may extend their stay with an internship. In 2023, 8 students participated in this language and culture program, with 4 students completing the additional internship.



Kakehashi Project

The Kakehashi ("Bridge") Project, funded by Fulbright Japan, stands out among the specialized short-term programs offered by Clemson. The Kakehashi Project provides an opportunity to visit Japan to students who have never before traveled to Japan. Clemson was selected to participate in this program in 2015 and 2017, sending a total of 46 students. The program highlights Japan's unique culture and environment. The 2015 program, led by Toshiko Kishimoto exposed students to U.S.-Japan relations, manga and anime culture, and Japanese language. The 2017 program, led by Helen Diamond Steele and John Hannon, focused on Japan's role in business and international affairs. As part of the first program, Clemson hosted a group of Japanese students in March 2015.



Williams Sensei

Collaborations between Clemson and Japanese companies continue to evolve in a range of disciplines including automotive engineering, advanced manufacturing, fiber optics and packaging. Examples include: automotive engineering, advanced manufacturing, fiber optics and packaging. Examples include:

Professor Leslie Williams, or Williams-sensei as he is known to his students, established Clemson's Summer Intensive Language & Culture program in Kyoto. He traveled with Clemson language students to Japan every other year from 2005 until 2010 when Williams-sensei sadly and unexpectedly passed away. The impact of his teaching and those five iterations of the program is evident in the successes of the students, as well as their fond memories of Professor Williams. Many of his students have gone on to live and work in Japan, work for Japanese companies in the U.S. and many other successful careers informed by their knowledge of Japanese language and culture.

Paul Wright, Kyoto 2005, went on after graduation to work for a Japanese company. He describes that first experience in Japan as "jumping into the deep end" into a new culture and language.

"Yet, Williams-sensei, would never let any student "sink or give up", he kept it positive and uplifting, and continued to support and mentor us beyond graduation."

Kayla Murdaugh, Kyoto 2012, currently co-chair of the Japan American Association of South Carolina, uses her Japanese language and cultural knowledge daily as operations manager for a Japanese owned chemical manufacturer. Kayla explains Williams-sensei as:

"almost spiritual in how he respected and treated his language studies and teaching. He instilled a solid focus on the basics of pronunciation and native conversation flow through repetition that have stayed with me since those beginner days, and I attribute my continued growth in the language to that foundation. Not only were his language, culture, and history courses strict, insightful, and fun; his enthusiasm for the materials left you with no choice but to share a similar passion that made it easier to succeed, even as a non-Japanese major."

Gregory Kheznejat, Kyoto 2005, is now an Associate Professor at Hosei University Tokyo and winner of the Kyoto Literature Award for his novel "Kamo River Runner" written in Japanese. Gregory met Williams-sensei while studying Japanese in High School.


"He encouraged me to continue my studies at Clemson. During my time as a student, he served as a mentor and advisor, helping me plot my course to graduation and beyond. When I gave my first presentation as a graduate researcher in Kyoto in 2012, he was there in the audience to cheer me on. Dr. Williams treated each of his students with this same level of care, always challenging us to be the best version of ourselves. I am grateful to have known him."







Industry Partnerships

Collaborations between Clemson and Japanese companies continue to evolve in a range of disciplines including automotive engineering, advanced manufacturing, fiber optics and packaging. Examples include:

 FujiFilm Endowment (1990) to support study abroad in Japan

 Hitachi High Technologies' (2014) Annual Student Fellowship in Electron Microscopy

 Deep Orange Sponsorships by Toyota (2015), Honda (2018; 2021), Mazda (2013) and JTEKT (2015).

 Esko's gifts of equipment, software and services to the Sonoco Institute of Packaging Science (2016).


Japanese companies have made major contributions to the state's economy and to Clemson University. The Japan-America Association of South Carolina (JAASC) formed in 1988 to manage the influx of Japanese-owned businesses into South Carolina. In 1989, the State of South Carolina established a Tokyo office to attract more Japanese businesses. By 2017, approximately 55 Japanese companies represented over 11% of all foreign-affiliated firms in upstate South Carolina and directly supported more than 16,000 South Carolina workers. In 1975, the Southeastern U.S.-Japan Association (SEUS-Japan) was established to promote trade, investment, understanding, and friendship between Japan and the southeast states.

For more information see the Corporate and Foundation Relations (CFR) blog.

Japan Research Engagement

Clemson's engagement with Japan extends broadly across disciplines through the research networks and activities of our faculty, post-doctoral researchers and graduate students. In the sample below, you'll see how Clemson is engaged in research and creative activities from Art to Engineering, from Humanities to Environmental Studies.


Valerie Ziminy, Chair of the Department of Art

 Valerie Ziminy earned her MFA at Kanazawa College of Art in Japan as a Fulbright Fellow and Japanese Government (Monbusho) Scholar researching contemporary craft and Kutani overglaze enamels. Later as a guest Fulbright researcher, Ziminy organized the exhibition *Porcelain Fever: Contemporary Artists and Kutani Now in Kanazawa*. Learn more about Zimany's artwork on her [website](#) and on her [profile on the IAC website](#).


Kyle Brinkman, Chair of the Department of Materials Science and Engineering

 Kyle Brinkman served as a Post-doctoral Fellow at the Advanced Industrial Science and Technology Institute from 2005-2007 as part of a program supported by the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science. Learn more about Brinkman [here](#).


Jianhua Tong, Associate Professor of Materials Sciences and Engineering

 Jianhua Tong joined Clemson in 2016 after working in the field of clean energy at the Research Institute of Innovative Technology for the Earth in Japan, as well as several US based institutions. Learn more about Tong [here](#).


Kumiko Saito, Assistant Professor of Japanese

 Kumiko Saito conducts research on modern Japanese literature and contemporary popular culture, fantasy, science fiction, and visual narratives including manga and video games.


Satomi Saito, Lecturer of Japanese

 Satomi Saito has a Ph.D. in cinema and Comparative Literature for the University of Iowa. His research focuses on Japanese popular media, film and literary theory.

Michael Itam, Post Doctoral Fellow, Biosystems Research Complex, Plant and Environmental Studies

 Michael Itam has a Ph.D. in cinema and Comparative Literature for the University of Iowa. His research focuses on Japanese popular media, film and literary theory.

Emma Nicolini, Masters Student and Teaching Assistant, Department of History

 Emma Nicolini conducts research on the accounts of surviving social group that may have been omitted from official narratives of World War II, beginning with the "comfort women".

Acknowledgments

Clemson in the World is an initiative of Clemson's Global Learning Institute led by Associate Provost Sharon Nagy. The Japan project is the fruit of the research and design of a selection of dedicated and talented undergraduate students supported by the UPIC internship program.

Research and Content Development Interns for Global Learning

Caroline Morgan '23, Political Science

Jose Contreras '24, Political Science

Abigail George '25, Language and International Business, Japanese.

VID Interns from the Pearce Center for Professional Communication

Emily Paulter '24, Architecture

Ellie Tucker '25, Visual Arts

Many others shared information, photos and experiences along the way. We would especially like to thank Professors Toshiko Kishimoto, Yuji Kishimoto, Jiro Nagatomi and Kumiko Saito, and Ms Yuki Kihara for their continued support of Clemson's engagement with Japan sharing information and double checking our timeline entries. Sean Baker was incredibly helpful in guiding us through the university archive and Ann Marie Alexander pointed us in the right direction to research Clemson's Japanese industry partners. Of course, we thank the many others profiled in the timeline for their time and support.

For more information on the Clemson in the World Initiative or to suggest a focus for a future feature contact Associate Provost Sharon Nagy at snagy@clemson.edu.