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The Japan Foundation Advocacy Kit Revision Project

How I Built a Second Year Japanese “Hybrid” Study Abroad Program: 7-Week Challenges and Fun in Japanese

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## 1. How I Built a Study Abroad Course to Japan

The summer 2009, I led a group of twelve students to Japan. It was the first faculty-led study abroad program to Japan from the University of North Texas and a life-changing experience for the students and for myself. Most of the students were traveling abroad for the first time; some had never traveled outside of the Central time zone in the US. Their age ranged from 18 to 34 years old, and they had just finished the first year of Japanese one month prior to the trip. I would like to share the process I went through in making this study abroad course in light of framework, content, and outcome. I will incorporate the discussions of the benefits of the study abroad program to our Japanese program as well as to our students. I would like also to include my advice and tips for fellow Japanese teachers for their future programs to Japan.

**Background:** [Slide 5]

I became interested in creating a faculty-led study abroad program to Japan in my second year at the University of North Texas (UNT) in 2007. UNT, located in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, is the third largest state university in Texas, with about 35,000 students (2009 UNT International recruitment material). UNT offers Japanese as a minor from the department of Foreign Languages and Literatures under the College of Arts and Science. More than 250 students enrolled in first through third year Japanese courses in the Fall 2007; this enrollment grew to over 300 in Fall 2009. The Japanese program here at UNT is still a growing program, linked to various student organizations on campus and Japanese communities in Dallas-Fort Worth. Each year, we send a few students to Japan for an exchange program. Also, we encourage students to take the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) each year even though the number actually taking the test is low due to the physical distance to a nearest test center, and the test is in early December when students are very busy with the last few weeks of the Fall semester.

In 2007, when I started to explore the idea of a study abroad program, an accelerated 1<sup>st</sup> year Japanese course for the Summer 2008 had just been approved. UNT did not have Japanese summer courses until Summer 2008; however, the growing number in Japanese enrollment was promising factor in promoting the idea of a new course development.

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The department chair of Foreign Languages and Literatures is very supportive in developing study abroad courses. The Global Learning and Experience office, formerly known as the Study Abroad Center, works together closely with the faculty from different departments to develop courses that are unique and experiential in various locations throughout the world. For the generation of people who are born and grow up in the cyber world, the value of a real trip to a real world and meeting with real people is quite significant. It is essential for us, as educators, to provide such chances for students to expand their views through hands-on experience and to help them grow up in the global community. There are possibilities for different types of study abroad that are not limited to exchange programs between sister schools or cities. Faculty-led study abroad programs can cater to students' needs and promote students' sense of autonomy in foreign environment; such programs can also support their wish to continue their life-long learning beyond school.

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Many students have strong interests in modern Japanese culture highlighted by anime, manga, cosplay, J-pop, computer games—thanks to all the wonderful works by Studio Ghibli, Nintendo, etc. Needless to say, though, the continuing popularity of traditional culture and history such as Edo period arts and crafts, old Kyoto culture and kimono, tea ceremony, samurai history, as well as Japanese cuisine such as sushi, tempura, teriyaki seem never to be exhausted. Of course, these are not all about what students are interested in regarding Japan; however, we can make use of this continuing popularity as our springboard to invite students to participate in new programs related to Japan.

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**Creating a win-win program to Japan:**

**Rationale for creating a second-year Japanese study abroad course**

When I started to conceptualize the summer study abroad program, I wanted to make a course for the third-year students who had a foundation in elementary Japanese. They would expand their ability in speaking and listening, and they could enjoy learning the content topics in the framework of a language course, such as history or art by visiting major sites and works in Japan, for example. However, it was hard to imagine that there would be enough third-year students who would sign up for the study abroad, since, traditionally, there is a smaller number of students in that level as compared to the first or second year levels. Also, by the time they are in the third year, they are more likely to have demanding classes in their major and/or getting very close to graduate. So it did not seem like a good idea having the third year as a target level for the new course in study abroad. I thought it would create a complication. If not the third year level, then the second year should offer study abroad to prospective students.

