

2016 Re-Inventing Japan Project: Leadership Development in the Fields of Food, Agriculture, and the Environment in Latin America (Long Term)

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1. Reason(s) for participating in the study abroad program.

- ✓ I wish to go to Japan to share my experience, knowledge and Mexican culture with Tokyo NODAI students.
- ✓ I want to learn and enrich my Japanese language.
- ✓ I would like to learn about the culture, history, traditions, Japanese society and the agriculture in Japan and the world.
- ✓ To overcome new challenges about lifestyle change in a foreign country.
- ✓ To strengthen my professional profile to be able to apply it my career.
- ✓ To reinforce the relationship between the two universities (Chapingo Autonomous University and Tokyo University of Agriculture).

2. Activities.

Below are some of the main activities during my stay in the long term.

- December 7th 2016

I arrived in Japan after a very tiring trip from Mexico. I had to travel by myself for the first time from Narita Airport to Tokyo. It was my first experience to take the bus. Once in Tokyo, I met with Mr. May, who helped me transport me to the place that would be my home for the next four months. Once settled in the bedroom, I had the opportunity to rest from such a long journey. In the afternoon, I had the opportunity to meet the staff of the CIP office. Among them was Mr. Iwai and Miss Yamada. They were very kind to me.

- December 8th 2016

This is my first day of classes and I was given my schedule where I chose the subjects that I will study. I chose five subjects: Farmers and Consumers in Japan, Agricultural Trade, Ecology and Food Production, Comparative Food Production Technologies and Edo Aesthetics and Environmental Resiliency. In the same way I am informed that Professor Sakata will be my supervisor.

- December 9th 2016

This day was very special for me because I had a welcome lunch along with the other students from the same program that came from Peru and Brazil. We had a fun talk about

our future wishes and what we hope to learn from the program. I also had the opportunity to meet Mr. Sakata who would be the professor with whom I would have to collaborate in the Laboratory of Plants Genetics.

After lunch I was given a tour around the university facilities by Miss Yamada and Mr. May. I noticed that Setagaya campus is a very beautiful and peaceful place.



- December 11th 2016

A small tour is organized by the Edo Aesthetics and Environmental Resiliency class at Fukagawa Edo Museum and the Kiyosumi Garden. I had the opportunity to interact and learn a little about the lifestyle that the population had during the Edo era. Inside the museum there was a very real representation of a typical town of those times. In addition, I learned about some of the jobs that existed and how the work used to be, among them the most important was the farmer. After some time inside the museum, the group decided to take a break to eat something in the Kiyosumi garden. I really enjoy the company of my classmates and Professor Fukushima.

After the activity, we dispersed and I decided to take advantage of my location to go walking around the Imperial Palace. It was a very good weather to admire the beauty of the surroundings.



- December 13th 2016

I was invited to the Spanish session. This lasted for one hour during lunch hours. I was very interesting and fun to meet new people who were interested in the Spanish language. The session involves talking and teaching the Spanish language. After some time, the CIP office informs me about the sessions that I will have to take to learn and reinforce my knowledge in the Japanese language. These will take place every Wednesday for two hours in the morning.

- December 14th 2016

I had my first Japanese language study session. Together with my partner Antonio we met with our advisor, a student who also speaks Spanish and who is very skilled in the Japanese language, Dario from Argentina. I studied some Japanese language before arriving in Japan so we managed to establish a brief conversation with our advisor so we decided that our next sessions will be to strengthen our vocabulary and verbal skill.

- December 17th 2016

I have my first visit to the shopping area in Shinjuku, where I went out shopping and got some clothes for the winter, among the clothes I bought is a coat, sweaters, gloves and scarves. After these purchases I went out to eat something and found a restaurant where they sold Tempura and Soba. I discovered that I love this food, it really is very delicious. I really enjoy going out with my friend Antonio.



