

FACT SHEET

U.S.-Japan Student Exchange/Study Abroad Partnerships

VERONICA ONOREVOLE

U.S.-JAPAN HIGHER EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT STUDY (USJP HEES)

This fact sheet is part of a larger study by the American Council on Education (ACE). This fact sheet and the accompanying live, interactive database, real-time analysis, case studies, and infographics provide a foundation to capture U.S.-Japan higher education institutional partnership activities.

The goals of USJP HEES are to improve mutual understanding and cooperation within the U.S.-Japan higher education community and to capitalize on its strengths within the global higher education context.

The U.S.-Japan Higher Education Engagement Study is made possible through the generous support of the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership.

Visit www.acenet.edu/usjp-hees to learn more about the project.

Background

Since the signing of the **Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan** in 1951, U.S.-Japan bilateral relations have been enhanced by strong academic engagement, cooperation, and mutual goodwill. With the conviction that people exchanges are the most effective means to promote world peace, the governments of Japan and the United States included in the agreement the establishment of an educational exchange program between the two countries through the Fulbright program (Japan U.S. Education Commission 2021).

Both countries have come a long way in terms of the number and types of academic and cultural exchanges offered not only by their governments but also by their civil society through higher education institutions, non-governmental organizations, foundations, and other educational and cultural entities.

To foster greater global competitiveness among the next generation of citizens, in 2013 the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) implemented a National Education Reform Plan to raise the total number of outbound and inbound student mobility by 2020. To increase outbound mobility, the government set a goal of doubling the number of Japanese students studying abroad, from 60,000 in 2010 to 120,000 in 2020. For inbound mobility, the government sought to attract 300,000 international students by 2020.

In its effort to build global *jinzai*, or talent, MEXT implemented an array of projects, many in partnership with the private sector, to encourage universities to internationalize and to imbue the next generation of leaders with global competency. Key projects include the Top Global University Project, Inter-University Exchange Partnership Program, Go Global Japan Program, and Tobitate Young Ambassador Program. In addition, an increasing number of academic departments and disciplines at Japanese institutions are making overseas study compulsory, and universities are increasing their offerings of English language coursework and programs to increase English proficiency.

According to ACE's 2017 *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses* report, Japan ranks second only to China when it comes to the number of partnerships with U.S. colleges and universities. According to the Institute of International Education's OpenDoors data, each year since 2000, Japan has been one of the top 10 leading countries of origin for international students studying in the United States. As of academic year 2019–20, Japan is the eighth largest sender of international students to the United States. For Japanese students, the United States remains the top destination, followed by China, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom.

Method of Data Collection

The U.S.-Japan Higher Education Engagement Study (USJP HEES) is a collection of open-source data at the institutional level for student academic exchanges and study abroad programs, and does not include faculty-led study experiences or short-term language and academic programs arranged by private agents. It does not capture individual student mobility numbers and is intended to document only institutional programs that have exhibited signs of activity in the period of collection spanning from 2017 to 2020 as a baseline for further study.

Displayed data on student exchange and study abroad partnership activity is primarily based on open access information collected from the Japan Ministry of Education Culture Sports Science and Technology (MEXT), Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), and the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational Cultural Affairs from 2017 to 2019. This information was cleansed and aggregated to look for signals of active institutional programs, i.e., whenever there was a volume of exchange connecting a U.S. and Japanese institution. ACE did consult with other secondary resources including the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) and IIE OpenDoors data, but this data was unfortunately inconclusive because it did not capture both home and host institution information. As a final step, ACE carefully reviewed U.S. and Japanese institution websites to crosscheck and confirm validity of a formalized relationship between Japanese and U.S. institutions as well as to capture any missing pieces of information such as the duration of exchange activities and discipline areas. To the benefit of the study, most institutional partners published updated information about their student exchange agreements on their official website.

Findings

Given there is both a U.S. and Japanese government- and university-level effort to increase student mobility, it is not surprising that the study has found student exchange/study abroad programs as the greatest type of partnership activity currently happening between the U.S. and Japan.