I looked into other faculty-led study abroad programs in the department as well as faculty-led programs from other schools. Many of them have home stay arrangements or they arrange to stay in the dormitory of some sister schools. Some have a combination of

dormitories and hotels. Some had a cultural focus on the area they are traveling to, and others have stronger language focus for their upper level courses. The Spanish section of our department, for example, has a vast undergraduate enrollment: over three thousand each Fall. They can afford to offer a variety of faculty-led study abroad courses to multiple destinations in Spain and in Mexico. I liked their ideas of visiting museums as assignments and creating scrapbooks for the family they are staying with as a gift/assignment.

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I checked Japanese study abroad programs from different schools. One program from a private college had culture as its topic. It was designed for students taking Japanese language courses or for those who need Asian culture credits. So it does not target a certain level, but it introduces the Japanese language within the topics of a culture. Lectures on various cultural topics are given in English covering Japanese vocabulary and teaches common phrases. Students stay mostly in a hotel in Tokyo near their sister school's campus where they rent classrooms for their lectures. Volunteers from the sister school join the group's activities and discussions. This program has only three weeks. According to the professor who is leading the course, **three weeks are a sufficient length**; students start getting tired of the foreign environment after three weeks and start to miss their comfort food. In addition, the cost accumulates the longer the program continues. This professor has led the program for ten years, and she was convinced of the three-week theory based on her experience with students each year.

Other program I looked at had abundant funding from the college. The program fee is almost covered by the funding. Therefore, students only pay about the equivalent of their airline ticket. The course has Japanese classes at a language school as a part of their activity in Japan, and they have a sister city home stay in Kyoto and in a small town in Aichi arranged through non-profit home-stay organization.

Each program I looked at had its charm and advantages. But these were not necessarily advantages for the program I wanted to create. I lacked many of the privileges they had: no sister city for one, no sister school for another, and no generous funding from school except for the \$700 scholarship for everyone who participate in the UNT study abroad program.

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At this point, I had two major concerns:

1. The cost
2. The content

For the framework of point #2 above, I decided to create an accelerated second-year course with the first half of the course done on campus and the second half done in Japan. The advisor of Global Learning and Experience gave me the idea so we could cut down on the cost of the program, especially for the cost of accommodations in Japan. Figuring out the program fee for study abroad is a major pragmatic concern since, when it comes down to the decision to sign up for the program, the price plays an important role in the end. Students have to come up with the money for 1) tuition, 2) the program fee, and 3) airline tickets. Out of these three factors, we can only manage the program fee.

[Slide 11] Now let's look at an overview of what producing a study abroad program entailed.

1. Time line
  - >Two years
  - 1<sup>st</sup> year: creating concepts and the framework of the course-> discussion with the language section program coordinator -> application to the department curriculum committee
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> year: Approval by department Chair and Dean
  - > Finalizing the detail of the course-> reservation
  - > Recruitment-> student application & registration -> managing the program's travel

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2. Parties involved
  - The instructor
  - Language section program coordinator
  - Study abroad office
  - The Foreign Languages and Literature department
  - The curriculum committee
  - The Chair of the department
  - Dean of the College of Arts and Science

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- Travel agency: airline tickets, Japan Rail pass
- Reservation of guided tour, theaters, etc.
- Accommodation in Japan
- Schools in Japan (in the case of school visits)
- Host families (included in the program in the case of home stay)

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3. Course design
  - Level
  - Purpose/target/goal
  - Location
  - Time
  - Length
  - Style

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4. Recruitment
  - Study Abroad Fair
  - Monthly information sessions
  - Email to students, announcement through Blackboard
  - Calligraphy workshop +announcements
  
  - <In the future> use of Facebook, etc.?

All of the elements above were totally new for me when I was implementing the program. It was a lengthy process altogether and non-stop once started; however, it was very exciting to have a chance to bring something new to life and to add it to our Japanese program.

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Now I would like to discuss the two major points of concerns I mentioned earlier: the cost and the content. First, I will discuss on the program fee decision making, and then talk about the academic content and overall course design in the later section.

### **Part 1. How I made the decision on the program fee**

I had numerous meetings and inquiries with an advisor from Global Learning and Experience on how to construct a course. Since this was my first time to do faculty-led study abroad, the advisor suggested that I work with a vendor, since the vendor can offer the infrastructure and network in the country and even serve as a travel agency for educational tours. Therefore, I would be able to have a backup on the trip.

I knew that would be more costs involved than what I could probably offer by doing it all by myself. However, I thought that it would be a good idea for students to have classes taught by different teachers in Japan and have an emergency support in case of sickness or injury. So I agreed to have open bids for my program based on the advisor's suggestion. I wanted to see the price of the course, the learning environment, and the field trips offered for our university's accredited course.