- December 21st 2016

That day I went out for the first time to eat ramen in Japan. It was very delicious and the way to buy fast food in this country is very different from what I knew. I was very surprised to see that there are vending machines for everything and they are also very useful. After eating, walking near to Kitami station I was able to observe the first illuminations to celebrate Christmas. I was very excited to celebrate my first Christmas in Japan.



- December 24th and 25th 2016

Finally came the day of Christmas Eve and Christmas. From the afternoon I went out with a group of foreign friends. All together we went to Shibuya where we could observe a large Christmas tree, which was very well decorated, looked so good that made me feel at home. We continue walking the streets of Shibuya observing the very colorful illuminations representative of the holiday season. At night, we decided to enter a traditional Japanese bar to drink and toast for our dreams and wishes. The night was very long so after that we decided to go to a karaoke. For me it was the first time I tried something like that. I had a lot of fun with everyone. The first Christmas I had in Japan was really interesting and fun.



- December 28th 2016 to January 4th 2017

During the winter holidays I did not have much activity, only on New Year's Eve. On December 31st I decided to go out again with my friends to visit Shibuya again and their special event to receive the New Year. It was crowded everywhere, it was a difficulty finding a good place to celebrate. The event consisted of Christmas songs and the countdown to the New Year. I could see that many people were foreigners and enjoyed the beauty of Japanese culture.

Shortly after I decided to venture by myself to receive the New Year in some nearby Shinto temple, I moved to the Meiji Shrine that was also crowded. I had to wait about two hours just to enter the temple, without fear the wait was worth it because I was able to

observe and experience the Japanese New Year that is completely different from my country.

At dawn, after going to the Meiji Shrine I decided to go and see the Tokyo Tower. I was very happy to know that the train system during the New Year is active all night because in this way I was able to travel through Tokyo all night and I think it was very useful. The Tokyo Tower is a building that according to the information looks like the Eiffel Tower and I think that is true.



In the morning and upon arriving at the bedroom, I was able to take a photo from there to Mount Fuji. That morning was very clear to take the photograph. After all the activities I did in New Year I was very tired.



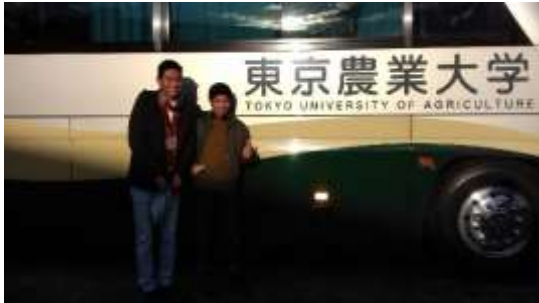
The rest of the winter holidays I enjoyed resting in my room.



- January 13th 2017

This day was a very busy day. First, in the morning I went on a trip to the railway museum and to the bonsai gardens that are in the city of Saitama. I really enjoy the trip together with other foreign students, mainly students from the Asian continent. I learned a lot from the history of trains in Japan but what surprised me most was the history of the bullet train "Shinkansen". On the other hand, the gardens with bonsai trees were very beautiful and I had the opportunity to meet one of them who is a thousand years old.

During the evening, I had an “Okonomiyaki” party along with Professor Sakata and some of the students who collaborate in the laboratory of Plants Genetics. It was the best opportunity to talk to them and hang out happily. I am very glad that they have received me warmly.



- January 15th 2017

I spent the day with some Spanish friends. They were very friendly. We decided to go to the Odaiba area which is characterized by great technology and tourist areas. I found it a beautiful place where I could find a small part of New York, the Statue of Liberty.



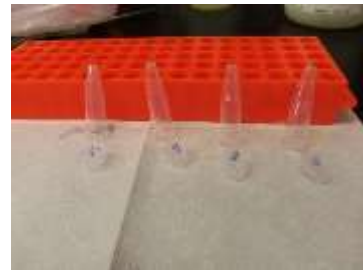
- January 29th 2017

That day I was invited to go out to visit Asakusa and Tokyo Skytree. First we went to the temple where I could take some very nice photos. I found that this place has been changing because it is constantly under repair. I learned the aspects of religion and what one should do in the temple. From there you could see Tokyo Skytree, a high-rise building that at night I was able to visit. I had a lot of fun learning about Japanese culture.



