

Short-term exchange program at Elms college

1. This study abroad program consisted of a sixteen-day fieldwork training experience in the United States, through which I was able to directly experience the cultural differences and similarities between Japan and the United States and incorporate these experiences into my academic learning. Although the schedule differed from the original plan due to a sudden deterioration in weather conditions, the extended stay in Chicago ultimately allowed me to deepen my understanding of the landscapes and local characteristics of three locations: Chicago, Elms College, and Boston.

In Chicago, we were required to secure a hotel on short notice and checked the status of our flights each day. While doing so, the students independently planned daily activities and conducted fieldwork in the city. At Elms College, we stayed in the university dormitories, received a tour of the campus, and attended ESL classes. We also participated in local cultural activities, such as watching an ice hockey game, and introduced aspects of Japanese culture. Through these activities, we were able to interact with local students and community members, thereby deepening our mutual understanding of each other's cultures.

In Boston, as in Chicago, the students organized their own daily schedules and carried out fieldwork in the city. This provided us with the opportunity to learn about the city's landscape, local environment, and the characteristics of the people who live there.

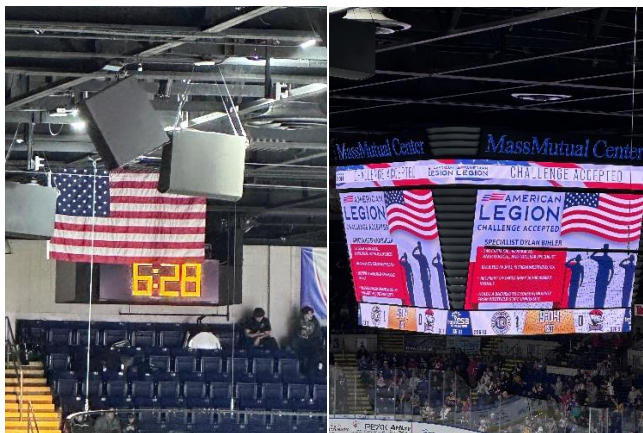
2. I will describe the observations and insights I gained during the training program. While I was at the airport in Chicago checking for alternative flights after ours had been canceled, I noticed that the staff assisting us frequently engaged in casual conversations and small talk with each other, even in front of customers. In Japan, when a customer is present, employees are generally expected to remain fully professional, and personal conversations are typically kept to a minimum. In contrast, such an atmosphere was not observed in the United States; instead, the staff appeared relaxed and friendly. This led me to think that differences in attitudes toward work, as well as aspects of American social behavior, may make such interactions seem natural.

At restaurants, I was often asked questions such as, "How is your meal?" or "Is there anything else you need?" while I was eating. While this may simply reflect a standard style of customer service in the United States, I also considered that it might be related to the tipping culture, in which customers leave gratuities at the

time of payment. Since better service can lead to higher tips, servers may be motivated to provide attentive service. In fact, for waitstaff in the United States, base hourly wages generally range from approximately \$2 to \$10 depending on the state, and tips are added to this amount, resulting in a wage structure that relies heavily on gratuities.

Additionally, compared to Japan, I encountered homeless individuals far more frequently, and on several occasions observed them actively seeking money. In Chicago, for example, there was a Black individual who, after offering to take photos for tourists at a sightseeing spot, asked for money, explaining that he was homeless. On another occasion, a Black individual approached us directly while we were gathered outside and asked for money. Based on these experiences, it seemed that a relatively high proportion of the homeless individuals I encountered were Black. Although I understand that various complex social and historical factors are involved, I personally felt that racial factors may play a significant role.

Another striking observation from visiting various places was the widespread display of the American flag. In Japan, the national flag is sometimes displayed at public institutions or during special events, and some individuals may own one privately. However, in the United States, I frequently saw the flag displayed not only at public institutions and events but also at ordinary private homes. I also attended an ice hockey game, where images of the American flag were shown on the screen and the national anthem was sung. Based on these experiences, I felt that many Americans possess a strong sense of pride in their country and express it openly, without hesitation, and that such expressions are widely accepted and unremarkable within society.



Short-term exchange program at Elms College

1) Activity overview

We departed Japan on February 22 and stayed in Chicago from the night of February 22 until the morning of February 26. From February 26 to March 6, we stayed at Elms College for our training program. After completing the program, we spent approximately two days sightseeing in Boston and returned to Japan on March 9.

“Schedule During Our Stay at Elms College”

February 26

Orientation, American Holiday

February 27

Visit to Bowe Elementary School, Thunderbirds Hockey Game (Dr. Seuss Night)

February 28

Dinner at Joyce’s House

March 1

Shopping with FP at Westfarms Mall, Karaoke

March 2

Japanese Celebration, Irish Dancing, Friendship Partner Night

March 3

Visit to Providence Ministries, Dinner and a Movie

March 4

Goodbye Dinner

March 5

Visit to Andrea–Glen Meadows, Red Sox Dinner with Ice Cream Sundaes

March 6

Leave Campus

During our free time, our Friendship Partners kindly drove us to nearby supermarkets, cookie shops, and other local stores.

