

The 36th START Program (United States of America)

For a little over two weeks from September 10 to September 25, 2016, 30 first year students participated in the 36th START Program. Led by Fuyuko Takita (Associate Professor at the Institute for Foreign Language Research and Education) and two other supervising faculty members, the students spent this time living and studying at James Madison University (JMU) in Virginia, U.S. JMU is approximately two hours' drive away from the capital, Washington D.C., and like Hiroshima University is also a member of the International Network of Universities (INU).

During their two week stay there, the START Program participants shared dorm rooms on campus with student RAs (resident advisors) and experienced communal living with local students. During the weekdays they attended special lectures on American culture and society taught by local professors at JMU, and regular classes together with their host RAs. Furthermore, this year's program overlapped with many major events, such as the 15th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, the U.S. presidential election campaign, and International Week in JMU. The students not only had the opportunity to talk about these subjects in and outside of the classroom, but also to participate in these activities themselves. These firsthand experiences to feel the movement in American society have become valuable lessons to them. Some students also spent their free time doing sports activities with local students in the on-campus gym.

Through various activities, the students were also able to experience natural English outside of the classroom – they visited a fire station, ventured into the Shenandoah Caverns, entered Mount Vernon (George Washington's house), watched a soccer match, and interacted with the local children.

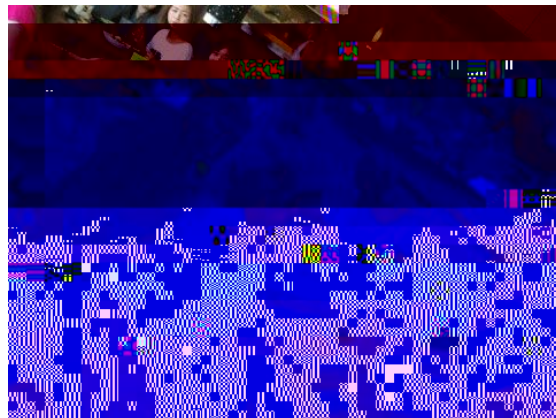
On the last day the students made group presentations in English on what they had felt and learnt during the two week program.

It was the first time for these START Program participants to experience student life in a university abroad. They were able to experience the differences between Japan and American culture and the students' learning attitude, and way they handle activities outside the classroom. Based on their experiences

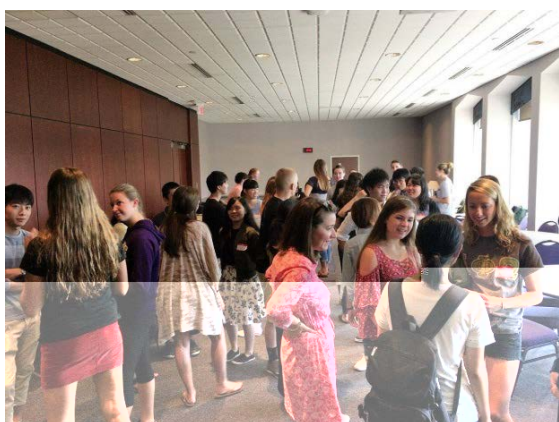
they gained through the START Program, at the follow-up session after returning to Japan the participants shared their strong desires to further their study in languages, study abroad, and take part in international exchange activities inside the campus.



Host RAs came to meet the participants on the day they arrived by bus.



Having a meal with local students at the cafeteria



Exchange activities with local students in class



Introducing Japanese culture



Making English presentation in groups



Exploring Washington D.C. on the last day of the program