- February 6th 2017

With the support of one of my lab colleagues, Miss Mukai, I was able to perform one of the most common laboratory practices, extracting the DNA genome to a moss sample. It was very interesting this practice that can be heard complicated or very difficult to realize but in reality it is not, although the truth is that it takes some time. I am very grateful to Miss Mukai for helping me and the laboratory for allowing me to do this practice.



- February 8th 2017

As part of the RJP program, the participating students had our first agricultural internships, which was carried out with a visit to Atsugi campus and the Isehara farm. First, we met with Mr. Sasaki, the CIP representative on the Atsugi campus. He was the guide who showed us the facilities that make up the campus. Mr. Sasaki took us by car to where the Isehara farm was. There the staff of the farm showed us the facilities, the fields of cultivation and the greenhouses where in each place we received an explanation of what is being investigated. Especially for me that I am studying agriculture in Mexico I believe that this activity was very important, interesting and enriching new knowledge and ideas. I was very surprised by the type of technology they handle in their fields of study, the tropical crops they have under the greenhouse and the machinery that is used. Then, we return to the Atsugi campus where we continue with the tour of the facilities and some of

the laboratories that comprise the campus. I saw many things in the laboratories that we visited, for example, some samples of insects, animals and plants, specialized gardens for biotherapy as well as a stable with horses that are also used for biotherapy. I enjoyed the visit and the company of everyone during the tour. I would like to return in the future again for another tour around the new facilities.



- February 9th 2017

After two months in Japan and with the finished classes, I organized a Mexican party for my lab colleagues to share some of my culture and food. I cooked some enchiladas and sopes with some ingredients from the Japanese supermarket. The enchiladas are characterized by their spicy sauce but Japanese friends are not skilled with spicy food. I think they enjoyed a lot of Mexico.



- February 12th 2017

I ventured to travel alone to Kamakura. This site is very beautiful place with enriching culture. It has very large and nice temples. I was able to enjoy the nature and tourist sites very popular like for example in Great Buddha of Kamakura. In the city I could see that many people were wearing very striking traditional clothes. I am satisfied and happy to make that visit.



- February 14th 2017

We conducted our second internship which consisted of attending Chiba University for a presentation about Plant Factory to know about the production system, where basically the production of the vegetables is under artificial light. After this presentation we were given a brief tour of the facilities where they produce the lettuce and tomatoes. At the end of this, we had to return to Tokyo NODAI.



- February 18th 2017

The next activity that was part of our internship was in the city of Yokohama. We participated together with the students in the sale that MERCADO did. Most of the



products are produced within the university and others are produced in collaboration with other countries such as Peru or Brazil. This activity greatly encouraged my ability to communicate and sell. I think it was very useful and that the skills I have learned will be useful to me in the future.

- February 24th to 26th 2017

With the support of Professor Sakata I was able to know the cities of Kyoto and Osaka, he took me to the house of his parents who kindly took care of me at home. I also had the opportunity to enjoy some food prepared by his mother. I was well received and we took a rest to sleep in the house. The first day I visited with the professor some tourist centers, temples and mountains of the city of Kyoto. For the next night I again tasted the Japanese cuisine, which I must say was delicious. The next day we visited Osaka Castle, a building with a lot of history. Finally we had to return to Tokyo. In truth I am so grateful to the family of Professor Sakata who took great care of me and that I enjoyed every moment that I was at home.



- March 1st 2017

Japanese friends took me on a trip in the areas near Hakone. I was able to enjoy unique new food from the region, as well as, I could observe nature from different transports (bus, train, monorail, cableway and boat).





I also had the opportunity to visit for the first time the Japanese hot springs. This place is known as "Onsen" which I recommend for a great Japanese experience.