Elms College offered a variety of programs, and we participated in an ESL course. In this class, we exchanged opinions with our Friendship Partners in English on topics such as education and social welfare, and learned about cultural differences between the United States and Japan.

As part of our off-campus activities, we also visited an elementary school, a facility supporting individuals with substance dependence, and a nursing home.

During this program, our originally scheduled flight from Chicago to Bradley was canceled due to severe snow. As a result, we had to make an unplanned four-day stay in Chicago and rebook our flight. Consequently, we arrived at Elms College much later than planned. Despite this unexpected situation, everyone at Elms College responded promptly and provided us with tremendous support.

2) What I learned and realized during the exchange program

Through this program, I realized how popular Japanese culture is in the United

States. Some of the Friendship Partners were studying Japanese, and others had visited Japan before. Many students were also familiar with Japanese anime and manga. During Karaoke Night, some of them sang Japanese songs, and they even played Japanese music while driving. There were also students who worked part-time at Japanese restaurants. These experiences made me feel that Japan and Japanese culture are truly loved, and that Japan is supported by many people abroad who appreciate it.

I also learned a lot about the differences between English and Japanese. For example, I found that English does not have expressions like “itadakimasu” or “gochisousama,” which show gratitude before and after meals. I realized that these phrases represent a unique and beautiful part of Japanese culture. In addition, one FP asked me about Japanese honorifics and the cute sentence ending “～nano.” When I explained its meaning and how it is used, they told me that English does not have sentence endings that make expressions more polite or cute, and they said it was a charming aspect of Japanese. I was happy to hear that.

I also strongly felt how friendly people in the United States are. When talking with the FPs, they showed interest in us, asked many questions, and even complimented our outfits or checked on our health when greeting us. The teachers were also very approachable, and by the end of the program, we even exchanged Instagram accounts with her. I found it surprising because it is quite rare in Japan for teachers and students to exchange private social media accounts.

3) Others

Through this training program, I did not feel that my English skills improved dramatically, but I did become much more comfortable speaking English without hesitation. I also felt a strong sense of joy when my simple English was understood by others. At first, I was afraid to speak English because I am not very good at it, but the Friendship Partners kindly talked to me and listened to me seriously, which helped me feel more confident.

However, I often had to simplify what I wanted to say because I could not express my thoughts exactly as I intended. This made me realize that I want to study English more so that I can express myself in a more detailed and accurate way.

During our drives to supermarkets and activities, we listened to loud music and enjoyed energetic car rides, which was something I could never experience in Japan. It felt like a special and exciting part of daily life there.

At Elms College, there were not only American students but also students from countries such as France and Egypt. Being exposed to so many different cultures helped broaden my perspective.

I am truly grateful to everyone who was involved in this program. Thank you very much for all your support.

4) Photo



Short-term Exchange Program at ELMS College

1) Overview of Activities

I participated in a short-term exchange program at ELMS College in Chicopee, Massachusetts. During the program, I took English classes and learned how to communicate in an international environment.

In addition to the classes, I joined various cultural and educational activities. I visited an elementary school and a nursing home, where I learned about education and elderly care in the United States. I also attended a lecture about the Boston Red Sox and watched a hockey game, which helped me understand American sports culture.

Also, I communicated with local students through activities such as a Japanese food party and a karaoke party. Through these experiences, I was able to practice cross-cultural communication.

I also visited Boston and Chicago. In these cities, I saw historical buildings and experienced local culture through food and sightseeing.

2) What I Learned and Noticed

I learned three important things through this program.

First, I learned about English communication. In ESL classes, I learned basic English such as how to give directions and words related to events. In addition, talking with local students was a good opportunity to practice speaking. Sometimes, my pronunciation was not understood, even when I used the correct words. Through this experience, I learned about natural pronunciation and accent. I think I was able to have more natural conversations little by little because of these experiences.

Second, I learned about the differences between the healthcare systems in Japan and the United States. In ESL classes, students from both countries shared their ideas. For example, ambulance services are free in Japan, but they are expensive in the United States. In Japan, children can receive medical care at a low cost, but in the United States, families often must pay more. Also, some hospitals in Japan use online systems for appointments, while in the United States, waiting times can be long. There are also cultural differences, such as playing music during childbirth in the United States. In addition, I noticed differences in nurses' uniforms. In Japan, they are usually simple and light-colored, while in the United States, they are often colorful.

