My host site, Dickinson State University, is located in western North Dakota. I work in the International Programs and Multicultural Affairs, in charge of international student admission, study abroad, and international activities. The members of the affairs are my supervisor and myself.

During the first three months, my main focus was on planning activities and events on campus. Gradually, I started visiting local elementary schools and doing more activities at the public libraries and community events. Coincidentally, North Dakota and Ibaraki Prefecture are beginning to move toward collaboration in business and investment, and I had some opportunities to work with government agencies such as the North Dakota State Government, the Consulate General of Japan in Chicago and JETRO Chicago office, which was also a great experience. My most recent big project is planning a study tour in Japan with the DSU Agriculture Club.
My first activity outside of my host site was a visit to after school programs. For most of the students, it was their first time to meet a Japanese person. During my presentation, I introduce basic information such as the location of Japan and how Japanese elementary school students are doing at school with quizzes and most children are very surprised that popular anime and games come from Japan.

I was also contacted by an elementary school to visit them following a visit to their after school programs. For me, one of the joys of school visits is answering unexpected questions from students. For example, "Is Japan part of the United States?" and "Are there still ninjas in Japan?". The content of the activities vary depending on the grade level. In kindergarten students class, I read Japanese folktales to them, and in the 6th grade class, we made Kabuto (Japanese samurai helmets) out of newspaper.

One of the memorable comments from the elementary school teacher is "we are glad we have you because we don't have any cultural events around here. It's a great opportunity for our students to learn about the importance of diversity.".
Nowadays, anime and manga are becoming popular in the world. I often see people wearing anime T-shirt in my town and when I visited elementary schools, I found out that many students like anime, so I talked with the librarians and decided to host anime & manga events at the Dickinson Area Public Library and the Bismarck Veteran Memorial Library that is located in Bismarck, the capital city of North Dakota.

There are many unique Japanese culture that appear in anime & manga. In the events, I presented about the culture such as traditional costumes in Demon Slayer and Gintama, and Japanese foods in Ghiburi films etc.. Also, I talked about how anime & manga developed and became popular in the world, and did trivia. After that, the participants enjoyed some activities such as onigiri(rice balls) making, yukata wearing, origami Pikachu making and chopsticks challenge. I still remember that after onigiri making activity, one of the participants came and told me "I was surprised to see my picky daughter eating onigiri. I would love to know the recipe of tsunamayo(tsuna and mayonnaise)." and I shared how to make it with her.
Japanese Calligraphy Workshop

I have been organizing various events and think Japanese calligraphy is the most popular activity. Totally, I have hosted calligraphy workshop five times at my host site, community event and Aikido club.

In my workshop, I present about the history of shodo, shodo in modern society and shodo tools etc., and participants start with practicing the three basic strokes, tome, hane and harai, and draw "Heiwa" (peace) in Japanese and try other Japanese words. One of the fun parts for the participants is trying to draw their own names in Japanese. Usually, participants register for the workshop online and I translate their names in Japanese in advance.

At the beginning of January, students drew their new year's resolutions as "Kakizome" (the first calligraphy of the year) and some of them wrote Japanese words on long papers on the floor.

A few months after my workshop, I met one of the students who was in my workshop and I was happy to hear that she bought calligraphy tools and does the calligraphy as a meditation at home.
Shunsuke’s first year at Dickinson State University has been very productive! He spent the first few months trying to get past the gatekeepers at local schools and organizations that didn’t understand what he could offer. Once he had his first activity at a local elementary school his schedule rapidly filled and he presented at schools all over the area. Shunsuke also did classes here on campus, the local library, and events around North Dakota. When non-DSU people ask me if I’ve heard about the manga event or the Japanese classes, you know he’s making an impact on the community. DSU is looking forward to his second year as he takes on leadership roles on campus and strengthens programs that will live on after his time at DSU is finished.