- March 5th 2017

Very soon I had to go back to Mexico, so I organized a trip to learn to snowboarding along with my friends. It was my first snowboarding lesson and I had many falls at the beginning but with the practice I improved. I had a lot of fun and it was great to see and play with the snow of the place (in Nagano prefecture). I also had a small accident that was caused by the tiredness I had accumulated. I must be more careful for the next time.



- March 7th to 13th 2017

The students of the RJP program had to participate in our last internship together with the students from Nepal. The activities we carried out were related to the joint university project with the University of Nepal on natural disasters (earthquakes). We took lessons on the use of GIS database, earthquakes in Japan and Nepal, and finally a visit to NARO and NIED in the city of Tsukuba. In the trip we learned the generalities about the study of Japanese agriculture (NARO), as well as about the soils and natural disasters that exist Japan such as earthquakes and heavy rains (NIED). To finish our activities we had a presentation in teams where we show the main natural disasters that affect our countries. In the case of Mexico are the hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.



- March 14th 2017

The date of return to Mexico was very close, so my laboratory colleagues organized a farewell party at laboratory. It was very sad to say goodbye to everyone. I am very happy to have belonged to the group of students of the Laboratory of Plants Genetics. I am also especially grateful to Professor Sakata and Professor Taji who included me in the programmed activities of the students. I made many friends in Japan and I hope to see them again very soon.



- March 16th 2017

On my last day in Tokyo, I went to Shibuya, Shinjuku and Ikebukuro. I enjoyed every last moment of the city. In Shibuya, I visited the statue of Hachiko for the last time, in Shinjuku I made my last purchases and I went to Yoyogi Park to see the cherry trees bloom. Finally in Ikebukuro I had a Japanese meal that I really like, the Tempura.



- March 17th 2017

Finally came the day to return to Mexico. My Japanese friends went to the airport to say goodbye. They were very kind, friendly and fun with me. I want to go back to Japan to meet them again. All the experience I got is through the RJP program. I am very grateful for the opportunity that was given to me.



- **ABOUT CLASSES**

- I. Farmers and Consumers in Japan

- Hours: Monday from 14:40 ~ 16:10

- This lecture aimed to show the basic structure and economic characteristics of farmers and consumers in Japan. Among the subjects taught was: Japanese agriculture and extension service systems and the various types of Japanese farmers. Topics related to Japanese agriculture, such as flower and fruit production, were also shown.

- II. Ecology and Food Production

- Hours: Tuesday from 13:00 ~ 14:30

- This subject aims to understand agroecology and food production systems for sustainable agriculture. Environmentally soft and sustainable agriculture has been emphasized for the alternatives as the low responsibility to global environment issues.

- III. Agricultural Trade

- Hours: Tuesday from 14:40 ~ 16:10

- This lecture is designed to understand the theory, the history, the current condition and the methods of agricultural trade. And also, some problems of agricultural trade was explained. The topics, for example, was the theory and the history of agricultural trade, the world agricultural trade system, the relation between food production and agricultural trade.

IV. Japanese Language Lessons

Hours: Wednesday from 10:00 ~ 12:00

The Japanese language lessons were programmed to reinforce my knowledge. Earlier I had already studied some of the language, however my ability to speak is poor. Together with my adviser, we decided to practice the language through conversations.

V. Comparative Food Production Technologies

Hours: Thursday from 13:00 ~ 14:30

In this course, environmental conditions on crop planting, deeply concerning to crop cultivation like climate and soil, were primarily described. Then, crop management including soil fertilization, water irrigation and drainage, pest and weed control, utilization of plant hormones, as well as breeding and biotechnology for improvement of yield and stress resistance, were lectured. This subject is important to understand that extending cropland and improving crop productivity will be able to achieve high yields, in response to increasing world population.

VI. Edo Aesthetics and Environmental Resiliency

Hours: Friday from 13:00 ~ 14:30

This course aimed to develop students' awareness of the way people get along with their environment. We took the Edo era as an example. We examined Edo culture and literature with an eye to analyzing the attitudes toward Nature expressed there. We also discuss the conduct life in our different countries.

3. What I accomplished and learned through this program.

Through the program I learned many things about Japan and its people. Everyone was very kind to me. I spent four months in Japan and was able to see and learn about Japanese traditions and culture. This experience was the first for me outside of my country. The differences between Mexico and Japan are great in the aspect of food, people and culture, however, this was not a problem and I was able to overcome this challenge.

The language was another experience that I accomplished when I came to Japan. In Mexico I had studied for two years the Japanese language but never had the opportunity to practice it. In Japan I spoke English and Japanese to communicate with other people and this was a great opportunity to improve my studies. With the help of the RJP program I learned a little more in my language studies and to meet many people.

During classes, classwork, essays, presentations, practices and some trips I made I was able to learn about agriculture, trade, and food production systems in Japan and some other regions of the world. Also make a presentation about Mexico to show my classmates some of the reality that is lived in my country. They also showed us the same information about their countries, including China, France, the Netherlands, Peru, Brazil, Japan, etc.

Finally in my personal life I think I have accomplished and learned to live away from home because it is the first time I do. I learned to be tolerant and respectful of other people's ideas because I met people from other parts of the world where their way of seeing reality is completely different from mine.

4. How did this program shape your career and how will you apply what you learned in the future.

I am studying agronomy in the university and I have a special interest in some laboratory practices related to the studies that I am realizing. I would mean to the practices involved in the subjects of Plant Physiology, Chemistry of molecules and Genetics that are useful for the professional development of my career.

I was involved in the activities of the Laboratory of Plants Genetics and I am very grateful to Professor Sakata for the opportunity to stay and listen to the presentations of his students and their respective labors. All this allowed me to open my mind to new horizons and to look for new ideas that in the future I will be able to realize.

In the future I would like to study my master degree in some subject related to what I have been shown in the laboratory (genetics and plant hormones).

The courses I take in Tokyo NODAI were completely related to agriculture, science, commerce and history. The way in which I can apply these new knowledge will be in the professional field, when I become an agronomist engineer. Lessons about agriculture around the world helped me and showed me different production systems.

All the activities programmed by the RJP program leave me great experiences that will be useful to me in the future. One of them is the activity that took place in MERCADO, where I learned the basic of the sales in Japan but that this will be useful to me to maintain a good atmosphere of sale if presents an opportunity in the future. Another activity was in ERECON to show us the importance of having security systems to prevent natural disasters (mainly earthquakes) that can occur at any time. Also, the short trip to visit the Atsugi campus and the Isehara farm allowed me to observe agriculture in Japan, where I think it is more developed. The cultivation of rice I could not observe it however the process of selecting grain through machinery was very interesting. All this experience will help me to improve the development of my career in the future.

5. Advices for future RJP students.

- ✓ Especially for those students who plan to participate in the long-term program, I would recommend that they have control over their finances. This is of great help because you will know where and how you have spent your money.
- ✓ During my stay as a student, I was very useful PASMO card to pay for transport (train and bus), however, it may also be useful to buy in some establishments (cafeteria or convenience stores). For this reason, I suggest students get one of these cards.
- ✓ Students should inquire about the weather of the season, i.e. the type of clothing most suitable for their stay. For example in winter they should wear coats, gloves and scarves.
- ✓ I think it is important for students to know something about Japanese culture before arriving in Japan. It is clear that once they are there, they will learn and compare their ideas and thoughts with the other students.

6. Suggestions to improve the program.

- ✓ One of the ways that the program can improve is with the programming of activities involved with the type of studies that the students are doing in their respective universities. It is also important to say that the participation of the universities of Peru, Brazil and Mexico are mainly focused on agriculture. Other types of studies could be interesting and enriching.
- ✓ I think the most important suggestion that I can make is that the publication of the convocations to participate in the program be done correctly and in time. I also think that the promotion of this type of opportunity should be carried out a few months before the beginning of the semester (in my case, I arrived in Japan in December and received the promotion in August). You must understand that the process of student acceptance is long. Please, be patient.