I also visited Providence Ministries, a facility for people experiencing homelessness and addiction. I learned that the facility is supported by many volunteers and donations such as

food. This experience helped me understand social support systems in the United States. Third, I learned about American culture through buildings and food. In Chicago, I visited famous places such as Cloud Gate. I learned that its reflective surface was inspired by liquid mercury. The shiny surface reflects people, the lights of Michigan Avenue, and the surrounding buildings and nature. I understood that this artwork includes the whole experience of Millennium Park. I also visited a large Starbucks store and the Art Institute of Chicago, where I saw many artworks, including Japanese art. In Boston, I ate local food such as shrimp. I also saw a memorial related to the Hungarian Revolution, which included a message about freedom. These experiences helped me learn about history and culture in the United States.

3) Other Reflections

First, I would like to write about my friendship partner. I stayed in my friendship partner's dorm room during the program. My partner is half Mexican and half American, and she introduced me to Mexican culture. She took me to eat tacos, which are famous in Mexico.

She is also a member of the volleyball team, so I had the opportunity to watch her practice. In addition, she took me go-karting, which was a new experience for me. She likes Japan because of anime, but she had not eaten much Japanese food before. When we made onigiri together, she was very happy. Through these experiences, we were able to share our cultures and interests and build a very good relationship.

Second, I would like to write about my future goals. I want to become a midwife in the future. However, I know that there are large differences in healthcare systems around the world, and I have been interested in healthcare outside Japan.

Through this program, I learned many differences between Japan and the United States. I think Japan's healthcare system, such as lower medical costs, is a good point. On the other hand, I noticed some unique aspects of healthcare in the United States, such as colorful nurse uniforms and playing music during childbirth. I think adding these kinds of ideas could make hospitals feel less stressful for patients.

In addition, I realized that it is important to think about global issues not only in healthcare, but also in education and welfare, while respecting each country's culture.

Finally, I learned that people in the United States are very kind and open-minded. I also felt that they respect and are interested in Japan. I am very grateful for this experience, and it has become an unforgettable memory for me.

4) Photos during the program



1 Make Onigiri



4 market



2 ESL class



3 Japanese food party



5 The Bean

Short-term exchange program at Elms College

1) Summary of activities

This program was conducted from February 22 to March 9, 2024, in Chicago, Elms College, and Boston in the United States. Due to severe weather, we stayed in Chicago from February 22 to February 26. We then moved to Elms College on the morning of February 26 and stayed until the morning of March 6. After that, we stayed in Boston from March 6 to March 8 and returned to Japan on March 9.

In Chicago, we visited places such as Cloud Gate and the Chicago Museum to learn about the city's culture and history.

At Elms College, we stayed with our friendship partners in the dormitory and deepened our relationship through daily life. On February 26, we experienced American Holidays, including Easter, Halloween, and Christmas. On February 27, we visited an elementary school and taught origami, and in the evening, we watched a Thunderbirds hockey game. On February 28, we cooked Japanese food such as tempura, rice balls, pork soup, and dorayaki, and enjoyed games together. On March 1, we went shopping at Westfarms Mall and enjoyed karaoke at night.

On March 2, we held a Japanese Celebration and introduced Japanese culture, experienced Irish dance, and went to Holyoke Mall for dinner and bowling. On March 3, we visited Providence Ministries and watched a movie. On March 4, we attended an Irish class and participated in a goodbye dinner. On March 5, we visited Glen Meadows, interacted through origami, and learned about the Red Sox. We left Elms College on March 6.

In Boston, we visited Quincy Market and enjoyed food and shopping.

2) Learning and realizations things in this program

During my short-term exchange at Elms College, I was impressed by the diversity of the students I met. My friendship partners were not only from the United States but also from countries such as Mexico, France, Egypt, and China. In Japan, people rarely mention their country of origin during introductions, but at Elms College, students naturally shared this information when greeting each other. This showed me that students from many different countries and racial backgrounds study together, which was my first strong experience of diversity. I also noticed that the campus has a church, reflecting an environment that respects different religions and allows students to live comfortably without disrupting their daily lives. Seeing this made me realize that diversity is not only about nationality or race but also about religion and personal

values, and that a supportive environment helps students feel included and confident.

I also felt a strong sense of freedom at the university. Although I had an image of America as a “land of freedom,” experiencing life on campus made it much clearer. For example, students were allowed to eat during class, there were no dormitory curfews, and they could spend time late at night in shared rooms. I also noticed that rules about clothing and hairstyles in elementary, middle, and high school were much more relaxed than in Japan. Observing my friendship partners’ daily life and future plans, I realized that they pursue what they want freely without worrying about others’ opinions, enjoying their time actively. Their attitude made me reflect on how freedom can encourage creativity and personal growth, which I found inspiring.

At first, I was very concerned about communicating with my friendship partners because my English skills are limited. Initially, I struggled to express myself, and sometimes I could not understand their words, which made me hesitant to speak. However, as I spent more time with them, I gradually managed to continue conversations in simple English, and they also tried to understand my intentions. I realized that communication is not only about words but also about expressions and gestures, and the effort to convey one’s thoughts is very important. I also noticed that sharing experiences, such as cooking together or playing games, helped build connections even when language skills were limited.