In the end, only one bid emerged from open bidding including three vendors that the advisor invited to participate. It was over \$5,000 for the three-and-a-half week portion of the course in Japan. At first, I was not quite sure if that was too much or not. It seemed quite high to me, but the advisor noted that it was not too bad based on his knowledge that expenses in Japan are higher than in other countries. So I decided to communicate with the vendor to see how well the vendor could implement what I had listed as requirements for the course.

My first concern was the location of classes. It had to be in the same place where the students would stay or, at most, within a 10-minute walking distance. After some time, I found out that the students would have to commute about 45 minutes to a school in downtown Tokyo. This caught my immediate attention on the vendor's plan because there would be no time for students in this accelerated course to waste in commuting for

45 minutes every morning. I was afraid that the students would become lost and exhausted in Tokyo before getting to class. After I asked to change the accommodation to a very close place from class, they offered a new location 15 minutes from the school. It was certainly an improvement; however, I was quite frustrated with the way I had to communicate with the vendor to find out the details of their plan. The person communicating with me seemed to have no idea of their plan for my course and had to ask questions of a local contact in Japan each time I asked questions to clarify their proposal. I felt it was dangerous to continue correspondence with the person who did not know the details and to waste time not going anywhere.

I discussed the difficulties I was facing with the vendor with the advisor at the Global Learning and Experience office. By then, I was convinced that their plan was too expensive and too much for me to deal with to make the course I envisioned happen. So I forwent the idea of getting help from vendor-organized services.

Getting back to the starting point for planning a cost of the program, I decided to offer \$3,900 as our program fee based on the idea that some Spanish and German programs offer around \$3,500 for a five-week course. \$3,900 is much lower than the vendor's bid, but I was sure that, if I did all the work for the program, I could modify the cost and offer students all of what they need for the program. I started to look for accommodations with a classroom facility. In the beginning, I checked colleges in Tokyo that might have a dormitory and classroom to rent. But it was not so easy to find a college in Tokyo with a facility to rent for 3-4 weeks in June.

Using a hotel for accommodations and renting a meeting room was an idea, too. A German program runs a program like that in combination with a traditional stay in a university dormitory as they travel to other cities. I kept the idea of a hotel while checking out the possibilities of finding some youth hostels, as there are some youth hostels in the central part of Tokyo. It would be great to be able to book a group there and find a meeting room to rent for our classroom. I started to check the availability of youth hostels in mid-October. By then, the possibilities for the following June were already difficult. Part of the reason was that I had to guess the number of male and female students who might participate in the program, and other part is that I would have to adjust the number until the number was settled. I had no idea how many would actually sign up, but I started with 10 male and 6 female students plus one instructor who would need a private room.

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Finally, I arrived at the best location in Tokyo for my group: the National Olympics Memorial Youth Center (NYC) in Yoyogi, Tokyo. It is a national institution providing facilities for youth educational and training purposes located next to Yoyogi Park and the Meiji Shrine. The process to register our group in their system required multiple documents in Japanese. After their approval, the process of reservation started. They have a youth hostel style facility as well as private rooms for accommodation. In addition, there are class or meeting rooms in various sizes for rental (1000 yen -2500Yen: about \$12- \$30/ 4 hour segment). It was very fortunate for us to have NYC as one location for our study abroad activities and accommodations. The fee for all facilities is very reasonable. Even private rooms are affordable (2500yen: \$30/day). I tried to book the private rooms as much as possible for I wanted students to have an optimal environment for their vigorous accelerated studies and for their private relaxation time.

In Kyoto and Hiroshima, students had shared rooms in youth hostels. The rates were 3,300 yen and 2000 yen. Students were more comfortable in sharing spaces after developing friendships with the classmates in Tokyo. In terms of the cost of accommodations overall, places like NYC and youth hostels are ideal with the additional benefit of students having chances to meet other people staying for various studies, cultural awareness, or sports training purposes.

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## **Part 2. How I made a decision on the framework and the course content**

### **I. Create a win-win scenario for the greater benefit of students**

In a process of shaping the image of the course, I came up several ideas to benefit students taking accelerated summer courses. The premise of the course, to get two birds in one stone, should be presented with multiple dimensions. Spending money on traveling and working hard on the accelerated course, students deserve as many benefits as possible. The following are the five major benefits of participating in summer study abroad for second-year Japanese students.

