OVERVIEW
SUMMER 2021 - SUMMER 2022

After settling in, I created an Instagram and Facebook page to promote JOI Program activities. In addition, I was able to make a page for the JOI Program on Western Carolina University’s Japanese Program website. The page contains ideas of what I can bring to the community, as well as a brochure, a monthly newsletter, and a request form.

Since obtaining my North Carolina driver’s license, I have been active on campus as well as in libraries and schools by being able to reach out to a wider range of ages and communities.

For these reasons, I am grateful to the Japan Foundation Global Partnerships Department, the Laurasian Institution, and Western Carolina University’s Japanese Program and Office of Global Engagement (WCU Global) for this wonderful opportunity to bring Japan-related activities and exchange opportunities to Western North Carolina.

In this report, I would like to highlight my top three outreach activities during my first year: the Onigiri Action, the Japanese Calligraphy Exhibition, and the Western Carolina University’s International Festival. These activities were made possible by the great support of my host institution, Western Carolina University, and the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED OUT TO:</th>
<th>NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS AND SCHOOLS REACHED OUT TO:</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS HELD:</th>
<th>TOTAL MILEAGE:</th>
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<td>2,046</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>1,309</td>
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TOP 3 ACTIVITIES

- ONIGIRI ACTION
- JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY EXHIBITION
- INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
ONIGIRI ACTION

I have organized a total of three "Onigiri Action" events at Western Carolina University between October 5 and November 5, 2021.

Onigiri Action is a philanthropic campaign that Table for Two (TFT) hosts each fall in honor of World Food Day (October 16). Table for Two strives to help feed the world's children with the simple act of taking a photo. By posting photos of Onigiri (rice balls) on the campaign website and/or on social media with #OnigiriAction, you can help provide five school lunches per photo to underprivileged children around the world.

Table for Two is a non-profit organization, first established in Japan in 2007, that partners with corporations, restaurants, schools, and other food service providers to work globally to correct food inequities through a unique meal-sharing program.

ORIGAMI AND STAMPS

On October 5, we discussed world food problems through our own experiences and made origami Onigiri and Onigiri stamps with toilet paper cores.

JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY

On November 3, each student wrote one character from "おにぎりアクション @ WCU 2021", and also drew a picture of Onigiri with a Fude brush. Many students experienced Japanese Calligraphy for the first time but still found that the activity was enjoyable.

CLAY MAGNETS

On November 4, we used clay to make Onigiri magnets and created small boxes out of origami. A few students struggled to make Onigiri shapes out of clay, but everyone was able to make them successfully.
On March 22, 2022, a reception was held at the Rotunda Gallery of the Jackson County Public Library, where my Japanese Calligraphy was showcased as an exhibition for the first time. My work was displayed in the Rotunda Gallery of the Jackson County Public Library from late March through the end of April. I started Japanese Calligraphy when I was six years old and earned an Instructor Certification (師範), the highest level of achievement recognized for a Japanese Calligraphy master at the age of 21, but I never thought I would have this opportunity in the United States. I am truly grateful to the Jackson County Arts Council for reaching out to me.

I tried to create Japanese Calligraphy pieces that could be enjoyed by people who do not understand Japanese, and completed 13 various works, including 般若心経 (Heart Sutra), ∞, and writing in a style similar to pictographs called 銅書体 (seal script). Although I faced many difficulties because of the environment not being the same as in Japan I’m proud that I managed to complete my work and hold the exhibition even with the lack of specific Japanese Calligraphy tools.

I was very pleased that a lot of students, faculty members, and friends went to see the exhibition. It is a great pleasure for me that more and more people in our community that I met at other events and workshops said, "Are you the one who wrote the calligraphy piece?"

I hope to hold more exhibitions in Gallery 130 at WCU and elsewhere in the near future.
INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

On April 28, 2022, the 41st Annual International Festival was held at Western Carolina University. As part of the Japanese Program, I worked alongside Ohtani-sensei, a retired Japanese teacher and an excellent Japanese Calligrapher in our community, by giving a Japanese Calligraphy performance and running a booth for Japanese Calligraphy.

JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY PERFORMANCE

Even with it being the first time I had done a Japanese Calligraphy performance on a large 3-meter by 4-meter piece of paper, I found the experience to be very pleasant. Ohtani-sensei and I wrote "未来を拓く輝く光になれ." This reads “Mirai o hiraku kagayaku hikari ni nare,” which means “Be a shining light to build your future.”

After Ohtani-sensei’s wonderful speech, many people stamped their handprints with determination to continue shining their light with hopes of creating a future that they desired.

From the days leading up to the festival to the day of, my supervisor Ono-sensei and I created large Hanshi paper (Japanese Calligraphy paper) using multiple pieces of cardboard and long Hanshi papers. Even with the day proving to be challenging, it was a good memory because of being able to work alongside my supervisor.

"The future is not given but it’s something I have to build."

- Ohtani-sensei’s Speech

JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY WORKSHOP AND EXHIBITION

Throughout the day many students and faculty, whom I do not usually have the opportunity to meet, were able to visit our booth. Due to space and time constraints, we were not able to offer everyone who visited our booth a chance to try Japanese Calligraphy, but we were very pleased to see the number of people who enjoyed the Japanese Calligraphy workshop and exhibition.

I found that many students were interested in Japanese Calligraphy which motivated me to host more Japanese Calligraphy events/workshops at Western Carolina University.
FOR THE SECOND YEAR

I am looking to start a new student organization on campus with an eye toward sustainable activities. Over the next six months, I would like to support the organization so that 50% of the weekly Japanese cultural events, which I currently lead and organize entirely, can be student-led, and by next summer, I would like to create an environment in which students can take the initiative in organizing activities. I would also like to increase our off-campus activities and reach out to the broader community. Specifically, I plan to hold Onigiri Action, which was held only at Western Carolina University last year, at libraries and schools this year. I also plan to participate in the 9th Annual Knox Asian Festival in Knoxville, TN in August.

COMMENTS FROM SUPERVISORS

Wesley Milner, Ph.D.
Director of Office of Global Engagement (WCU Global)
Professor of International Studies
Western Carolina University

Hosting Nanaka Okamura as a JOI Coordinator has been so enriching on an individual and community level. In addition to her learning much about North Carolina and the US, she has educated all of us about Japanese customs, art, culture, food, etc. Notwithstanding her being the youngest coordinator in this cohort, Nanaka-san stepped into the role with great courage and tenacity. With just a bit of assistance and encouragement, she has become a fixture on campus and has been very effective in broadening her reach to far-flung counties, libraries, schools, and community organizations. Once she finally obtained a vehicle and became a licensed driver, she was off making connections far and wide. She has held almost 100 community events and reached approximately 2000 citizens of North Carolina. In addition to her Onigiri Action and calligraphy exhibition at the Jackson public library, Nanaka-san was a major contributor to our 41st Annual International Fest held on the campus of Western Carolina University. Personally, it has been a joy to get to know Nanaka-san and she has been so welcoming to our animals when she is at our home. We look very much forward to a productive and enjoyable second year!

Yumiko Ono, Ed. D.
Instructor of Japanese
Coordinator of Japanese Program
Western Carolina University

It has been my privilege to witness Nanaka-san’s enthusiastic engagement with our community. I cannot thank her enough for her tireless effort and arrangements to contribute to students, and people inside and outside of Western Carolina University. As this report shows, results of her engagement are overwhelmingly amazing. She is very relatable for our students, who are not only those in our Japanese Program but also other disciplines such as Art and Design. Her calligraphy performance with Mr. Ohtani, beloved retired teacher of Japanese and calligrapher in our community, highlighted our belief for the future - 未来を拓く 輝く光になれ (Mirai o hiraku kagayaku hikarini nare: Be a shining light to build your future). Through her engagement with our community, she has been an amazing force to provide diversity and inclusion in such authentic ways, which I believe parts of the fundamental aspects to be shining light to build one's future. Again, I could not thank her enough. With amazing results from the first year and the second-year plans shown here, I look very much forward to seeing her becoming a shining light to build her own future after the JOI Program.