Finally, I noticed many differences in food culture. Portion sizes were much larger than in Japan, and high-calorie foods such as hamburgers and pizza were common, which taught me about different eating preferences. The university cafeteria accommodated various needs, including vegetarian options, religious dietary restrictions, and personalized choices. Students also had flexibility in when and where they ate, which showed me how freedom and respect for individual habits are embedded in daily life. Experiencing meals together also provided opportunities to talk and share culture, which strengthened my understanding of daily life in the U.S.

Overall, this exchange program gave me a deeper understanding of American culture and university life. I learned how diversity, freedom, communication, and food habits shape students’ daily experiences. I realized the importance of respecting differences, expressing myself clearly, and actively participating in new environments. Spending time with students from various backgrounds taught me to be more open-minded and adaptable. This program not only improved my language and cultural skills but also gave me confidence to interact with people from around the world and to appreciate different perspectives. It was a valuable experience that I believe will influence my future studies and personal growth.

4) photos



shopping



Goodbye dinner



ESL Class



Lunch

Short-term exchange program at Elms College

-Activity overview

I participated in the short-term exchange program at Elms College in the United States. During this program, we visited medical institutions and elementary school to experience the atmosphere and observe differences between Japan and the United States. In addition, we communicated with local students and talked about their school life and personal experiences. Through these interactions, we were able to learn more about the educational environment and student life in the United States.

-learning through this program

When we visited a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center (Providence Ministries), I learned about the challenges people with addiction face and how the government insurance system is different from Japan. As a point I felt was different, Japanese center often use like an isolated house, but in the United States, it was a hotel format. In addition, it was found that while there are many former dependents in Japan, there are many medical professionals (like doctor or nurse) and counselors in the United States. From the introduction of the center, I learned that there is also a 2–3-day volunteer operation. I also learned in the ESL class the day before that the center only accepts men. When I asked how many people could live, I found out that there were 75 people. It was bigger than I imagined.

Visiting an elementary school was also valuable experience. I was able to learn about the atmosphere of classes in the United States and the relationship between teachers and students. I noticed about the atmosphere was open, and students were encouraged to express their opinions and participate actively in class. When the teacher asked the students a question, it was seen that many students actively raised their hands and tried to speak. In Japan, students often refrain from asking questions and making statements out of embarrassment, so I felt that the learning environment felt more open and relaxed. I think it was a big difference. I thought that the atmosphere of classes in the United States, where students can express their thoughts and questions without being embarrassed, is good learning environment for both students and teachers.

Communicating with ELMs College students was one of the most meaningful experiences during this program. Through our conversations, I learned about their daily

life, school environment, and future goals. My friendship partners were also majoring in nursing too. When I asked them why they were majoring in nursing, one of them said she wanted to save her family who had been discovered and also help people with similar symptoms. Her story was similar to my situation, and I could relate to it. After that we talked about the image of a future nurse. It was impressive time for me.

I spent a lot of time in the common room of the dormitory. Many dormitory students gathered in the common room, playing table tennis and watching movies. I looked at the conversation between Americans, physical contact such as hugging is commonly used as a greeting, and communication with physical closeness seemed natural. Compared to Japan, handshakes are not very common as greetings, and also hugging is usually limited to close relationship.

I also noticed a difference in attitudes about gender. There was a boy student who liked cute hairstyles and accessories like girls, but other students treated him naturally without paying special attention. In Japan, the way of thinking about gender are gradually changing. However, people may still be concerned about how others see them. In contrast, in the United States, individuality seemed to be accepted more naturally.

Before going to ELMs college, I was nervous about speaking English, but the students were very friendly and supportive. Even when my English was not perfect, many students tried to understand me and responded in simple English. I felt kindness towards people not only in universities but also in daily life. People in United States build close and friendly relationship. For example, store clerks often start conversations by saying "How are you?". In addition, I was impressed by how people would casually start conversations, such as complimenting someone's appearance and asking their name, even when meeting for the first time. This experience helped me realize that communication is not only about language but also about the willingness to connect with others. Through this short-term exchange program, I learned about the atmosphere of United States, such as the kindness of people, a sense of freedom, and the healthcare system. I am considering working as a nurse overseas in the future, so I would like to make use of what I learned through this experience. And I also strongly felt that I need to focus more on studying English.