1. To complete a Japanese minor in two years
2. To graduate quickly  
To complete a two-year foreign language requirement upon or before graduation
3. To get a study abroad experience without interrupting the scheduled time for graduation
4. To enjoy a small group and short study abroad experience other than going for a semester or yearlong, highly competitive exchange program
5. To earn academic credits and see major Japanese cultural experiences as well as to have opportunities for individual exploration time in Tokyo

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Benefit #1: Completing minor in two years

UNT has a minor in Japanese that can be completed with 6 Japanese courses (JAPN 1010, 1020, 2040, 2050, 3060, and 3040) under the current catalogue. (With the 2010 catalogue and after, it will be 6 core courses from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> year plus 1 elective to complete the minor.) Normally, it takes 3 years to finish the minor. However, if students take the summer study abroad course, they can finish the 2<sup>nd</sup> year right after the Spring semester and can join the 3<sup>rd</sup> year course in the Fall. This enables students to finish the minor in two years. Also, if some students missed taking the second year in the fall, they can take the summer course without waiting one full year.

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Benefit #2: Graduating as quickly as possible

Some majors, such as International Studies, require two years of foreign language credits to graduate. Students can join the summer study abroad course at the end of their freshman, sophomore, or even junior year and complete their foreign language requirement quickly. This allows them to focus their junior and senior years on their major studies. Also, when some students fail or withdraw from the second year course, they can take the summer study abroad to catch up with their desired graduation date.

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Benefit #3: Getting a study abroad experience without jeopardizing a plan for graduation

Students who have a set graduation schedule can take advantage of the summer study abroad with faculty and classmates from the same institution. The credits are added as a whole without any loss as in some cases when students participate in a program from different institution; they can possibly earn less credit when the credits from other institution are transferred to their home institution. Sometimes the credits are evaluated as lower than the students' intended level. Faculty-led study abroad programs have no possible chances like those.

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Benefit #4: Getting a small group study abroad experience with a familiar instructor and classmates

Study abroad may be a stressful experience for some students. Those students may enjoy familiar people in the group and the instructor from the same institution. The continuity may be a helpful factor for students' learning in foreign environment. Some students prefer the short-term study abroad experience as opposed to a half-year or a yearlong program. In the case of UNT, an exchange program is becoming highly competitive. Faculty-led study abroad programs can offer more chances for students to receive study abroad experience.



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Benefit #5: Earning academic credits while enjoying major Japanese sightseeing spots

Faculty-led programs may be ideal for first-time travel abroad students. It may also be a beneficial program for career students who want to earn credits and to enjoy some time traveling. In my program, there is some free time for students to go out, explore the town, and meet people on their own in Tokyo. This encourages students to test out in real life what they are learning. They will have chances to use the language as a tool.

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In addition to #5 above, I'd like to introduce 2 more points to benefit students.

#6. Students can finish the study abroad program in Japan and come back home to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend with their family and share the exciting stories of the trip

Students are often on the verge of homesickness in terms of food and their own culture at the end of the course in Japan. They can meet their family for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday and rest well.

Still, some students have extended their stay in Japan to travel on their own to relax and enjoy time after the program. They had already planned that when they were purchasing their tickets. The return ticket could be changed with an additional fee if students changed their mind.

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#7 Students who plan to study through the summer can take more courses in Summer II

One week after students return to the US, Summer II programs start. It is possible to earn more credits in the summer instead of ending the season only with the study abroad credits. This program does not interrupt students' path to accumulate credits toward graduation.

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## II. Details on the academic content and overall course design

The following list is the framework and the content of the course in detail. The textbooks for 2009 and 2010 are different. Consequently, the content of the grammar points, vocabulary, and kanji are different. I will expect more active speaking and reading skills from Genki II group. It will be interesting to compare the 2009 group with Nakama 2 and the 2010 group with Genki II at the end of the course.

### 1. The structure of the course

Textbook: 2009: Nakama 2 (Ch.1-6), 2010~Genki II (Ch.13-23)

Length: 7 weeks altogether.

