

JUNBA2020

In recent years, reduced subsidies for higher education have put strains on operating budgets at many universities in Japan. In order to continue developing high quality research and education functions, while still meeting the needs of a diverse student body, universities have focused on developing independent funding sources such as donations.

Given the necessity of fundraising among many universities in Japan, the Japanese University Network in the Bay Area (JUNBA) held its 10th symposium aiming to provide university leaders and administrative staff with an opportunity to learn about issues and strategies surrounding fundraising through the experience and example of universities here in the US. The event brought together more than 50 officials from both the U.S. and Japan on January 10, 2020 at the San Francisco Airport Marriot Waterfront in Burlingame.

Co-hosted by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), San Francisco, the symposium titled “Fundraising Best Practices: Fostering Effective Leadership and Building Alumni Relationships” featured talks from fundraising professionals from universities around the Bay Area as well as several discussions on how Japan’s institutions of higher learning can improve their fundraising strategies and policies.

On the eve of the symposium, participants joined a reception at the Official Residence of the Consul General of Japan in San Francisco. Thanks to the generous support from the Consul General and his staff, the evening provided an excellent opportunity for representatives from different institutions in Japan and the U.S. to meet and engage in lively conversation with one another.

The symposium began with opening remarks by Tomohisa Koyama, the President of JUNBA, followed by a lecture from Peter Smitz, Interim Vice President for University Advancement of San Jose State University, titled “Ingredients for Successful Fundraising”. Dr. Smitz impressed the audience with his wealth of experience and knowledge on how to guide a successful university fundraising operation. His lecture along with an interview and Q&A session with his colleague, Lori Redfearn, gave participants valuable insight into effective leadership and alumni engagement.

The second lecture titled “Higher Education Advancement” was given by Amy Ambrose, Senior Development Director at Simons Institute at the University of California Berkeley. Following the introduction by Tomohisa Koyama, Ms. Ambrose presented practical methods based on her first-hand experience for department-wide fundraising initiatives. The audience benefited greatly from her extensive base of knowledge and expertise.

After the morning sessions, the speakers and participants enjoyed lunch overlooking the San Francisco Bay. The casual settings allowed everyone to talk freely about university fundraising and related topics. Many also consulted with one another sharing advice and experience.

The afternoon discussion session focused on two topics: effective leadership and alumni engagement. Hiroto Watanabe, Advisor at JSPS San Francisco, started the session with a presentation on fundraising data from both the US and Japan. Following his presentation, the two-part discussion session began with a few conversation starters selected by participants. Before long, a vibrant discussion developed with each university representative contributing their views, thoughts, and strategies that have been successful at their own institution. The three-hour discussion session was just enough time for participants to engage in a lively dialogue that generated new ideas and insights.

The full day event concluded with Masato Miyake, a board member of JUNBA, summarizing the morning lectures and afternoon session while raising new topics for future discussions that can contribute to the further development and enhancement of research and education in Japan. The event ended on a high note with participants staying well past the official ending time.

The success of the JUNBA 2020 event was achieved through the generous support and cooperation of numerous different individuals and organizations. JUNBA would like to thank the presenters and participants for contributing to a productive event. JSPS SF hopes to hold future symposiums and other events benefiting higher education in Japan.