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Title : “Short-term exchange program at Elms College”

1) Activity overview

We departed Kochi Ryoma Airport by plane at 10:30 AM Japan time on February 22nd and arrived at Haneda Airport. From Haneda Airport, we flew directly to Chicago O'Hare International Airport and stayed in Chicago from the 22nd to the 25th US time. In Chicago, we visited Cloud Gate (The Bean), one of the world's largest Starbucks, and the Art Institute of Chicago. Then, at 5:30 AM on the 26th, we departed O'Hare Airport. After arriving at Elms College, we had lunch with our Friendship Partners (FPs), attended orientation, a campus tour, ESL classes, and dinner, learning about the American holiday in a fun way. On the morning of the 27th, we interacted with elementary school students at Bowe Elementary School by doing origami and other activities, and in the evening we went to watch an ice hockey game in which Thunderbird was playing. On the 28th, we took a bus to Dr. Joyce Hampton's house and split into three groups to cook Japanese food for them. On March 1st, we went to Westfarms Mall with FP and bought formal wear to wear to the Goodbye Dinner on the 4th, and then did karaoke at the Library Theater. On the 2nd, we did Japanese origami and calligraphy at Dining Hall, and then went bowling at Round One to deepen our friendships. On the 3rd, we visited a facility called Province Ministries and learned how homeless people live there. On the 4th, we learned Irish in Irish Class. In the evening, at the Goodbye Dinner, there were speeches in English by the Japanese students and a group photo. On the 5th, we took a bus to a nursing home and interacted with the residents by answering their questions and doing calligraphy and origami. We also learned about the American baseball team, the Red Sox, from a man working as Santa Claus. On the 7th and 8th, we ate, shopped, and bought souvenirs at Quincy Market in Boston. On the 9th, we departed for Japan and arrived at Kochi Airport at 8:20 PM Japan time.

2) Learnings and insights from the trainings

Through this study abroad program, I learned the importance of perspective and mindset. Firstly, there was a change in my thinking. Originally, I was prone to worry and tended to view things pessimistically, but through interactions with faculty and students at Elms College, and with people I met in Chicago and Boston, I was exposed to a positive and optimistic attitude. As a result, within a few days of the start of the

program, I became able to respond positively to unexpected events. Furthermore, I learned the importance of positively accepting the opinions of others, from observing how people clearly express their own opinions without being swayed by others, and from the environment that accepts such opinions.

Secondly, I learned the importance of purposeful action. During my stay in Chicago, I initially got carried away with sightseeing, but I reaffirmed my original purpose of understanding different cultures and set the goal of learning about history and culture through museum visits. Also, from my experiences abroad, I realized the need for caution in judging situations and not easily trusting others. From these points, I learned the importance of thinking and acting proactively. I also became aware of the differences in lifestyle and social structure between Japan and other countries. The tipping culture was particularly memorable. In the United States, tipping is common in various situations, such as restaurants and hotels, and a culture of expressing gratitude for service with money is deeply ingrained. This custom is not present in Japan, so I was initially confused, but I gradually came to understand its significance. I also strongly felt the high level of interest in politics and international affairs. In particular, there were instances where international tensions, such as the conflict between the United States and Iran, were mentioned, and I realized the importance of paying attention to safety. I learned that a stable environment like that in Japan is not always guaranteed, and that it is necessary to proactively gather information and act when abroad. From these experiences, I realized that understanding different cultures requires considering the background society and international relations.

3) Others

In addition, I would like to write down some easy-to-understand advice in bullet points for students who will be going on this study abroad program next year. This advice is based on what I discussed with my ESL teacher and other students during my last ESL class at Elms College.

- Should bring water bottle, Japanese foods, hanger, letter set to write for Elms students, many medicines, more than two weeks' supply of wet masks, disposable dishes, chopsticks, disinfectant wipes, more than \$630-, formal clothes for farewell dinner, heat-tech clothes, portable phone charger.
- Learn more English! Majors, what majors do, American slang, sarcasm-distinguish what is literal, idioms, abbreviations.
- Ask lots of questions.
- Be brave-share your true thoughts, don't be shy!!



“Short-term exchange program at Elms College”

1)activity overview

We spent our time in America, especially Chicago, Massachusetts, and Boston. America is a big country. As you know, it has huge buildings, enormous amounts of population, big people and more. Completely, there are many differences compared to Japan.

Thanks to those differences, I was able to see something using variable perspectives. If I had not been to America, I could not have felt such feelings. I wanted to learn how different Japanese and English are during this activity. This activity made me research this topic easily. I think to understand differences is good for my dream, which is to be an English teacher for high school students in Japan. To improve my English skills, I really want to go to America again, because the time I spent was too short. Through this activity, I believe the door to my dream has opened.

2)learning and notice in this program

I had a wonderful time in America. In this program, I found a lot of interesting things. I will write them from three perspectives.

First, I will write about what I learned at Elms College. Students at Elms College were very welcome to us. I was able to be a completely different person compared from me was in Japan. Environment in this college made me change. I was able to talk with all of my friendship partners because of their kindness and this environment. Thanks to these reasons, I could make friends. Additionally, there are students who did not come from America, such as France, Vietnam, Egypt, and more. In University of Kochi, there are little students from other countries. In Elms College, people can talk about their cultures, music, sports, and more with people from different countries using English.