“Hybrid” study abroad course

First half, 3 ½ weeks: at UNT [mid-May through early June]

Second half, 3 ½ weeks: in Japan [mid-June through early July]

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### 2. Framework and content

2009: Nakama 2 (Ch.1-6)

Monday – Friday:

3-hour class in the morning + afternoon activities (Lunch and chat, movies, calligraphy)

2 vocabulary Qz and 2 kanji Qz for each chapter

Chapter test every week

Kick-off lunch before the departure to Japan

Workbook

Essay

Oral interview & skit (at UNT)

Independent project (in Japan)

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2010: Genki II (Ch.13-23)

Mon & Tu. Th, Fri & Sat. 4-hour class in the morning with a long break in the middle

+ afternoon activities (Lunch and chat, movies, calligraphy)

\*Wednesday tutorial (10am-12pm)

1 vocabulary and kanji quiz each per chapter

Chapter test every 4 days

Self-intro portfolio project (name cards, photos as visual aid, and essays, etc.) \*prepared before the summer for the purpose of conversation material to use in Japan.

Integral assignment: daily report/journal card (with their own self-assessment)

Group studies/ group effort (team work)

Creating study material as an assignment

Conversation in class

Oral report for everyday activity (assigned one student/day to report in the beginning of the class)

Workbook (as HW and as in-class exercise)

Short essays based on the daily report

Oral interview & skit (at UNT)

Independent project (in Japan) on topics of their choice

Report and a short presentation on the independent project

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### **3. Field trips & activities in Japan**

#### **2009:**

Kick-off lunch before the departure to Japan

Guided tour in Tokyo

NHK Studio tour

Edo Tokyo Museum

Tukiji fish market

Yasukuni Shrine

Shishi mai, lion dance performance by Sawanoya Ryokan owner

Kabuki Theater

Calligraphy workshop

Kamakura

Bike ride in Kyoto

Ryo-An Ji Temple

Kinkaku Ji Temple

Kiyomizu Temple

Fushimi Inari Shrine

Hiroshima A-Bomb Memorial Monument & the Memorial Museum

Peace and Friendship Evening in Hiroshima

A-Bomb survivor, Mr. Sunao Tsuboi's presentation, cultural exchange

Miyajima Island/ Itsukushima Shrine

\*option: Studio Ghibli Museum, Hanayashiki Amusement Park

Farewell dinner

Karaoke night

#### **2010 (tentative):**

Generally the same as above

Noh Theater (Noh and Kyogen performance) instead of Kabuki (because the theater in Tokyo will be undergoing demolition after April 2010)

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On home stay and language exchange opportunities for this course

This course originally had a 2-day home stay planned. I tried to book home stays through an organization and agreed to pay for their services. However, they could not locate host families for our group, and I had to let go of the plan. It was OK, in the end, not to include a home stay since students were extremely busy with their study materials and daily activities/field trips. They needed a free time to relax on the weekend and to enjoy their free time in Japan.

Since we did not have a sister city or schools to greet us and to interact with us, we had to have alternative contacts with Japanese college students and local people if possible. My fellow teacher at UNT told me about Japan National Tourism Organization's (JNTO) service which helps coordinate educational tours for groups from the US. I contacted their office in Los Angeles; Mr. Suzuki, from the Los Angeles office, approved their services for our course. We received great assistance in arranging school visits as well as generous travel reference materials such as maps and brochures.

We were introduced to a local representative in Tokyo and in Kyoto to coordinate school visits. Ms. Tsuzuki from the Tokyo Convention & Visitor's Bureau coordinated our school and sports club visits in Tokyo. Ms. Miyazaki from Kyoto's city organization introduced us to a professor Kanazawa of Kyoto Prefectural University. I appreciate all their help and kindness in helping our group in Japan. The experience to meet and interact with real university students in Japan was very valuable for our students who had only learned Japanese in classroom in a limited time. I would like to thank, once again, all the people who were such a great help through the JNTO.

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School visits

**Tokyo:** Tokyo University campus and kendo club visit

Tokyo Metropolitan University: Campus visit and meeting the president, Japanese class participation, tea ceremony, exchange time with ESS club members

Minorigaoka High School school visit: conversation, guitar performance by a UNT music major student

**Kyoto:** Kyoto Prefectural University: class exchange at Prof. Kanazawa's English class, exchange in small groups

### III. Notes on cases of emergency and unexpected incidents

Even after spending almost two years of planning and preparing, sometimes we needed to face the unexpected phenomenon and to deal with it. For 2009, the rush of swine flu hit through winter to spring of 2009. The programs for Mexico had to cancel their trips. Our trip made it, but, at one point, the school visit was cancelled and then re-scheduled. Overall, we did not experience many effects of the flu phenomenon; however, things like this could happen any time. There is nothing to prevent them.

