

Yamanashi and DMACC Dental Exchange

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YDHC has a three-year dental hygiene program, which essentially combines dental assisting and dental hygiene studies, while DMACC offers a one-year Dental Assisting program and a two-year Dental Hygiene program, both of which are based at the DMACC Ankeny Campus.

The exchange program takes place every two years, with two Japanese students and an instructor traveling to DMACC in the fall, and two DMACC students and an instructor traveling to Japan in the spring. Students get the chance to sit in on classes and participate in activities with their peers, visit dental offices to see what each country's dental practices are like, and participate in trips and excursions so students can experience each other's culture. (DMACC Daily)



Second-year DMACC Dental Hygiene students Megan Solberg (left) of Des Moines and Sophie Swygman (center) of Elkhart, along with DMACC Dental Hygiene Associate Professor Johanna Land (right), enjoy visiting Lake Kawaguchi in Japan. The trio visited Japan as part of the longstanding DMACC & Yamanashi Dental Hygiene College (YDHC) Exchange Program. They traveled there on May 10th and returned to the United States on May 20th.

Additional information about the Yamanashi-DMACC Dental Hygiene Exchange Program

1. How did the program with Yamanashi begin? Whose idea was it? How and why was Yamanashi chosen to partner with DMACC? Who were the faculty members who participated at the time, and how many students participated? How were the students who participated chosen?

Beginning in August of 1985, the Yamanashi Dental Hygiene College and Des Moines Area Community College Dental Hygiene Program worked cooperatively to plan and to implement a student/faculty exchange program. The agreement was the result of a sincere desire by all parties to promote the sister state and sister city relationship between Kofu, Yamanashi and Des Moines, Iowa.

The beginning of the Exchange was allied with establishing mutual Sister City and Sister State identifications with Yamanashi Prefecture/State of Iowa and Kofu City/Des Moines. Then DMACC President Joseph Borgen was open to cultural exchange for the college, and The Yamanashi Dental Association (owner of the Yamanashi Dental Hygiene Program) had an established exchange committee and were eager to implement the project.

Students were selected by a committee which included the Health Sciences counselor (Evelyn Wright) and part-time DMACC Japanese instructor Yoshiko Swift. Students were required to be in good academic standing, to submit a written essay, and to participate in an interview for selection. There were only 14 students in each class at that time, and two were selected from the applications. More than 30 students have travelled to Japan since 1988 but probably ten times that number have been involved when the Japanese students and faculty travelled to Iowa. I (Marilyn Corwin) was privileged to be the first faculty to go to Japan with students Kathy Smits and Judy Nedved (first cousins).

At first, the visiting students and faculty were hosted in homes-both here and in Japan. I (Marilyn) stayed in the home of Dr. Tomihiro Watanabe; Kathy was hosted by Dr. Hiroshi Fujihara; and Judy by Dr. Yasua Achiyama. This was a great honor because Japanese homes were not large, and the Japanese didn't usually entertain guests in their homes. The first Japanese students and faculty visiting here were hosted by Sandra Leggett, Blanche Riordan, and me. The exchange lasted three weeks and, in

Japan, may have included a weekend trip to Tokyo. The exchange is now about ten days in length and the visiting students and staff are in public housing. DMACC did have an on-campus apartment available for much of the exchange history, and there was an International House dormitory available in Japan.

The objectives of the cultural and education exchange are as follows:

- To enhance and to expand the understanding between two sister states of Iowa and Yamanashi.
- To promote mutual understanding of the organizational philosophy, structure, curricular, teaching methodologies, services, and future aspiration of the Dental Hygiene Programs.
- To identify and to understand the demonstrated needs of the respective populations which influence dental health policy, education, and health delivery systems.
- To establish a positive long-term relationship for dentistry and dental hygiene between the education institutions of Japan and United States and their respective communities of Des Moines and Kofu.
- To provide exposure to the clinical practice of dental hygiene in Japan and the United States.

Dental Hygiene Affiliation Agreement

2. Have there been any changes in the program over the 35 years?

There have been changes in the length of the exchange visits and in the housing. The program started as a three-week exchange, and it is currently about ten days. Exchange students and faculty were initially hosted in personal homes; participants now stay in public accommodations. The Scholarship Interview Committee at DMACC interviews and selects two students for the exchange. The students submit an essay to the committee and the committee then interviews the students to decide which two students will be given the scholarship for the upcoming exchange.

3. Who are the current faculty members who participate?

Jackie Kollasch went to Japan in May 2017; Johanna Land went in May 2023. The DMACC dental hygiene faculty member who goes to Japan rotates within the dental

hygiene department. When Yamanashi Dental Hygiene College visits DMACC, all faculty are involved with their exchange.

4. How many DMACC students have participated over the 35 years?

The Japan/DMACC Dental Hygiene Exchange program celebrated their 35th year of the exchange program this year. With two students from DMACC participating in the exchange every other year that makes about 34 students total that have visited Japan. When YDHC visits DMACC, each class spends time with the visiting exchange students having lunch with both 1st and 2nd year dental hygiene classes, they also spend time observing classes, and attending clinic. DMACC students also participate in outings as DMACC hosts YDHC on their visit to Iowa.

5. What benefits do students receive from participating in the exchange?

Students get the opportunity to understand what the dental hygiene profession and career is like in Japan. In Japan, dentistry is funded nationally so there are some noticeable differences. The access of care is addressed differently than in the US. The scope of the dental hygienist is different between Japan and the United States. The students gain so much knowledge on what is really working well in Japan that the US could gain advantage from and vice versa; but overall, they all learn how similar and alike we are. Our common goals of being a healthcare provider and dental hygienist are the same. The concerns for their instructors are my (Johanna's) same concerns and our proudest moments as an educator are also very much the same, which is seeing our students succeed. The participants in the exchange are required to give a presentation during their visit to the students, faculty, and administration of the college. This has been a really great opportunity to share our program, college, and lives in Iowa. The exchange creates opportunities for participants to learn from others, to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and those around them by deepening their knowledge of foreign cultures. The students leave with a higher degree of awareness, adaptability, acceptance for cultural diversity, and more global awareness. The exchange bridges the connections of dentistry/dental hygiene from Japan to the US and creates friendships that will last a lifetime.

6. The medallion created by the DMACC Tool and Die students is beautiful! Have there been any other gift exchanges?

The medallion created is beautiful! Japan's culture is known for their gift giving. There is an exchange of gifts on each trip. This year we were very fortunate to meet the Mayor of Kofu to present the DMACC medallion, and we presented one to Yamanashi Dental Hygiene College and the Yamanashi Dental Association exchange

students and faculty. Mayor Higuchi was presented the medallion from Des Moines Area Community College during a meeting on Thursday, May 18th, commemorating the 35-year exchange between Yamanashi Dental Hygiene College and the Des Moines Area Community College Dental Hygiene Program.



7. During Covid, it appears that the trip wasn't taken, but that a video was sent. Do you have any other thoughts about that?

We were very fortunate to have multiple Zoom meetings during COVID to keep in touch with the Yamanashi Dental Hygiene College. For one of the Zoom meetings, students from each college had prepared presentations to share. There was always time for questions and answers from each college with both students and faculty participating. (Go to the dental hygiene website to see the videos. The link is at the end of this article.)

8. Is there anything else that you would like me to include in the article?

The Exchange has been an incredible experience. Some of the founders of the Exchange program from Japan were present at the Farewell Party. Everyone whom we encountered took so much pride in what our two colleges have gained with this opportunity and how much we look forward to its continued success.

Pictures are from 2023 Dental Hygiene trip to Japan. DMACC students attending were Megan Solberg 2nd Year Dental Hygiene Student from Des Moines and Sophia Swygman 2nd Year Dental Hygiene Student from Elkhart. Faculty member attending was Johanna Land.











See <https://www.dmacc.edu/programs/dentalhygiene/Pages/japan-exchange.aspx> for more history, videos, and pictures of the Yamanashi-DMACC Dental Hygiene Exchange Program

Article submitted by Judith Vogel - July 2023