Second, I will write about what I noticed in town. In public space, there are mostly English and Spanish. Japanese is used only global space. It is supposed that English is major and Japanese is minor in the world. Many facilities in Japan use not only Japanese but also English, Hangul, and Chinese and so on. There are differences in used language. Japan is adopting to the global standards. We met a homeless person when we wanted to take our pictures. He wore a jacket which was like a security guard, so I never thought he was a homeless person, who wanted to get money. In Japan, if we have no money and go to a government office, we can get enough money to live. We do not have to be homeless people. There is the wage gap which is wider Japan. So, if we live in the America, we must keep in mind, “to live in the America is challenging because of the wage gap.”

Third, I will write about what I learned in talking with various people in public spaces. We went to Bowe elementary school, which is located near Elms College. We tried to make something such as a snake and a helmet using origami. The kids were very honest. When I could not explain how to make origami correctly, I was laughed at by them.

However, at the last moment, I made a crane for the kids. They looked satisfied with this. I noticed that kids were very honest as much as we cannot imagine. As you know, when we were kids, we were doing so. We went to Glenmeadow, which is a facility for elderly people. We did calligraphy, tried to teach how to make “origami” and talked with them. As soon as we entered the common room, we were interviewed by them with a lot of questions. After interviewing, someone spoke to me about Japan. I tried to understand what they said and say what I wanted to say, but I could not. Honestly, I thought I could talk with them easily. I have been studying English grammar since I was a high school student. However, I realized the most important thing is not how completely I talk but how much I want to talk. I talked with a grandmother, who lived in Okinawa. When I could not understand what she said, she said to me, “make sense?” many times. I spent most of the time there talking with her. I was asked about my dream by her and answered, “I want to be an English teacher in Japan”. she said to me “If you want to be an English teacher, you should come America again. I can teach you English and learn Japanese from you, make sense?” Of course, I could understand what she said. Additionally, she said” if you come America again, call me.” I thought I must go there again. At the last moment, she called me “my new friend.” Hearing the word, I thought even if there is an age gap or a difference in nationality, we can become friends by talking. The most disappointing thing is that I did not take a picture with her. I can remember her, but I cannot see her.

3)others

At the karaoke party, we were able to have fun singing and dancing, even if we didn’t know the song friendship partners sang, we sang together. When Elms College students come to Kochi, I want to take them to karaoke. If I do so, I can hear English songs I do not know, and we will be excited absolutely. When we did karaoke, we sang songs along with YouTube, so we did not score songs. Scoring karaoke, we will be more excited.

When we went Starbucks and I ordered, the staff misunderstood my name. They asked my name after I finished ordering and I answered. My name is “Keito” but, they wrote my name as “Kayto”. I wonder if I could make sure my name was conveyed correctly. I must learn how to pronounce accent of my name before I order something in Starbucks. You should bring some 25 cents coins if you want to use laundry service. In Boston, I wanted to use laundry service, but I didn’t have any coins. I wanted to talk the frontman that I want currency exchange. I thought about trying to explain it myself, but since I didn’t know how to describe the currency exchange, I used a translation app then. I really regret not memorizing some useful English phrases for this activity and not bringing any coins.

Thanks to this activity, I experienced exotic feelings. If I have enough money and time to go to America, I definitely go there.

4)photos



Short-term exchange program at Elms College

Summary of activities

When we arrived in Chicago-O'Hare International Airport, we heard that our connecting flight was canceled because of the weather. So, all the university of Kochi students stayed in Chicago for four days. We were involved in the accident from the beginning of the short-term exchange program at Elms College, but I thought this was the real pleasure of traveling, so I decided to enjoy it in any situation.

In Chicago, we went to Millennium Monument, Cloud Gate, the biggest Starbucks in the world, and The Art Institute of Chicago.

At Elms college, we took ESL (English as Second Language) classes, we went Bowe Elementary School, watched the ice hockey game, did Karaoke, learned Irish and Irish dance. In addition, our FP took us to ROUND1 on FP night day. FP spent so much time together (taking class, playing chess, ping pong, and video game, and shopping).

What I learned and noticed during the short-term exchange program at Elms College

There were many things that were different from Japan!

After the immigration, we needed to book a hotel. Our professor booked us a hotel, and we had to wait for the shuttle bus to get to the hotel. Then, I was surprised that the shuttle bus service time was not fixed. Also, I noticed that many national flags are displayed on sidewalks and inside and outside buildings.

When we went to Cloud Gate, we met a homeless man. He told one of the students that her hat looked like his, and he showed us how to take pictures, how to arrange us, and how to pose. After taking our pictures, he asked us to give him some money. He told us that he wants to earn money in the right way, and he thought that he felt he had earned the money by providing a service. I could understand his situation, and felt glad that I could help him, and relieved that he was trying to earn money without committing any crimes. In Chicago, I saw many homeless people that surprised me. The number of homeless people seemed much larger than in Japan.