Also, during the winter of 2008, the economic crisis erupted and hit so many people. In some courses, I heard some students had to cancel their trips because of the acute financial change in their household. What if the program enrollment drops suddenly? The school has a borderline of enrollment to say Yes or No to the program to go. Some activities planned in the program may be reduced so students do not have to pay extra when the group becomes smaller. The smaller the group, the higher the individual student's cost for the program. We need to develop a flexible plan so we can deal with the emergency situation and/or severe drop in enrollment.

The following are the must-have points from my first trip:

1. Keep a copy of students' passports in a file. Keep their numbers in a separate notebook for extra security.
2. Emergency contact and procedures. Share the students' family emergency contact and their number with the group and the school.  
-Be sure the study abroad office has all the info and itineraries for the course including the number of insurance card for injuries and disease.  
\*Travel insurance for your belongings may be suggested for additional compensation in the case of theft or loss of valuable items. You need to call the police of the local area and claim the loss and receive the police report number. This will be important when you claim the insurance. **Your home insurance may cover the loss of the valuable items:** check with the insurance company.
3. Know refund policies and information from travel agency, airline company, hotels, museums, etc.
4. Any local contact is helpful. The travel agency from which you purchase the airline tickets and rail passes may have a local office. Find out the phone number with some personnel's name and email address for extra security.
5. Go over the emergency plan during the orientation before and after arriving. Arrange emergency networks including the students' names and phone numbers if some carry rental or private phones to the trip. It is easier and cheaper to use text messages to communicate each other. The instructor must have a mobile phone with text function. Do some simulation of communication with students with a phone as soon as the trip starts.

6. In the very extreme case: When losing money or credit card for the program  
Have someone back home who can wire funds from your school to you in Japan in case you lose money, check, card, etc. It is ideal to have a bank account in Japan with some funds for an emergency to cover the cost of the trip right away if that happens.

7. Empowering students:

Programs like this do not have the luxury of having program assistants and chaperons.

The university treats the students as adults, as responsible individuals. Assign small groups to go together during the tour and to keep each other company and updated. The group should decide upon a leader and a sub-leader and report their names and contact to the instructor. The mutual help system applies here: trust students so they trust you.

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#### **IV. Looking back on the whole program in the first year (2009)**

The immediate thought after I finished the first study abroad course in summer 2009 was “THANK YOU!!!” to all my students to survive the course without getting hurt or sick or disappearing in Japan. Also, I appreciated a strong support from the Global Learning and Experience office staff as well as from my husband back home while I was all by myself on the trip. I had to contact them from time to time to help me immediately.

There are several things I want to improve upon for the next trip. The major point is the use of limited time. The key is to synthesize the learning material more to the activities. Keep a daily report card for simpler assignments to turn in every day. They can be used as the students’ own progress assessment cards. I want them feel ownership for their learning and to grade their own performance frequently instead of passively being given a grade by the instructor.

1. Class style and time management

The nature of accelerated courses has always limited time to study ->promote small group learning help systems, additional evening tutorials, study materials for students.

2. Diverse teaching & learning

Students with certain learning styles need more help to process the material and maybe even different assignments and evaluation criteria.

3. Balance between 2040/2050 studies and field trips

Create a better field trip report card so students use the new words and vocabulary in it. Ideally, they need to incorporate 4 skills to complete the card.

If some students are not catching up with the material, you may reduce the number of field trips to the students can participate in or conduct major review sessions of the material from first-year Japanese.

4. Use of lockers during the traveling

The first summer group used lockers at NYC when we had to relocate to a ryokan a couple of times when NYC was closed for maintenance. The locker is a great service. We do not need to haul all of our stuff when we are returning from a trip in a day or two. We'll be a bit freer from pushing our luggage in Japan.

