

# AEC Special

## Sophia exchange program offers expanded horizons

Eighteen students, including those from Southeast Asia, Japan and other parts of the world, were divided into four groups to hold intense discussions in English about various global sustainability issues. They were creating a rough draft of a poster they would use for next week's presentation.

"I think economic development makes water political. People fight over it," one woman in a group whose presentation theme was "Water Supply in China," said to her group in a classroom of Sophia University in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward. She wrote it down on the draft of the poster.

The class is the "Introduction to Trans-Disciplinary Human Development," part of SAIMS, a one-semester program at Sophia for exchange students who come from universities in ASEAN member states.

Sophia University is one of 11 Japanese universities that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology selected as recipients of subsidies for participants of AIMS, or the ASEAN International Mobility for Students Programme, in 2013.

Sophia University has named its own program under the government's program SAIMS, for Sophia AIMS.

"It's very important to increase exchanges with ASEAN in many areas as Japanese companies do a lot of business with ASEAN, and Japanese and ASEAN academic researchers should exchange more. Thus it's very meaningful that students participate in exchange programs," said Tak Watanabe, assistant professor of cultural anthropology, Faculty of Liberal Arts, who taught the class, which was also supervised by Mikiko Michelle Sugimura and Davisi Boontharm, both of whom are associate professors at Sophia University.

Sugimura enjoys having students from ASEAN member states as they can interact with Sophia students in a positive manner.

"These students are very smart and their English skills are excellent. They also learn Japanese very well and many of them can write sentences in kanji by the end of a semester," she said.

The SAIMS is a trans-disciplinary program focused on human development.



Students discuss their presentation. MASAORI DOI

Students from ASEAN region and Japan study together in a program that combines the disciplinary frameworks of natural sciences, social sciences and humanities.

The universities participating in the SAIMS are Bogor Agricultural University and Gadjah Mada University from Indonesia; Chulalongkorn University and Mahidol University from Thailand; Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University from the Philippines; and the National University of Malaysia.

Students from those universities attend Sophia University in the spring semester from April to July or the autumn semester from late September to January. They take exams at the end of the semesters.

During their semester, the students take a compulsory course, "Introduction to Trans-Disciplinary Human Development," and some elective courses.

In the course, professors from natural sciences, social sciences and humanities share ideas about how each academic field approaches key issues in human development such as education for sustainable development, the environment and development, aquatic ecosystems, environmental conservation and food and agriculture.

World Food Programme Japan Director Stephen Anderson came to lecture the SAIMS students in the class in the latest spring and autumn semesters.

The students have more than 100 choices in elective courses from Faculty of Science and Technology, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Department of Education, Faculty of Global Studies, Center for Global Discovery (Faculty of Foreign Studies) and the Center for Language Education and Research. They can take classes including physics, Japanese popular culture, Southeast Asian politics, globalization and cultures, environmental change and human development and Japanese language.

The students can also participate in fieldwork seminars from the end of July to mid-August, in which they take a field trip to Hokkaido to learn the ecological systems of a protected wetland in the Kushiro region. They can also take various summer classes on campus.

Also, Sophia University offers all SAIMS students housing during the program at Sophia Soshigaya International House, in Tokyo's Setagaya Ward, a co-ed dormitory for international and Japanese students with 362 well-equipped rooms and other facilities that ensure comfort and safety.

Sophia University has advantages over other Japanese universities for success in AIMS because of its long history of focus on language education and globalization. Its Faculty of Liberal Arts has long been known for offering English-only courses to accommodate foreign students and educate Japanese youth with



Tak Watanabe, an assistant professor in the Faculty of Liberal Arts, explains to students participating in the SAIMS program how to prepare presentations during a class in the "Introduction to Trans-Disciplinary Human Development" course. MASAORI DOI

English skills in a multilingual environment. It also has many English-speaking teachers and a long history of faculty exchanges with overseas universities.

"Sophia must be one of the few Japanese universities that have a Western-style evaluation system such as participation points and mini quizzes," Sugimura said.

ASEAN students also find it easy to transfer credits between their universities and Sophia University, she added.

Watanabe also stressed the merits of educational exchanges, saying that students with cross-cultural experiences will be successful in various businesses as Japanese and foreign companies find it beneficial to hire people with talent regardless of their nationalities.

"In ASEAN today, emphasis has been placed on the importance of 'People to People Connectivity.' Central to this goal is the notion of harmonization, in which people living in the same era join together to form a unified regional society," Sophia University Vice President for Academic Exchange Miki Sugimura said in a pamphlet. "The SAIMS program run by Sophia University is a future-oriented program that attempts to do so."