When we visited Bowe Elementary School, I was surprised that so many students wanted to say their own opinion. Also, Elementary School has a vending machine which can buy only books and the vending machine's name is "feed your mind". If you get some points to earn the points by doing good things in school. The classroom has its own economy. The students can earn money by answering the phone instead of their teacher, making statements actively in class, writing their schedule on a calendar, and so on. They can buy a seat next to their friend, hand gum, which is like a slime, chance to sit on teacher's chair, and so on from their money earned in class economics.

At Elms college, I met a lot of foreigners (French, Vietnamese, Egyptian, Irish etc....) so there is multicultural environment all the time and for the first time I realized that many students have English as their second language. After I realized that, it became easier for me to speak English and no fear.

In the USA, I felt that it is a good place for I could understand myself, find my true self and be able to be honest. People who live there and I met there are Direct and Assertive to communicate with others. In Japan, in Kochi, I was afraid of saying my opinion and be honest my mind. Also, I learned Assertive communication in Interpersonal relationships and Mental Health. People in the USA don't need to learn it, because those people already know it and use it normally in communication.

There are a lot of wild squirrels in the United States. In Kochi, that is not common, so I felt lucky the day I was able to see squirrels.

Others

When I stayed in Chicago, an old friend who I have known since I was a high school student came to see me at my hotel. I met him after almost two years. We had a great time talking to each other about what we've been up to lately. So, now come to think of it stuck in Chicago was not bad for me rather I think that is lucky and happy accident. When I stayed in Boston, an old friend who my sister introduced me to last summer came to see me and she guided me and my friends. I think this program gave us a lot of freedom if we followed the rules and didn't cause trouble for other students or our college.

I had so much fun at Elms College. It is good opportunity to speak English, make friends over the world, and broaden your horizons. Because it's an exchange program. College gives us community and we can take communication with FP and college staff. We stayed four days in Chicago and two days in Boston. There was no pre-existing community for us, so we had to create our own opportunities to talk to people. I noticed that University of Kochi and Elms College gave us the community. Also, their students and FP were so nice and kind to us, so I can say clearly you can speak English, experience a lot and it's a great program for first-time visiting abroad.

I learned that we don't have to be afraid of making mistakes when speaking English. Making mistakes can be successful and be proof of your challenge. Because you are still learning English now. I also noticed that in the USA, it is common to ask about things you don't understand on the spot. Which means they are trying to communicate with you. Even if my English isn't perfect, people listen carefully and try to understand, so I realized it's important to speak without fear and keep challenging myself.

Pictures during the short-term exchange program at Elms College

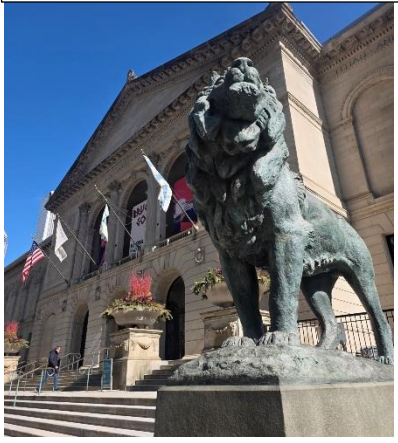


A squirrel 🍀

This picture was taken by a homeless man at Cloud Gate



The Art Institute of Chicago



Taking ESL class with FP



Shopping



Playing foosball



Ice hockey game



Playing ping pong



ROUND 1



Brake time of learning Irish dance

Short-term exchange program at Elms College

Activity description

In this program, we experienced a lot of valuable things and some unexpected things. Especially, our flight was cancelled, and we were stuck in Chicago for four days unfortunately. When we visited Boston, we could not visit Harvard college by protest to Iran.

However, we discussed making plans to learn about Chicago culture. As a result, we learned about America-specific culture while we were looking around city. Furthermore, we also could learn the way of making relationships between different countries in Elms college. That is why friendship partners did many events for us.

Therefore, I will report about what I learned from this program in this report.

What I think is important

As I communicated with many kinds of people, I felt like being brave to talk is important again. I have visited some countries before, but I could not speak English so well then. Thus, I was afraid of talking with local people and I felt pressure to make mistakes. On the other hand, I tried to talk with friendship partners in this program because I wanted to change myself. When I spoke with them, no one pointed out my English skill instead, everyone was kind and willing to talk with me. What made me especially happy was spending time together in the dormitory common space, where we sang songs, did puzzles, and played table tennis.

Particularly, I was glad that we were able to enjoy time together not only during the planned events but also in our free time. Therefore, I really felt the importance of taking proactively speaking to others.

Specific differences between Japan and America

One cultural difference what I noticed was the percentage of having a car license seemed higher among college students there. It compared to students in Japan. When my friendship partners asked me whether I had a car license and I answered that I did not. Then, they seemed surprised. I felt that not having a license might be uncommon there from that reaction.

The other difference what I noticed was that expressions of political opinions were more public than in Japan. When I used public transportation in Chicago and Boston, I found critical messages about the current administration written on train wall.