There may be better results in managing time and students' progress for my second study abroad course. I am more familiar with the locations we are visiting and staying. I will try my best to improve the course. The challenge is the new textbook, *Genki II*, from this summer. As our monthly information sessions turned to our orientation to the summer course, I have started to introduce the framework of the textbook and material to cover. I feel nervous, a little, but I am really excited to see the outcome of the new group this year and, hopefully, to meet familiar faces in Japan again. I am looking forward to this year's challenge for 7 weeks of fun together with the students! It will be a blessing to see how they develop linguistically and as individual being.

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## 2-1. Advice/ Tips for Fellow Teachers

One major piece of advice I can give to fellow teachers is to have fun planning a unique study abroad program for your students and for yourself.

Using a vendor for educational tours maybe a good idea for the first-time planner. However, monitor the costs of their service and the details if they follow your plan and the bid is decent. In my case, it didn't work with a vendor's plan. Perhaps my course was too specific and demanding because of the nature of the university-accredited core language course. It is still a good idea to see what they can offer and to compare what they offer with your plans.

Work closely with your school's program coordinator/ director and study abroad office to find out the niche and the needs of a new course to include within study abroad. They will give you great ideas and resources to create a new program. A small survey to conduct a needs analysis of current, past, and/or upcoming students is recommended.

The study abroad course should not be limited to run with your subject alone. There may be a history, business, or art teacher, for example, who wishes to jointly produce a program to save costs and to promote enrollment. This involves an inter-departmental effort, but it can be designed to support each other during the trip. If you can plan an elective course as opposed to a language course, the content can be more flexible.

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It is ideal to use the resources of the sister city or schools if your school has any; however, examine the possibility to arrange a home stay with some volunteer groups or non-profit organizations. My program is still in an experimental stage with a new textbook this year and demands of the studies that students need to cover. Therefore, I am not including home stay, but I encouraged the students to interview people working at ryokan and youth hostels. Students had the assignment to do several interviews while they were in Japan.

My course is for college students' introductory experiential language study, so they have some freedom to go on their excursions during their stay in Japan. If you teach younger students, you may want to choose a more local environment away from the city so you can have some help from the local people through home stay, etc., and have more control over students' activities. The relaxed environment may be helpful for young students to feel accommodated more easily. If you can afford chaperones, for example, students' parents, assistant teachers, etc., they can share the fun of the trip with you and help you to make your educational trip more meaningful. They might want to help organize fund raising to help the cost of the program.

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## **2-2. My Future Vision and Ideas**

I would like to promote exchange/sister school programs through this study abroad program between our school/city and schools/cities in Japan. I have been working with a university in Tokyo to set up a new exchange program. The process has been slow, but it may be possible if we can standardize classes for students to take from both schools so they can keep fulltime status during their time studying abroad.

Sister schools and sister cities will be helpful assets to have for any future group's study tour, and students will greatly benefit from sisterhood exchanges between US and Japanese schools and cities. They will be great when we try to coordinate language partners or online chat for conversation exchanges throughout the year or before and after the trip to Japan.

Other idea I'd like to try next year is to help students organize fund raising for study abroad. Even for the students who are interested in participating in the course, the whole cost can be overwhelming. They may be able to raise some money to cover their expenses in Japan. Finding grants or scholarships for short-term study abroad will be essential.

Knowledge on student loans will be helpful information to give to students, too. I have two students who signed up this year mention that they could get a VA loan. According to what they found out from the VA office, as far as the study abroad program's focus is from the student's home institution to earn credits from the school as opposed to participating in a study abroad program offered from different schools; in essence, the credits have to be transferred back to the home institution. This type of knowledge on the loans or financial aid would help students to plan their schedules for the following year. An office of study abroad may have some resources, but I hope to find more information to help students' decision making.

Developing more fun, sufficient, and productive assignments to do on campus and in Japan are very important. I am trying a new approach with this year's group with a

daily short speech, etc., but I still feel a need to develop a very simple but effective assignment. Story writing using new vocabulary and structure everyday might be interesting. If they add 2-3 lines each day, they will have a complete story of adventure by the end of the course. This can be done either as a group project or as an individual endeavor.

Study abroad is a physically and mentally challenging course which tests a student's time management skills. In the case of the core language program, implementing new vocabulary and structures in real conversation and writing is the key. I want to help students' ownership of their learning in the target language environment. There are elements to improve from the first year course; however, I am convinced that the effect of the study abroad is very significant. I see the development of the students' cognitive level in Japanese as well as their personal growth through traveling in a new world.