As of March 2021, the USJP HEES database houses information on a total of 3,375 student exchange and study abroad programs offered through formalized agreement amongst U.S. and Japanese universities and colleges. To reiterate, this is by no means exhaustive and there are certainly more informal student exchanges happening that are non-accredited and/or short term between both countries via faculty-led programs or from intermediaries, including non-governmental organizations, foundations, private agents, and other educational and cultural entities.

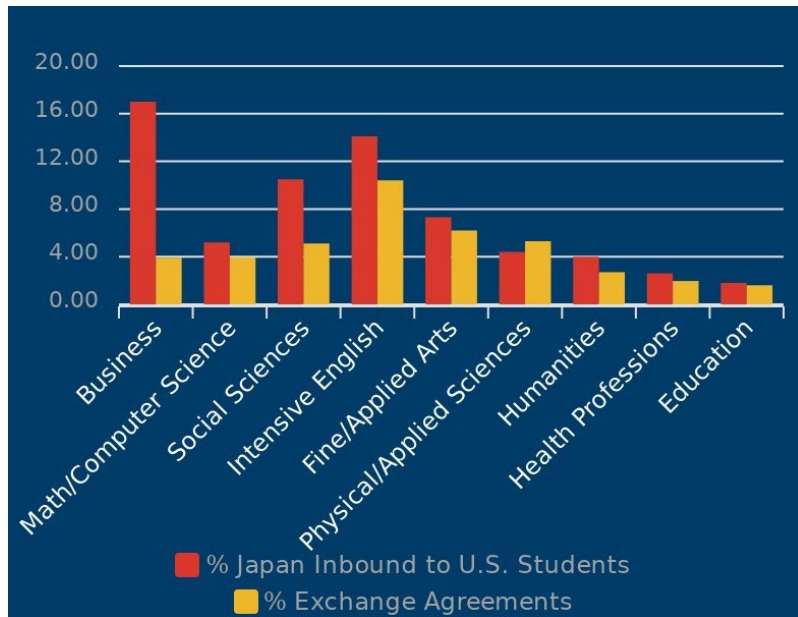
Disciplines

USJP HEES categorizes student exchange and study abroad activities according to the following identified discipline concentrations as appropriate:

- Humanities includes the academic disciplines of philosophy, religion, languages and literatures, linguistics, history and the arts.
- Liberal arts includes the natural sciences, social sciences, arts, and humanities. The central academic disciplines include physics, chemistry, biology, philosophy, logic, linguistics, literature, history, political science, sociology, psychology, and mathematics.
- Physical sciences are those disciplines that study natural sciences, dealing with nonliving materials. Areas of coverage includes physics, chemistry, earth science, geology, space science, astronomy, and materials science, etc.
- Social sciences includes anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, linguistics, politics, psychology, and sociology.
- STEM is a curriculum based on the idea of educating students in four specific disciplines—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Nearly half (45 percent) of the student exchange and study abroad programs identified in the database are multidisciplinary in nature, i.e., they are open to students in a variety of majors at each of the participating institutions, and offer access to a wide array of courses in different fields. Of those programs with articulated focus areas, 33 percent are English and Japanese language-centered or have a language studies component. The next largest requested fields for student exchange are in the humanities and performing arts, followed by the physical sciences.

Figure 1: Japan Inbound to U.S. Students Choice of Study vs. Discipline Specified Exchange Agreements, AY2018–19



Source: IIE *OpenDoors* 2020 data and USJP HEES Data (2020)

Interestingly, a juxtaposition of IIE’s *Open Doors* data on Japanese students declared studies in the United States and USJP HEES data exchange agreements over the last three years indicate an interesting correlation of the same top 10 disciplines. While business administration was the most popular discipline of study for Japanese students in the U.S., there were not many specific business exchange programs showing up as active in the USJP HEES data. The same can be determined for studies within the social sciences. All of the other designated discipline studies programs showed a close cause and effect relationship to the number of international students pursuing studies in those subjects.

Length and Level of Study

The Japanese calendar starts in April and runs through late February. The U.S. calendar starts in late August/early September and runs through early May. Thinking of this in terms of a calendar year yields the following comparison.