Although small-scale demonstrations regarding government policies are sometimes

held in Japan, however, it is rare for individuals to express their opinions by writing on public property. In addition, the protest the Iran conflict that I heard in Boston seemed to be on a completely different scale compared to those in Japan. I felt that expressing political opinions through large-scale demonstrations, often involving police presence, is a characteristic feature of American culture.

Conclusion

From these experiences, I was able to exchange with various friendship partners every day in college. In addition, achieving my goal of improving my English, I was also able to teach Japanese.

Moreover, Japanese culture such as anime and Vocaloid was very popular, and many students were learning Japanese from these interests. They often asked me to teach them simple words in daily conversations, which made our interactions more enjoyable. Language exchange like this, built through everyday communication, made the experience even more meaningful and enjoyable.

In addition, by comparing the United States with Japan, I was able to learn about various aspects of American culture. Beyond the examples mentioned above, there were many differences in daily lifestyles as well.

Recently, it has become easy to obtain information about other countries through the Internet. However, by visiting a place, it is possible to gain experiences that go beyond what can be learned online.

Therefore, I strongly feel that participating in this program was a valuable and worthwhile experience.



“Short-term exchange program at Elms College”

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who gave me this opportunity to participate in this program. There were several accidents in our study abroad, but we were able to learn a lot of things within it. First, we conducted training in Chicago for about 4 days. I was surprised by the number of homeless people. When we went to “Cloud gate” someone took pictures of us. We were expressing our gratitude with joy, but then the person suddenly revealed that they were homeless and began asking for money. It was very scary for me. I wanted to run away immediately, but we had no choice but to pay the money because we didn't want to cause any trouble. Also, there were people shouting on the train, even though it's supposed to be prohibited. Through these experiences, I realized how safe and comfortable our country is. At the same time, I learned a little about the challenges and differences within American society. I was also surprised that the local people seemed indifferent to those frightening people. I thought that it had probably become normal for them, so they no longer felt anything strange about it.

When I arrived at Elms College, I felt very happy to be warmly welcomed. However, I couldn't keep up with the speed of native English conversations, and I began to lose confidence in my own English speaking ability. When I was shown to my dorm, I couldn't understand what my roommate was saying, so I kept responding with “yes,” which sometimes confused them. However, as the days passed, I gradually began to get a sense of what was being said and was able to communicate little by little. While living together, I noticed some clear differences from Japan, especially regarding cultural roots. My roommate, Ramia, places great importance on her heritage, and she had flags of her parents' home countries, Puerto Rico and the Republic of Zimbabwe, displayed in our room. I felt that this was a unique aspect of American culture, where people from many different countries come together. Additionally, Ramia is very conscious about symbols and emblems. She warned me not to step on the university emblem painted on the ground. I also saw her point it out when another student stepped on it, which made me realize how strongly she values such symbols. In the ESL class I experienced at Elms college, we discussed the differences between the healthcare systems in Japan and the United States. I learned that in the U.S., calling an ambulance can be very expensive, so people don't use it unless it's necessary. I felt that this reflects the differences in the political systems of the two countries.

I also heard that in some American hospitals, a bell is rung when a baby is born or when

someone passes away, which surprised me because there is no such custom in Japan. On the other hand, when I explained that in Japan people aged 18 and over generally pay only 30% of their medical costs, and those under 18 often have their medical expenses covered, many people were very surprised. This experience gave me a valuable opportunity to realize once again how great healthcare systems can differ from country to country. When we cooked Japanese food, everyone enjoyed dishes like sushi and tonjiru. In particular, the dorayaki we made for dessert was unfamiliar to them because it used sweet red bean paste, so they were hesitant to try it at first. However, they ended up really liking it, and it disappeared as soon as we served it. I was very happy that everyone enjoyed Japanese food. When we learned Irish dance, everyone danced the same routine with great effort, even while out of breath. Through the dance, we were able to deepen our understanding of Irish culture and communicate more with each other. On the day before we left for Boston, they held a warm farewell party for us. Memories from those few days came rushing back, and I felt like I was going to cry. The next day, I expressed my deepest gratitude and left Elms College. I was able to have many valuable experiences in Boston as well. One event left a very strong impression on me the demonstrations related to Iran. Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which we had originally planned to visit, were at the center of the situation, so we were unable to go.

When we talked to our friends from Elms College about it, they told us that if we had gone there, we might have been caught up in the demonstrations and could even have been arrested or, in the worst case, seriously harmed. Hearing that sent chills down my spine. Because of this, we changed our plans and went to Quincy Market, which is famous in Boston. There, many products related to the city's well-known lobster were sold, and when I tried lobster, I found it to be meatier and much more delicious than shrimp or crab. I was also deeply impressed by the historic streets of Boston, which have a charm quite different from buildings in Japan.

Through this trip, we were able to gain a wide variety of experiences. I am truly grateful to everyone who made this opportunity possible. I hope to make the most of these experiences and dedicate myself fully to my studies from now on.