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### **3-1. Benefits to our Program**

I have discussed the benefits to students when participating in a study abroad program in the earlier section. Students' benefits are, to an extent, also benefits to our Japanese program. I have listed the points in the following on how our program benefited from the study abroad course to Japan.

- It established the 1<sup>st</sup> UNT Faculty-Led Study Abroad program to Japan.
- Promoted students' interests in Japan and helped our Japanese program grow in a global sense.
- The group became the ambassador of UNT and promoted the visibility of UNT to people and schools in Japan. We had interviews from local press in Tokyo and in Kyoto and had an online article about our visit in Kyoto Prefectural University.
- Provided an opportunity of study abroad for students who have not benefited from exchange programs before. This helped to introduce a variety of people to our program who then had a real experience of developing a point of view of Japan.
- Most of the group went on to the 3<sup>rd</sup> year Japanese course and helped the stability of the upper level courses in our program. The number of enrollment for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year grew bigger than before.
- Developed a sense of friendship among students and the instructor. This kind of close feeling helps the stability and coherence of the program.

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### 3-2. Benefit to our Students

Along with the benefits I listed earlier, the following points are envisioned as benefits of study abroad to our students. After almost one year has passed, I believe the following points are valid and seemed to have been endorsed by our first group of students through feedback I collected in March, 2010. (See the later section for the highlights of their feedback.)

Benefits of study abroad to students:

- Develop/ broaden their perspectives as global citizens
- Help students' bonding—help each other to study—can develop lifelong friendships
- Create foundation for students' life long study—stabilizes language study
- Accelerate their academic endeavors
- Provide chances to think about their futures, career plans, and visions
- Develop skills to survive and help others in a foreign environment
- Help finding who they are

Etc.

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#### Words from the students from the 1<sup>st</sup> group in 2009

Based on the one-year-after feedback from the students from 2009 group, I found the following valuable thoughts, words and testimonies. On the balance of study and fun (2040/2050 material and field trips and activities) are mixed feelings. As much as they enjoyed it all, they struggled to find the time to study and to catch up. Innovation in the balance of the two needs still require special consideration and improvement:

On the balance of 2040/2050 materials and activities:

1. All enjoyed various activities in Tokyo, Kamakura and a trip to Kyoto and Hiroshima
2. Still, many felt it was too much to do both 2040/2050 materials and field trips
  - a. The fact is that they only had to participate in 3 minimum field trips each in Tokyo and in Kyoto/Hiroshima, all participated in field trips listed.
  - b. Reduce the field trips altogether?
3. One student suggested that it would have been better if students “dedicated long duration of time to studying and then just go exploring instead of trying to have class everyday.”
4. “Too much of both studying and activities” will not be helpful for students' learning.
5. The course should include less (activities) for the very little time in the course.

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On benefits to study 2<sup>nd</sup> year language course in Japan

1. Less time to forget the 1<sup>st</sup> year material before the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year course
2. Great to develop a real sense of language within the culture in the very early stages of language learning
3. Encouraging to do well in 3<sup>rd</sup> year Japanese
4. Challenging but fun to build up lots of practical skills
5. Able to have enough time to complete minor

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On acquisitions:

1. Immensely improved listening skills with natural speed
2. Became able to understand the language in multiple dimensions
3. Helped to understand how the language works in context
4. Trying the language in real time helped to learn the language fast and in a cognitive fashion
5. Reading signs and schedules in town improved character recognition

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On learning skills

1. Developed better management of study time
2. Earned a survival skills in getting directions and reading signs
3. Used flash cards a lot for constant review
4. Started using dictionaries since this trip
5. Enjoyed daily practice in speaking with new vocabulary and grammar
6. Language learning is a part of everyday life

Started to spend more time listening and assimilating the language in film and music

7. Explored more words and expressions beyond class material
8. Employed different learning styles; tried to figure out how to say things hoping to have success in conversation
9. Helped reinforce a more natural rhythm of speaking
10. Interacting with native speakers of our age group helped us to pick up casual speech
11. Became more creative in using learned material to express what to say

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On overall effects of the study abroad:

1. A great introduction to Japan
2. Made learning and memorizing naturally easier, for you can apply everything immediately
3. Solidified my goals and clarified my plans for the future
4. Eye-opening to find Japan as a different world from the Western world. Though Japan is advanced and urbanized, its principles and traditions are quite different from the US

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Thank you!

The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles