

H.K. Cup English Program

Sharing cultural perspectives to solve problems

The Japan News

Ritsumeikan University junior Kunihiro Kodama has never been to Hong Kong, but proved that this is not a crucial factor for winning the top prize in the Hong Kong Cup All Japan University Student Ambassadors English Program when the final round of this academic year's contest was held last month.

Kodama won the annual contest with his presentation titled "Collaboration of Culture in Hong Kong and Japan to Keep Health and Community," in which he proposed a cultural exchange program to encourage students to play a leading role in promoting the health of local residents and fostering better bonds among them.

The contest is aimed at promoting a better understanding of Hong Kong among young people in Japan. The top winners are invited on a two-week trip to Hong Kong. The participants were required to present their ideas using PowerPoint slides as a visual aid, on one of three designated themes: business, culture and tourism.

The outline for the culture theme, which Kodama selected, was: "Design a joint school event or program between your university and a university in Hong Kong to promote cultural exchanges."

In his presentation, the 21-year-old pointed out that people in both places face similar issues, such as an aging society and weaker bonds among neighbors. He proposed a program in which students study each other's culture and come up with initiatives that feature elements from both cultures. As an example, he suggested combining a breakfast of Hong Kong's specialty, dim sum, with Japan's early morning workouts done to radio broadcasts — a pairing for which he got inspiration from a Hong Kong native who was studying at his university as an exchange student.

"University students make a big impact for our community and our health," he said. "To deal with common issues, an aging society, make use of cultural differences. This will lead sustainable relationships between Hong Kong and Japan."

Kodama ended his presentation by en-

couraging the judges to choose him as a winner because he has never been to Hong Kong. "That is why I want to go to Hong Kong and want to see what is real in Hong Kong with my own eyes," he said. "If you think this is good or interesting, please support me. I promise I will play an important role as a student ambassador."

Kodama said when he actually visits Hong Kong, he aims to discover things that are not introduced in regular guidebooks and are different from what many Japanese may think about the city. "I'd like to spread the word about those things, and I believe this is what a student ambassador is expected to do," he said following the contest.

Meanwhile, Niina Nomura, a Kobe City University of Foreign Studies senior, was chosen as the first runner-up for her presentation with the title "Intensive Summer Study of Environment (ISSE) in Hong Kong and Japan." She proposed a program that would offer students — four each from a Hong Kong university and its partner institution in Japan — an authentic cultural exchange through focused study on environmental issues.

"The term cultural exchange has a broad definition given to the sharing of information for the purpose of improving friendship and understanding each other," Nomura said. "I strongly believe that offering the university students educational opportunities where they can work together, and they can share different ideas, will provide them an authentic cultural exchange."

Nomura chose environmental issues for her proposed program because she saw "strong commitments" toward them by the governments of Hong Kong and Japan. The program would last for one week in each of the two places, concluding with group presentations about cooperative projects that would allow Hong Kong and Japan to make a strong connection through tackling waste management.

The second runner-up was Akino Shirane, a junior at Mukogawa Women's University. She chose tourism as her theme, which required her to "design a Hong Kong tour program for Japanese university students." In her presentation, titled "Romancing MTR," she proposed a tour to give Japanese female students a chance to



Counterclockwise from right: Top prize winner Kunihiro Kodama, first runner-up Niina Nomura, second runner-up Akino Shirane and Fighting Spirit Prize winner Aiko Yamashita

meet someone from a prestigious university in Hong Kong on its public transportation network.

Aiko Yamashita, a Hokkaido University sophomore, won the Fighting Spirit Prize for her presentation titled "SWALLOW BEAUTY."

The prize honors the finalist who has lived overseas for less than a year and gave an outstanding performance. Yamashita promoted a swallow's nest facial mask, having chosen "business" as her theme, which required students to "pick one Hong Kong product, food, service, custom or

aspect of culture that has yet to be introduced or become popular in Japan, and develop a business plan to introduce it to Japan."

The final of the 11th round of the contest was held on Jan. 19 in Tokyo, with 15 finalists selected from among 139 participants nationwide.

Thinking like global citizens means everyone wins

Prof. Kenneth Pechter of Hosei University Business School served as a judge at the contest. He gave The Japan News the following comments about the students' presentations.

Spend time in any global gateway like Hong Kong or Japan, and the evidence is clear: We live in increasingly globalized societies. A global citizen — an ambassador working effectively across national borders — must be able to communicate complex ideas beyond regional and linguistic boundaries while being both rationally persuasive and emotionally engaging, often in the form of images and stories.



Thanks to our smartphones, we all have daily access to an ocean of images. But global citizens must be able to pair these images with a convincing story that transcends individual communities. This skill is known as presentation literacy, and can only be

learned through repeated challenge.

The Hong Kong Cup gives Japanese university students a chance to take the challenge in the quest to become a student ambassador for Hong Kong. I sincerely thank the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, The Japan News and the other sponsors and supporters for the opportunity for me to contribute to this worthy event as a judge. More importantly, I am grateful that they launched this event in the first place, and have thus contributed to the development of 10 years of global citizens.

My fellow judges and I agree that judging this event was difficult, as there were many remarkable presentations. The champion, runners-up, and Fighting Spirit Prize winner are all worthy of their honors. The rest of the contestants did well, too, but they undoubtedly wonder what they could have done better. Here are four recommendations for contestants:

First, choose a topic for which you have heartfelt passion. For a theme such as tour programs, which have a similar schedule element across many presentations, be sure to build your tour on a distinctive core concept. You may also consider if the topic is suitable for an ambassador who will represent Hong Kong.

Second, choose a convincing story to tell about your topic, and support it with solid data and understandable slides. Avoid spelling errors and sloppy formatting that suggest a lack of care.

Third, speak brightly with enthusiasm. Don't worry about being perfect. If you make mistakes, make them loud and laugh at yourself, especially in the question-and-answer session.

Fourth, English ability matters, but it is not everything. Like a figure skater at the Olympics, you must be able to deliver the basic techniques, but a passionate performance with a few flaws may be more impressive than a perfectly executed but cold performance. What separates the top winners from the rest may be this intangible something that no judge could specifically name.

I truly believe all 139 of this year's contestants should hold their heads high and be proud. They took up a challenge to think like global citizens, and then delivered on it. Only four contestants could win the top spots, but all are winners. And for that matter, there are now 139 more young people thinking like global citizens, and our world needs this more than ever. So in the end, we are all true winners.



Finalists, judges and representatives of sponsors pose for a photo after the contest.

Finalists (in speaking order)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Ikumi Chiba
International Christian University
Introduction of Pouched Tong Sui to Japan | 11. Kanae Igusa
Sophia University
Hong Kong 3+1 Tour |
| 2. Natsumi Matsui
Kwansei Gakuin University
Students Only! Hong Kong School Tour | 12. Riko Matsumura
Waseda University
Experiencing DEEP Hong Kong |
| 3. Mayu Iwao
Kwansei Gakuin University
Your One and Only Story Tour | 13. Kaito Nakagawa
Shimonoseki City University
Instagramable H.K. |
| 4. Atsushi Fujii
Meiji University
Hong Kong Laundry Service "Pound Wash" | 14. Niina Nomura
Kobe City University of Foreign Studies
Intensive Summer Study of Environment (ISSE) in Hong Kong and Japan |
| 5. Naoshi Yamazaki
Kwansei Gakuin University
Science Students Forum in Asia | 15. Kota Gotanda
Kurume University
Let's Enjoy H.K. Style Drinks in JAPAN!! |
| 6. Akino Shirane
Mukogawa Women's University
Romancing MTR | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizer: Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (Tokyo), Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region • Co-organizer: The Japan News • Patrons: Foreign Ministry, Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry, The Yomiuri Shimbun • Supporting organizations: Cathay Pacific Airways, Dah Chong Hong (Japan) Ltd., Hong Kong Tourism Board, Hong Kong Trade Development Council, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Japan Hong Kong Society |
| 7. Kunihiro Kodama
Ritsumeikan University
Collaboration of Culture in Hong Kong and Japan to Keep Health and Community | |
| 8. Tamako Mushi
Rikkyo University
Hong Kong Delivery — Online Platform That Can Match Drivers and Senders | |
| 9. Mizuho Ogawa
Kanda University of International Studies
Coolest Hidden Cafes in Hong Kong | |
| 10. Aiko Yamashita
Hokkaido University | |

H.K. ideal place for foreign students, start-ups

Opening remarks by Shirley Yung, Principal Hong Kong Economic and Trade Representative (Tokyo):

Welcome to the final contest of the Hong Kong Cup All Japan University Student Ambassadors English Program.

As the representative office of the Hong Kong Government in Japan, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office is most delighted to co-organize this program with The Japan News again this year. This program aims to encourage university students in Japan to explore the dynamism and rich diversity of Hong Kong, and to promote cultural ties, friendship and goodwill between Hong Kong and Japan. Through this program, the ambassadors will be able to see Hong Kong firsthand, experience our university life and see what it is like working in a Hong Kong related organization.

Indeed, Hong Kong and Japan have enjoyed a very close and friendly relationship for many years. Japan is Hong Kong's fourth-largest trading partner, and Japanese com-

panies are the largest group of overseas companies in Hong Kong. In addition, Japan is also our fourth-largest source of tourists. Over 1 million Japanese people visited Hong Kong last year.

On the other hand, Japan is also a very popular tourism destination for Hong Kong people. Last year, over 2.2 million Hong Kong travelers came to Japan, making us the fourth-largest source of tourists to Japan.

We welcome people from all over the world to travel, study or work in Hong Kong. Besides the beautiful scenery and delicious food, Hong Kong is also a fascinating blend of the East and the West in terms of arts and culture, and a vibrant business and talent hub.



As a foreign student, if you graduate from a university in Hong Kong, you may stay in Hong Kong for one year to look for a job. There is also a point-scoring admission scheme for professionals and talented people who wish to work in Hong Kong, and bonus points will be awarded for graduates of internationally renowned universities, people with international work experience, or people from professions in the "Talent List" of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong is also an ideal place for start-ups and entrepreneurs looking to innovate and scale their business globally. The number of start-ups in Hong Kong has been increasing, with 18 percent growth in 2018. If you need more information to make that decision, you may join the Working Holiday Scheme, which will enable you to gain firsthand experience living and working in Hong Kong.

Today, a total of 15 finalists will present their ideas on promoting business, tourism and cultural exchanges between Japan and Hong Kong. I look forward to hearing your bright ideas in these aspects.