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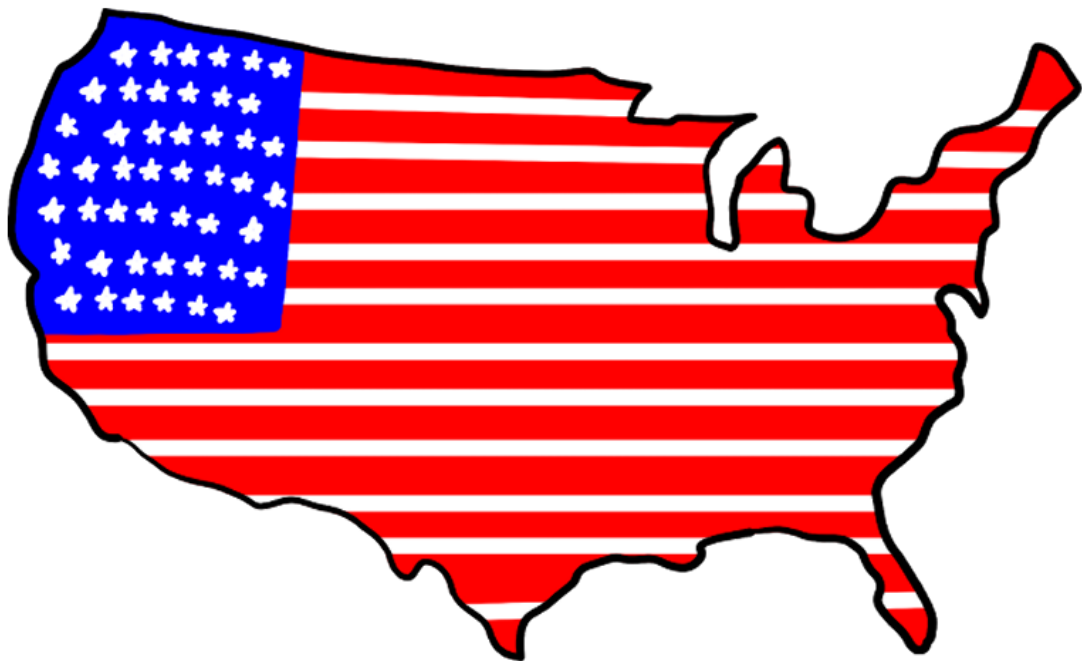
# AGU CENTENARY COLLEGE PROGRAM

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Aoyama Gakuin University



These essays are written by students who participates in study abroad A program 2024 at the college of science and engineering. We went to Centenary College of Louisiana for two weeks and learned a lot of things such as different culture. We appreciate Centenary College of Louisiana's great help.



# The wonderful two weeks

Miyu Sugimoto

Through studying abroad in America for two weeks, I was able to learn many things that I had never experienced before. I'm going to tell you the especially impressed things that I learned.

The first is American culture. In the class, Japanese students introduced Japanese culture and discussed it with American students. For example, we asked American students about their opinions of Japanese culture and learned about different American cultures. It was a valuable experience for me as I had rarely communicated with Americans until now. It was interesting to learn about American culture that is completely different from Japanese culture. I was glad that the American students were interested in Japanese culture, saying, "Japanese culture is a little complicated, but it is interesting." Also, through the study abroad, I learned that Americans have a culture that values freedom. For example, they express their opinions and feelings clearly. Thanks to this, at first I was confused even to talk to people, but gradually I was able to express my thoughts, feelings, and requests.

The second is real English. Through class discussions, I was able to learn practical English. Also, outside of the class, I had many opportunities to communicate a lot with American students during playing sports, inside a moving car and so on. There, I was able to learn casual expressions and expressions that are used frequently that are not taught in Japanese school classes. At first, Americans often couldn't understand the English I spoke, and I couldn't understand what Americans were saying. It turned out that my intonation, accent, and rhythm were all wrong. Over the two weeks, I touched a lot of English, so I was able to understand the content and speak much better than before studying abroad.

The third is that there are many kind, warm and helpful people in America. After the class, they took us to an ice cream shop, a local hunting shop, and an American fast-food restaurant. I am also very grateful to the Americans who took care of the little things, such as driving me from the baseball field on campus to the dorm.

One thing I especially remember is playing Mario Kart with everyone in the dorm lounge. I was happy to know that Japanese games are being enjoyed around the world, and we all had a great time, which became a special memory.

I had various valuable experiences in this program, and my values have changed a lot. Also, it motivated me to continue learning English. It was a wonderful two weeks in my life. I'm so grateful to everyone involved in this program. I'll go back to America, and I'm looking forward to meeting them again.



The left photo was taken at the gas station " Buc-ee's " on the way home from the MLB. It was my first time watching an MLB game, and I felt the excitement and power of the game. I was moved to be able to see it on-site.

The right photo was taken while playing Mario Kart in the dorm lounge. Everyone was very kind, and it became a wonderful memory.

# What I learned from two weeks study abroad

Minori Noguchi

I learned a lot of things through this study abroad. There are about three points. I want to write about that.

First of all, I have learned that even if you don't have a perfect skill of the language, you can communicate with each other as long as we think that we want to communicate with each other. For example, when we talk about everyday talk or our hobbies, even if I could not completely understand the conversation, I could see what they wanted to say by their gestures, facial expressions, and moods. I thought we should not have a passive personality, just because we cannot master language perfectly. However, I felt that advanced language skills are required when it comes to discussion. For example, one must have knowledge of the premises of the discussion as well as the terminology used in the discussion. Therefore, I felt that it would be difficult to discuss unless I could master the language to some extent. Also, I could not explain what I thought and remained silent. I also learned that this is a rude attitude for Americans. I learned that in Japan, silence is important, but not in the U.S. If you cannot clearly express your opinion, it is considered as if you are not thinking about anything.

Secondly, it was difficult to convey the nuance of what I wanted to say. Japanese people are able to read between the lines, "gyoukan" and understand ambiguous parts and nuances, but I felt the difficulty of not being able to do so. I thought that differences in customs, language, and ways of thinking may be major factors.

Finally, I thought that if you want to communicate or build a good relationship with someone whose native language is different from your own, you need to know about their culture, and you also need to have the attitude of wanting to know. This is because the desire to

know you and your country's culture will be conveyed to the other person. During this study abroad period, I talked with many people and was able to get a sense of whether or not they were interested in Japan. This means that the same goes the other way around. It is important to show that you are interested in the other person and that you are interested in them. This is not just an American and Japanese, but I think it is necessary for Japanese people to be interested in each other as well. This attitude of being interested in the other person is conveyed to the other person, and I learned that it is important in situations where you want to build a friendly relationship or build a good relationship in business and other situations.

I was able to learn many things like the above through this two weeks study abroad program. It was definitely the most intense two weeks of my life, and I would like to make the most of what I've learned in my future life.



# My Experience in America

Ai Ishihara

I went to Centenary College in Louisiana, U.S.A. for 2 weeks from Aug. 7 to Aug. 22 for an overseas cultural study program. There, about 20 local students were taking a class called "Japanese class," and I participated in it, taking classes and playing together. The two weeks I spent in this program were a very important experience and a wonderful memory for me. The biggest thing I learned from this program is that if you want to grow, don't be afraid to fail and keep trying. When I arrived in the U.S. on the plane after leaving Japan, I could not stop being excited about the challenge of studying abroad, and I thought I would absorb as much as I could if I had the chance to go abroad and experience real English. However, on my first day at the university, when we had a group discussion with two local students and one Japanese student, I was more nervous about whether I would be able to express my opinions clearly than I was excited about speaking with the local students. I would repeat the words I was going to say in my head and think, "Isn't this wrong? I wanted to speak perfect English, but I had a hard time expressing my opinions. I wanted to speak perfect English, but it was difficult to express my opinions. I was never once told that my English was strange. I learned that no matter how bad my English is, if I don't keep trying, I won't get better and I won't be able to communicate. They also took me to ice cream shops and other places in their free time, and we played games and basketball together, which allowed me to be more open-minded and talk to them more easily. The professors who taught local classes were also very kind and answered all my questions, let me observe graduate students' classes (even though I had no idea what they were doing), and took us to major league baseball and bowling. I think it was the friendly attitude of the local students when they interacted with us that made me have a very positive attitude toward English in just two short weeks. The two

weeks of fun went by so fast, and I knew that I would probably never see them again, so as the last day approached, I felt very sad. I did not find anything inconvenient or unpleasant about this program. Rather, it has made me more enthusiastic about the exchange program, and I have been able to experience a culture and customs that are completely different from those in Japan and on a different scale from those in Japan. If given the opportunity I would gladly go to Centenary College. And I would like to thank everyone involved in this program. Thank you very much. Finally, I would like to recommend these words to anyone who is struggling with a new challenge: "Nothing will work unless you do"-Maya Angelou.





# Important things I gained from this study abroad experience

Yoko Monai



Studying abroad at Centenary University was an unforgettable experience for me. At first, I was very nervous about whether I could improve my English and whether I could speak well. It was my first time to go abroad. However, I learned so much in the classes and in the various activities that I was able to forget my nervousness and have a valuable experience.

What surprised me the most was that the Centenary students loved Japanese culture more than me, a Japanese person. They said they loved Pokémon, Mario, and One Piece. We talked about the difference between the English and Japanese names of the characters, and playing Mario Kart together was a fresh experience. I was glad to know that there are people who love Japan even in distant lands. On the other hand, I had no knowledge of American culture or even my own country, so I gained big motivation to learn more about American and Japanese culture.

Of course, I think my English skills improved a little through this program. Originally, my goal in this program was to improve my speaking and listening skills. In high school, I had passed the EIKEN Pre-Level 1 test and thought I was good at reading and writing English, but I was completely unable to speak and listen. Therefore, I wanted to improve my English speaking and listening skills by studying abroad. At first, I felt that the speed at which the local people spoke English was very fast and I could not understand much, but in everyday conversation, I gradually began to understand what they were saying. However, when discussing Japanese and American

culture in class, I sometimes felt frustrated that I could not convey my opinions well, or that I could not immediately understand what the other student was saying. In a discussion about Japanese wabi-sabi, when asked why Japanese people like wabi-sabi, I was frustrated because I could not give a good answer. I learned the importance of not only understanding and speaking English, but also of instantly communicating in a way that is easy for others to understand. I realized once again that my English skills are not yet good enough. I would like to learn more about Japanese culture so that I can convey the good qualities of Japanese culture to others, even though I could not communicate well this time.

In conclusion, this study abroad experience was invaluable to me. Through this study abroad experience, I not only improved my English skills, but I also realized that people overseas also like Japanese culture. It motivated me to learn more about the differences between Japanese and American culture and to improve my English. Also, unlike Japan, where buildings are lined up in rows, the U.S. is spacious and there are many wide buildings across the country. The size of the food was also large, and everything felt big, but I eat a lot, so I felt the American style suited me very well. I am a shy person and I am always concerned about what others think of me, but I felt very free and comfortable in the U.S. I have a big dream to live in the U.S. someday. It was a very satisfying study abroad experience, as I was able to realize my big dream of living in the U.S. someday and was greatly encouraged to continue studying English hard.

# My experience in the U.S.

Yutaro Sato

The two weeks I spent in the U.S. become invaluable to me. I was nervous and anxious because I had never been abroad before departure. Those feelings were gone as soon as we arrived. The students, teachers, and staff at Centenary University were all very kind and put my mind at ease. Of course, the first two days I was bewildered by the different lifestyle from Japan, but I soon got used to it. I've learned a lot During my two weeks in the U.S. There are three main things I learned in the U.S.

The first thing I learned was cultural differences, especially guns. In the class, I sometimes talked about my hobbies with students at Centenary College. Several students said their hobby was hunting. They hunt deer, wild boar, wild birds, and other wild animals using guns. Apparently, they eat the animals they hunt. In Japan, we need a license to own a gun, and there are restrictions on hunting. I was amazed at how easy it is to hunt in the US. Also, when Centenary students took me to a large home improvement place, I was very surprised to see that they usually sold guns. There were not only guns, but also bows and crossbows, many of which are rarely seen in Japan. When I saw these, I was excited and terrified at the same time, and I was reminded of how safe Japan is. Other than the guns, I was amazed at the showers and toilets. Bathrooms and toilets are often clean in Japan because we are cleaned most meticulously. It was not flattering clean in the US, and even the major airport, Dallas, was not very clean. There was a gap in the bathroom door, which surprised me the most. I felt the high standard of living in Japan.

The second thing I learned was the difficulty and the joy of speaking English. I thought I could communicate to some extent, having studied English since I was in the first year of junior high school. However, when I talked with native speakers, I realized how poor my speaking ability was. What I found particularly difficult was listening. Luckily, the students and staff at Centenary were kind enough to

answer my questions, and I was able to have a conversation with them. I used to think that if I pronounced something wrong, I wouldn't be able to communicate, but I've learned that it's possible to have a conversation even with a slight mispronunciation. Conversation in English was difficult but also enjoyable. I was very happy when my ideas were understood in class discussions. I was able to get to know the students better through basketball, games, and outings. I felt then that nationality had nothing to do with sports and games.

These two weeks have been invaluable for me. I don't usually cry at all, but I cried so much when I had to say goodbye to the Centenary students, but this farewell is not a goodbye for this life. I trust we will meet again someday.



# The Great Experience in America

Yume Tamura

I had valuable two weeks with classmates at Centenary College of Louisiana. This experience taught me a lot of wonderful things. I think its are very important to communicate with many kinds of people from now on.

Before I leave Japan, I worried about communicating with other country people. On

the first class, I tried to join the discussion, but I couldn't do actively. Because the actual English was fast and hard to listen. So, it was all I tried to understand conversation. And I was afraid that I spoke wrong English. From these reasons, I wasn't confident and I just hearing conversation. After the first class, I felt anxious that I could do well for two weeks. I talked with AGU students about that. They and I encouraged each other. It made me relax. In other situation, I got a lot of them help. I really appreciate AGU students. Thanks to them, I could keep working hard the next day. In the next day's class, I tried to ask what I couldn't understand. At first, I felt sorry that I had asked back and interrupt the conversation so many times. But Centenary students answered kindly without showing any displeasure. I was surprised at their reaction because I assumed they might be irritating by my behavior. When I apologized and asked back them what they had said, they said to me "it's OK" and explained in easy way to understand for me. It resumed me a lot and got rid of my hesitation to speak English. I also appreciate Centenary students. Their behavior took away my anxious which I felt at first day. Since then, I enjoyed taking the classes. There were many times when I had what I didn't understand and didn't keep up with the classes but, Centenary students helped me every time. From this experience, I learned that it's important to speak even if I'm not sure.

And I learned that if I try to speak English, even awkwardly, I can eventually tell the message I want to tell. I think that it's very beneficial to know the facts. Knowing these facts, it'll be able to communicate with many kinds of people around the world easier.

I realized another thing through the two weeks. That is difference of culture between America and Japan. This is often said, I experienced it in various situations. For example, the reaction which we give back after being thanked was different between American and Japanese. In Japan, if we're thanked by someone, we hardly say "you're welcome", we're humble or make response muddy. On the other hand, in America, when I told gratitude, they nodded or said, "you're welcome", "of course" and so on.

They returned response which accepted my gratitude. I was surprised at it, but I liked it. I think the response like it makes feeling good. However, there were some behaviors which were considered not good in Japan. For example, they often leave much amounts of leftover. I think it's wasteful. I could learn both good and bad culture in America and Japan. Therefore, learning the difference of the culture firsthand enables me to review my habit. And it is useful and important to avoid misunderstanding in the future. Trough two weeks, I really could learn a lot of things. I appreciate this experience from the bottom of my heart. This will be helpful to communicate and understand other people or countries. I'll never forget the memory.



## Wonderful memories of two weeks

Rinko Hirano

I think this program is a wonderful experience for me. It was the first time that I did everything except cooking. I decided to participate in this program because I wanted to try something on my own. I realized once again that things can go on without me moving, but if I don't move, it won't be for my own good.

Before boarding the plane at Haneda Airport, I was very nervous. I've been overseas a few times, but this time is different. I have to do everything by myself and speak only English. Also, I wasn't sure if I would get along with the other AGU students. The first day we took a class at Centenary College of Louisiana, I was so confused that I couldn't understand what the American students were saying. Before I left Japan, I was so worried about being able to communicate with them in English. But the most important thing was to listen. Over time, I was able to understand what they were saying. I talked with students who were not in the same class when I was participating in dormitory activities, waiting for my laundry to dry, and so on. Whenever I talked to them, they waited for me to finish. I was so impressed that I decided to talk more, ask them questions, and act on my own.

During two weeks, we had many opportunities to learn about culture, college, Shreveport and Louisiana, go downtown, watch MLB, go bowling and take an MBA class. During the class, we made a presentation based on the textbook by ourselves and did Japanese culture experience. We discussed Japanese culture such as Japanese funeral, honnne and tatemae, giri, etc. ... I think these discussions were a great opportunity to get to know Japanese culture well. On Saturday of the first week, we were given a tour of downtown Shreveport by Twins, who is an alumnus of Centenary

College of Louisiana, and heard the change of the city between now and the past. We went to the Louisiana States Exhibit Museum, the Krewe of Gemini Mardi Gras Museum and the R.W. Norton Art Gallery. I was so interested in the Mardi Gras Museum because I've always been to New Orleans to see the Mardi Gras parade. The costume I saw at the museum was beautiful. It made me want to see it even more.

I found a few differences between Japan and the US. First, the class format was different. The classes I took were quiet and few people asked questions, whereas in the U.S., many people asked questions and all students were free to ask questions. They are also time tolerant. Japanese people get upset if someone is late for an appointment. But Americans were different from us. However, it is expected to be on time for important occasions such as church services and airplane departure and arrival times. The last difference is thinking. I was shocked that they would obviously take uneaten portions from the cafeteria and throw away what they couldn't eat. In Japan, it's considered wrong to ask for more food than you can eat. At that moment, I realized that the word "MOTTHAINAI" is a novelty. I decided to research food loss after returning to Japan. It gave me a chance to think about many things by changing my perspective.

Overall, I am glad to have participated in this program and it will be an unforgettable memory of my time at this university.

Finally, I can't thank Tom and Mr. Iguchi enough. Thank you for these two weeks.





# Valuable Experience in America

Mio Yamagishi

I spent 16 very happy days in the U.S. The program in the U.S. was my first experience abroad, so I was worried about whether I would be able to speak English well and adapt to life in the U.S. before I left. However, thanks to the support of AGU students and Centenary College students and teachers, I was able to have a fulfilling time in America. I learned many things through this program. Among them, I learned the joy of communicating in English. In this essay, I would like to explain about some important experiences that made me feel this way.

On weekdays, I took Japanese culture classes with Centenary College students. During class discussions, we explained the Japanese mind until they could understand it, and we exchanged our opinions on the topic of discussion. In addition, each person was responsible for a one topic and gave a presentation to the class. I gave a presentation on the Japanese sense of beauty. Even though it was a difficult topic to explain, when I explained it in English hard, they always tried to understand. So, I gradually became comfortable speaking in English. During the discussion, we talked not only about the class topic, but also about various topics. For example, we talked about our favorite music, movies, and Japanese food I recommend. We especially enjoyed talking about our favorite movie genres. We also introduced Japanese culture to the class. I introduced how to fold a samurai helmet to using origami. When it was difficult to express the folding method, I used simple words while showing them how to fold it. After folding the samurai helmet, many students put it on. Because they knew samurai and Shohei Otani, they looked very happy to put it on. These experiences gave me the courage to speak English and the joy of making

myself understood in English.



Off-campus experiences were also my interesting memories. We went to see Major League Baseball, walked downtown and learned about history, and visited museums and Mardi Gras exhibits. On Sundays, we attended two kinds of church services. Broadmoor United Methodist Church we visited on the first Sunday was a contemporary church. We listened to a band play, children sing, and talked with people who often attend this church. I was surprised because it was a more joyful worship than I had imagined. First Baptist Church we visited on the second Sunday was a classical church. There is a chapel with beautiful stained glass windows and huge chandelier. The chapel had a sacred atmosphere. After visiting the churches, we had a class discussion about Christianity. In that time, I learned about the American view of religion. It was different from that of Japan and I was able to understand Christianity deeply. When I asked Centenary College students some questions about what interested me about American culture, they gave me interesting answers. The most interesting conversation was about “Itadakimasu” and “Gochisousama”. I asked what Americans say before and after eating. They answered there is no word that can replace these words. Also, they regard these words as prayers. Through these experiences, I find to know each other’s

culture makes our communication more enjoyable.

In conclusion, this experience in the U.S. taught me a lot. Not everything I did well, but I believe that what I didn't do well will also lead to learning. All of these experiences in the U.S. were my first experiences, and they can't be done in Japan. So, I want to keep them as the best memories of my life.



# My Memories in America

Masato Negishi

I really enjoyed the 2-week U.S. program. I was able to experience the cultural differences between the U.S. and Japan, become friends with Japanese students, and make many memories.

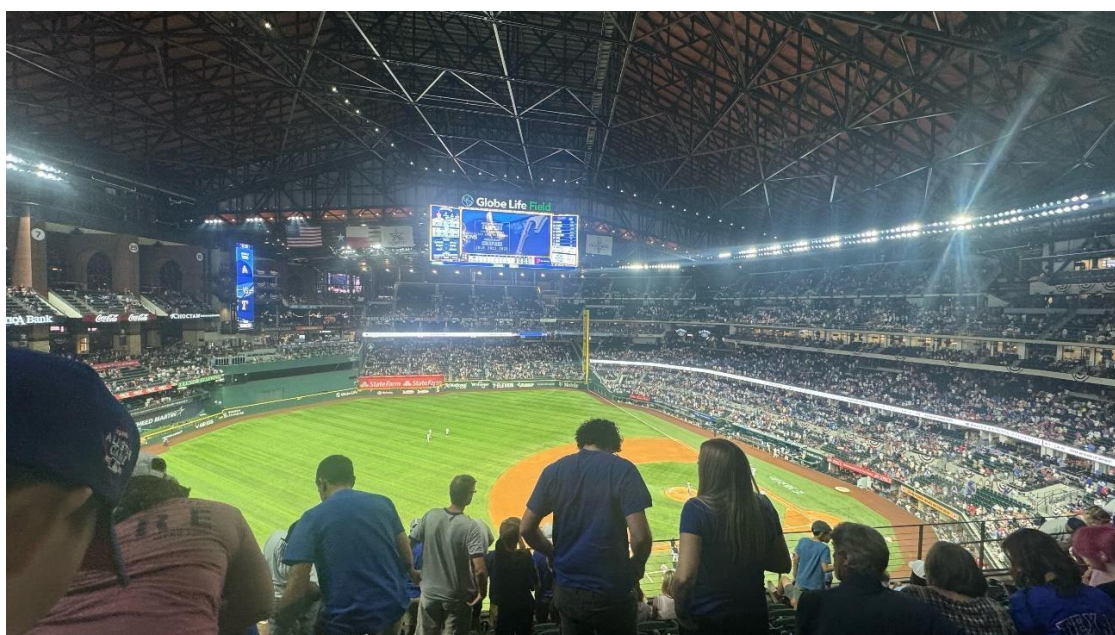
Entering the U.S., I realized that values are different between the U.S. and Japan. For example, the temperature of a room and the taste of food are different. The indoor temperature in the U.S. was very low, and many Japanese students were wearing long sleeves. The food tastes very spicy and the food itself is very large. I was worried that I would not be able to eat the ice cream from the ice cream shop where the students of Centenary College took me.

However, the ice cream was delicious and I was able to finish it. In addition to eat ice cream, I had a few American hamburgers, which were big and tasty. In this way, it was found that people in the U.S. set their air conditioning lower and eat more food that would be considered “mottainai” and not done in Japan.

In addition, I became good friends with the Japanese students. I went into this program alone, so I did not know anyone at the beginning of the program. However, during the program, I gradually became friends with everyone by playing billiards and table tennis together in a room in Centenary College called the SUB. Moreover, we were able to play various Japanese card games together that I had brought with me. By becoming friends with other Japanese students, we were able to support each other in times of trouble. I am so glad because I didn't expect to get along with other students across grades and genders.

Furthermore, I have had many valuable experiences in the U.S. During the first week, I went downtown and went bowling. In downtown, I was impressed with the American street scenes as seen in the movies. I also remember that Tom, a professor at Centenary College, scored very high in bowling. Then in the second week, I went to a museum and aquarium

in Louisiana and watched a baseball game at a baseball stadium in Texas. It took three hours each way by bus to get to the baseball stadium, but I was happy to see the American professional sports game for the first time. Additionally, I went to church every Sunday. The church had English Bibles and hymns, which was very new to me as I only see them in Japanese. I was excited when the hymns I knew from church were played. Consequently, I had an experience that I could not have had in Japan and felt the American culture. I have made many friends and memories in this U.S. program. I thought the American students were very kind because they listened to me seriously even though I could not express myself well in English. They also drove us around and took us to many different places. I truly appreciate for the Centenary students, the Japanese students and teachers. I decided to study English more through this program.



# The Wonderful Two Weeks in Louisiana

Kazuta Murakami

The days I spent with the students at Centenary College of Louisiana gave me a lot of experiences. I visited so many places, played basketball, played baseball, and took a meal with them. I could not have imagined that I could spend time and enjoy many things for such a long time with them, so I learned what is important when I communicate with people in the US.

First, not to be afraid of using English is very important. When I had a discussion with them for the first time, I was not confident about my English, so I was very nervous to communicate with them. I think most of the students from AGU felt same at that time. However, before I left Japan, I had decided to try to talk to them in English as much as I can in the two weeks, because I thought two weeks is not a long time so if I give up talking to them, it will be no meaning of taking part of this program. So, I tried hard to talk to them and not to be afraid of making mistakes in English. They are kind so they will be waiting for me until I can tell what I want to say. By doing so, I came to be confident about my English little by little and be able to talk with them about many things. For examples, sports, culture, own family, and more private topics.

Second, I learned that I do not have to care so much about grammar when I talk with them. Of course, talking with them in grammatically perfect English is best, but trying hard to talk in perfect English may take time then make the rhythm of conversation bad. I think it is more important to talk with a lot of gesture and eye contacts than to care about those things. In the cafeteria of the college, students have to say the staff what they want to eat from the wagon, then most of them say "Thanks" or so. I always tried to say those with making eye

contact more than taking care about pronunciation and fluency. I think this way shows better intense of trying to take communication. A week later, one of the staff told me that “Your English is getting better!”.

I learned a lot more than these two things, but about speaking English with the students, I think these two are the most important things. I think I could talk with them so many times and had a good time.

The photo on the bottom left is me and one of the students at Centenary College of Louisiana, Chase. He plays baseball there and I played with him. There are so many students who play baseball like Chase so I played baseball and I also went to gym with them almost every day. Playing sport with them was fun and I could make good relationships through those time, so I could have a tasty lunch and good conversation in Chick-fil-a!



# About the Study Abroad Experience

Riku Yamada

Study abroad A was more a program to experience the local culture and customs than a program to learn English conversation. In particular, I was able to learn for American people to treat others and how to position themselves in a group, which is different from Japan.

First, the students and Tom were basically frank with everyone in the class and allowed us to live as part of their circle. When we were free, for example after school, they drove us to downtown stores or fast-food restaurants in the suburbs or invited us to exercise or play video games. In addition, they cancelled their plans or rescheduled with friends for us. There was no formal courtesy or honorific between “Senpai” and “Kouhai”, and students only called Tom “Professor” when they spoke to him.



The second is liveliness. As mentioned above, the class was very lively. Some students express their opinion also during Tom was speaking, and many hands raised as soon as a question was raised by Tom. They actively communicated with us both in class and after school, and always had a smile on his face if we were at a loss for words. Also, when we introduced Japanese culture, everyone shouted loudly and enjoyed themselves, and at the Texas ballpark,



the signs inside the stadium encouraged the spectators to make a lot of noise when they could enjoy themselves.

Third was the awareness of crime prevention. Shreveport, where I studied abroad, was not a safe place, and students were very cautious about security in the downtown area and at night. They seemed to think it was natural to have a gun to save themselves, but they were not very vigilant about crimes such as pickpocketing at the ballpark or in the downtown area. When I asked about the frequent gun murders in Shreveport, Carl (student of Centenary) said, "Gun violence is caused by a few crazy people, and there is nothing we can do if we encounter them," and he was concerned about the current situation in which many elementary school students and even kindergarteners are in danger. On the other hand, in addition to crime prevention, some people seem to find joy in having guns, and Carl, who turned 21 during that studying abroad, proudly told me to be able to buy a large gun.

Fourth is physical contact. Many students were seen picking at each other even in class. They often greeted us with a bump on the shoulder, or even lay their arms over in joy. When I asked Carl, who was picking at the arm of a female student next to him during class, if she was his girlfriend, he replied with puzzled look on his face that she was not, so I felt this kind of touching might be a regular occurrence. Of course, handshakes and "goo-touch" greetings were also common, and I was very impressed by the hug between Tom and Mr. Iguchi when they drove us to the Dallas FW airport.

There were so many things I saw, heard, and learned during this studying abroad that I could not possibly write them all down here. I would like to use the events I experienced and the memories of the people at Centenary College who were so kind to me as motivation for my future English studies.