Table 1. U.S.-Japan Academic Calendar Comparison

Month	Japan	United States
January	Middle of second semester	Start of second semester or special J-term
February	End of second semester/Break	Middle of second semester
March	Break	Middle of second semester
April	Start of first semester	End of second semester
May	Middle of first semester	End of second semester/break
June	Middle of first semester	Break
July	End of first semester	Break
August	Break	Break/Start of first semester
September	Break/Start of second semester	First semester
October	Start of second semester	Middle of first semester
November	Middle of second semester	Middle of first semester
December	Middle of second semester	End of first semester

Source: The Team Up Roadmap 2018

USJP HEES defines long-term student exchange as spanning an academic year, semester, or summer term with anything under that in duration defined as short term. An overwhelming amount of student exchange agreements target only undergraduate students. While only 6 percent are open to both undergraduate and graduate students and 3 percent are exclusively available to graduate students. Nearly 60 percent of the U.S. undergraduate student body are post-traditional learners (students who are over the age of 25, working full time, financially independent, or connected with the military). They are a diverse group with a range of educational needs, encompassing many life stages and identities: single mothers, immigrants, veterans, and full-time employees (Soares, Gagliardi, and Nellum 2017).

Because of discrepancies in the academic calendars of the U.S. and Japan, many Japanese universities are working with U.S. counterparts to develop more summer programs for students from both universities to engage in discussion and learning together. For example, prior to the pandemic, the scholars of University of Tokyo and Princeton University jointly organized a six-week summer program in Tokyo, “War, Memory and Identity.” Princeton and University of Tokyo students were exposed to various viewpoints and took field trips to Hiroshima, Kamakura, Yasukuni Shrine, museums, and secondary schools. Meiji University arranged a partnership agreement with University of California, Berkeley, whereby Meiji students enroll in six- to 12-week summer sessions offered for Berkeley as well as international students.

Before the pandemic, the University of Shiga Prefecture had also started holding Summer Intensive Japanese Language and Culture Programs that provide a six-week session with eight credit hours, where the attendees can learn Japanese language and experience Japanese arts and culture together with interactions with local Japanese students. The U.S. Department of State’s Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) annually offers American students participation in this program, where students cover the equivalent of a one-year course at a U.S. institution during the summer program.

Institution Type

According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology’s (MEXT) annual Basic School Survey in 2020, among 795 universities in Japan, 615 are private, 86 are national, and 94 are public. There are also 323 junior colleges in Japan, of which 306 are private and 17 are public.

According to the USJP HEES, 67.5 percent of student exchange/study abroad programs occur at private universities in Japan. The remaining 26.7 percent of student exchange partnerships occurred with national universities and only 5.8 percent with public universities.

In the United States, more than half (54 percent) of student exchange and study abroad partnerships are at doctoral granting universities, followed by 26 percent at master’s level universities and 15 percent at baccalaureate granting institutions.

The U.S. is home to more than 500 minority serving institutions (MSIs), including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TC’s). Of these institution types, only 18.2 percent of the total number of exchange programs with Japan are from MSIs.

According to IIE’s OpenDoors Community College Data Resource, during the 2018–19 academic year, Japan had the third largest population of international students studying in community colleges in the United States.

Table 2: Japan Students Studying at U.S. Community Colleges (2017–19)

Students Studying at U.S. Community Colleges	2017–18	2018–19	% of Total	% Change
Japan (ranked 4th)	5,390	4,751	6	-11.9
Word Total	94,562	79,187	100	-16.25

Source: Institute of International Education (IIE), 2020 *Open Doors Report*

Conversely, only 2.9 percent of U.S.-Japan student exchange and study abroad partnerships are with U.S. community colleges. Further, of the small proportion of community colleges with student exchange, the majority are concentrated with Hawaii’s four system community colleges: Honolulu Community College, Kapi’olani Community College, Kaua’i Community College, and Leeward Community College.

Geographic Location

The largest regional concentration of universities with U.S. student exchanges are in and around the Tokyo metropolitan area, followed by Osaka and Aichi prefecture.

Given the long-standing historical ties of California and Hawaii's with Japan, both states continue to dominate the number of student exchanges and study abroad programs, representing 18.2 percent of total student exchange activity in USJP HEES from 2017 to 2020. Notably, the Great Lakes region of the U.S. comprising Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Indiana had the next highest cluster of student exchange activity. The Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA) and the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) have the historically oldest study abroad ties to Japan in the U.S., starting with Earlham College in Indiana.

Figure 3: Top Japanese Universities for Exchange Programs

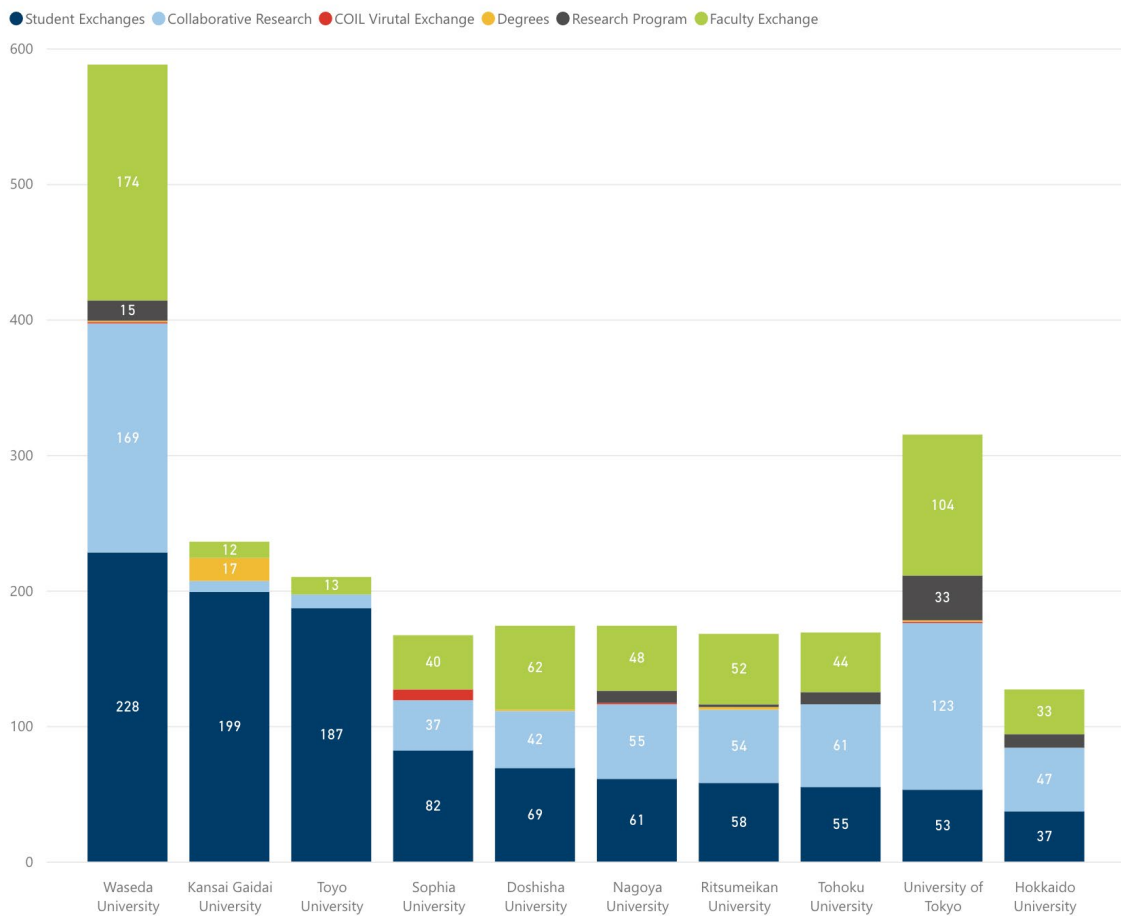
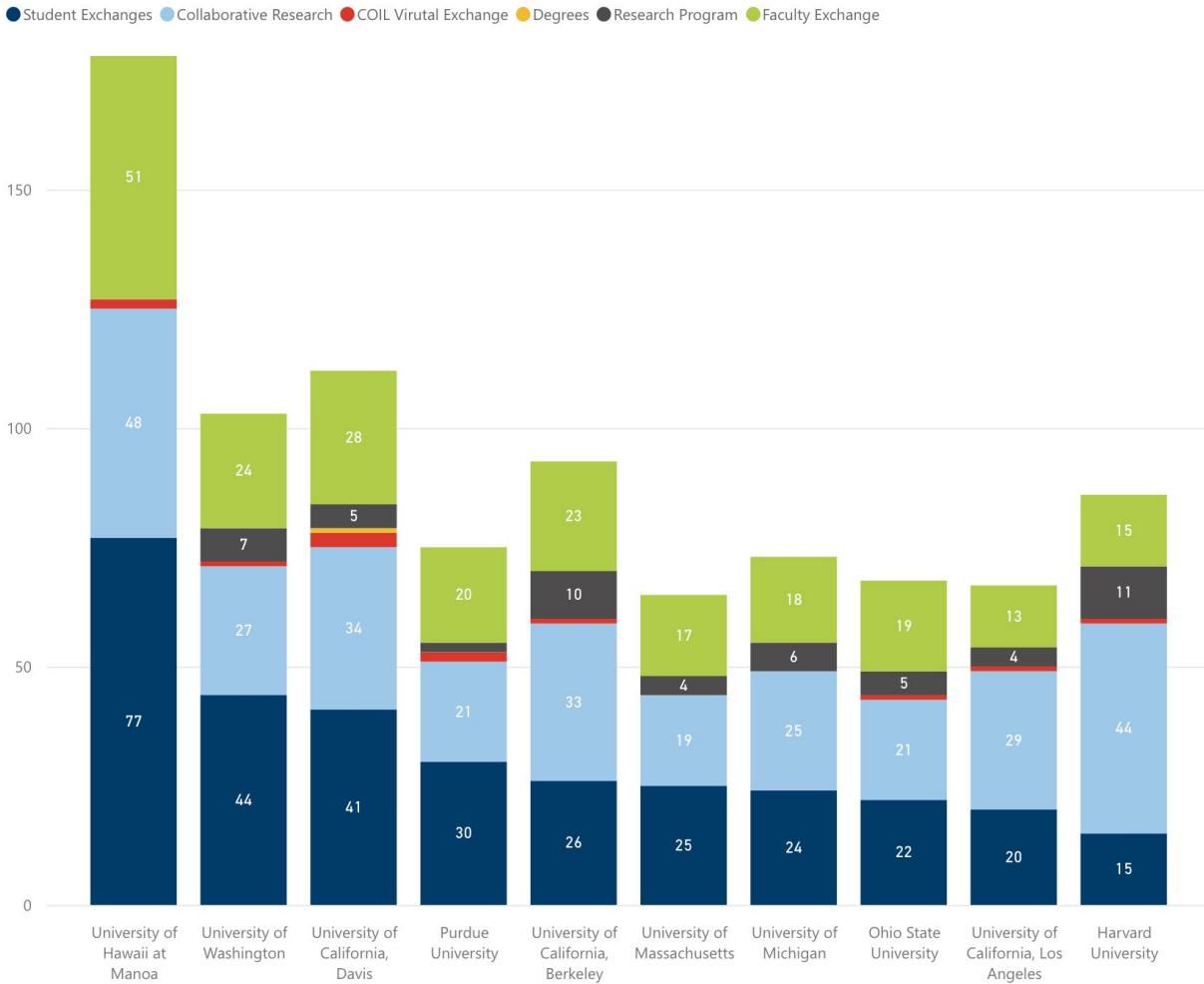


Figure 4: Top U.S. Universities for Exchange Programs



Conclusion

Update of Existing Partnership Agreements

Overall, on the surface there is an impressive number of active student exchange agreements between U.S. and Japanese universities and colleges. However, only a deeper investigation of formalized agreements versus flows could yield results to determine whether these agreements are depicting the realities of what is happening between campuses. For example, the level and extent of opportunities (number of programs and duration offered by an institution) versus the realities (number of inbound/outbound students and nature of duration of their programs) may differ. In addition, this kind of comparative analysis could also indicate trends in students' interests of study or the redundancy or competitiveness of programs.

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