

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



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Institute for Global Education

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Dear Kalamazoo-kai members and friends of WMU, greetings from Kalamazoo where the first snow of winter has begun to fall and the campus is covered in a quiet blanket of white.

Let me begin by thanking you for your generous support over the years. Without you, there would be no Soga Japan Center, and our programs on Japan at WMU would be lacking. Let me also apologize for not being in the video presentation you have just seen (or will be seeing soon). When they were filming, I was getting ready to board a plane for a conference at the University of California, Berkeley on the future of Japanese studies and Japan centers in the US. There I was promoting our Soga Center to our peers in a panel discussion sitting side by side with Harvard, Ann Arbor, and all the big programs. It is thanks to you that we have a seat at that table and I am very grateful.

In the past two years our activities have really picked up. This academic year we have hosted award-winning manga artists from Japan and a conference on gender and language. We have also been continuing our ongoing work with the Battle Creek Japanese School and the Japan-America Society of West Michigan. Beginning this spring we will host the Japan Foundation film festival and will be supporting Japan related events at the Kalamazoo library, Portage library, area schools, and in Saugatuck. Next year we are planning a visit by shodo experts, a martial arts of Japan in Kalamazoo demonstration and roundtable discussion, and we plan to host the Midwest Japan Seminar. Much of this increased activity has been possible due to your support and to a Japan Foundation grant that brought us the services of Michiko Yoshimoto. Yoshimoto san has been fantastic and has worked very hard on community outreach. The grant is only for two years, though, so our next big goal is to make the position of outreach coordinator permanent.

I wish I could be there in person to thank each of you for your tireless work and especially to thank Oshima san. Oshima san, your leadership and all the exhausting hours you put in to this fundraising drive is greatly appreciated!

I look forward to seeing as many of you as I can when I visit Japan this summer. If all goes well I will have WMU students with me on my Japanese Religions and Culture study abroad seminar.

Thank you again,

これからも、どうぞよろしくお願ひします。

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