Students make a rough draft of a poster for their presentation. MASAORI DOI

## Students appreciate college's international surroundings



Clockwise from top left: Setiadiputra Muhamad Haris Zamaludin; Rabbani Naufal Shidqi; Afriani Anindita Untangdesi; Ahmad Lutfi Najihah. MASAORI DOI

Students from ASEAN member states are enjoying their learning experiences at Sophia University and their daily lives in an international environment provided by the most international university in Japan.

Those students participate in SAIMS, Sophia University's program to accept Southeast Asian exchange students for a semester. SAIMS stands for Sophia's AIMS, and is conducted under the ASEAN International Mobility for Students Programme initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

Setiadiputra Muhamad Haris Zamaludin, a male student from Bogor Agricultural University in Indonesia, learned about SAIMS from a Sophia student who was then studying at Bogor.

"SAIMS covers airfare and accommodation, so it's a good opportunity for me to study abroad," Setiadiputra said.

"Indonesia now has many young people and I have to compete with them. So, having a unique experience is a big plus," he said as a reason he decided to study abroad, adding that Sophia is the

right choice for him for its internationalism.

He described his experience at Sophia as "fascinating."

"I thought it would be crowded with many Japanese people, but Sophia has people of so many nationalities," he said. "Also, I live in Soshigaya (International House) and there are many people of different nationalities there, too."

All SAIMS students are eligible to live in Sophia Soshigaya International House during the program.

Another reason he chose to come to Japan is that he wanted to learn the Japanese culture of dedication to work.

Setiadiputra, who majors in communication and community development science, is the president of a debate club in his home university and was able to participate in an English debate in Tokyo.

Rabbani Naufal Shidqi is a member of a band who plays guitar and also from Bogor Agricultural University.

Rabbani, whose major is food technology, had opportunities to go to Taiwan, Thailand and Japan, but chose

Sophia because SAIMS has a focus on sustainable development, he said.

One of his good memories about life in Sophia University is that he played traditional Indonesian music at a Sophia festival and he was able to speak with other musicians about traditional music.

He is also happy that not only can he now sing in Japanese, but he is also able to ask for directions in Japanese when he gets lost; a remarkable improvement from when he first arrived in Japan.

Afriani Anindita Untangdesi, a female student from Bogor Agricultural University. She had never left Indonesia before coming to Japan, but she chose Sophia for its strength in social studies.

"Life at Sophia is interesting. I am a Muslim and Sophia is a Catholic school, but there is a prayer room for me and food is marked as being halal, so I can survive here," she said.

She also said she enjoys a class required for all SAIMS students, "Introduction of Trans-Disciplinary Human Development."

In the class, professors from the natural sciences, social sciences and human-

ities share ideas about how each academic field approaches key issues in human development such as education for sustainable development, the environment and development, aquatic ecosystems, environmental conservation and food and agriculture.

"I learned the other side of science," Afriani, who is majoring in communication and community development science, she said.

Ahmad Lutfi Najihah, a female student from the National University of Malaysia, is enjoying her time at Sophia University very much.

"I like everything here. I like mingling and my best friends are from Mexico, Indonesia and Germany," she said. "At Soshigaya, I can try Mexican and German foods. And I have a Japanese friend who has been to Malaysia and I promised I'd cook for her because she misses Malaysian food so much."

She goes sightseeing on weekends with her friends.

"My life in Japan is simple; I go sightseeing and everything I see is interesting," she said.

# Sophia University

A Japanese University with a Global Mission



### Undergraduate Faculties and Departments

#### JAPANESE PROGRAMS

- Faculty of Theology
- Faculty of Humanities
- Faculty of Human Sciences
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Economics
- Faculty of Foreign Studies

- Faculty of Global Studies
- Faculty of Science and Technology (Program in English is available)

#### ENGLISH PROGRAMS

- Faculty of Liberal Arts
- Faculty of Science and Technology

### Graduate Schools and Programs

#### JAPANESE PROGRAMS

- Graduate School of Theology
- Graduate School of Philosophy
- Graduate School of Humanities
- Graduate School of Human Sciences
- Graduate School of Law
- Graduate School of Economics
- Graduate School of Languages and Linguistics

- Graduate School of Global Studies
- Graduate School of Science and Technology
- Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies

#### ENGLISH PROGRAMS

- Graduate School of Global Studies
- Graduate School of Languages and Linguistics
- Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies
- Graduate School of Science and Technology

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