



Annual Activities Report 2019-2020

December 8, 2020

DIRECTOR: Dr. Ying Zeng (since Fall 2019).

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Ying Zeng reports to Dr. Paulo Zagalo-Melo, Associate Provost, Haenicke Institute for Global Education.

ESTABLISHED: 2006

CORE FACULTY (Specialists in Japanese studies)

- ◆ **Dr. Jeffrey Angles**, Professor of Japanese Literature & Translation, Department of World Languages & Literatures, Associate Director of Soga Japan Center
- ◆ **Dr. Stephen Covell**, Professor of Japanese Religion, Chair of Department of Comparative Religions, Secretary of Soga Japan Center
- ◆ **Dr. Priscilla Lambert**, Associate Professor of Political Science, Department of Political Science
- ◆ **Dr. Carlos Pimentel**, Assistant Professor of Japanese Language & Linguistics, Department of World Languages & Literatures
- ◆ **Dr. Diane Riggs**, Faculty Specialist I, Department of Comparative Religions
- ◆ **Dr. Rika Saito**, Associate Professor of Japanese and Women's Studies, Department of World Languages & Literatures
- ◆ **Dr. Takashi Yoshida**, Professor of Japanese History, Department of History

STAFF

- ◆ **Ms. Michiko Yoshimoto**, Japan Program Manager

ADVISORY BOARD (Faculty with personal or research-related connections to Japan)

- ◆ **Dr. Pavel Ikonomov**, Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering
- ◆ **Dr. Hiroaki Kaku**, Assistant Professor, Center for Immune Biology, School of Medicine
- ◆ **Dr. Lisa Whittaker**, College of Aviation

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ **Promote** and disseminate faculty and student research on Japan.

- ◆ **Stimulate** creative curricular development, as well as extra-curricular activities that enrich student and area residents' understanding of Japan.
- ◆ **Support** students pursuing Japanese studies, those interested in study in Japan, and recruitment of students from Japan.
- ◆ **Serve** as the nexus between WMU and the Japan-related business, arts and civic communities in western Michigan.
- ◆ **Facilitate** ties between WMU, the Kalamazoo community, and our partner institutions and alumni groups in Japan.
- ◆ **Collaborate** with faculty and university administration to put in place effective and efficient learning experiences, instructional strategies and scholarly inquiries.

BRIEF HISTORY: Western Michigan University's links to Japan date back more than 50 years, with WMU's first Japanese alumnus earning a graduate degree in psychology in 1955. In 1961, the first academic partnership with a Japanese university occurred when Keio University sent a group of 66 students and three professors to WMU for a Summer Institute program. Currently, more than 500 WMU alumni reside in Japan.

In 2006, efforts on both sides of the Pacific Ocean have resulted in the establishment of WMU's Michitoshi Soga Japan Center (hereafter SJC). For more than 35 years, Dr. Soga, a WMU professor emeritus of physics, worked tirelessly to establish a network of connections in West Michigan for individual visitors, as well as for businesses and Japanese partner universities and colleges. The Center was created and approved by the WMU Board of Trustees as one of a number of centers that exist under the auspices of the Diether H. Haenicke Institute for International & Area Studies.

In 2009-2010, WMU alumni living in Japan conducted a large-scale campaign that resulted in a nearly \$150,000 in donations, which was placed in an endowment. The interest generated by the endowment helps to fund SJC operations. The current market value of the endowment is \$320,327.91(as of September 30, 2020).

Soga Japan Center Activities in AY 2019-2020

FACULTY & STAFF BUILDING:

Since June 2014, Ms. Michiko Yoshimoto has been working for SJC as a full-time outreach coordinator. Ms. Yoshimoto continues to visit grade schools, libraries, community centers, summer camps, etc. across western, central, and eastern Michigan in order to teach about Japan. She also supports current programming at WMU by coordinating Japanese-language tables, on-campus SJC events, advising the Japan Club, etc. The kind of outreach work that Ms. Yoshimoto does is important to spreading knowledge about Japan in our community, as well as establishing WMU as a major center for Japanese studies. Furthermore, it significantly aids in recruiting. The work that she does is critical to the expansion and longevity of Japanese studies at WMU. In September 2015, Ms. Yoshimoto's efforts are acknowledged and awarded by the University. She was one of four WMU staff who received the Annual Make a Difference Awards. In AY2019-2020, Ms. Yoshimoto continued to develop more vibrant outreach programs and succeeded in receiving grant from Japan Business Society of Detroit.



PROGRAM BUILDING:

SJC continued to seek opportunities to strengthen its ties with companies, schools, and other institutions in Western Michigan and Japan, including Kalamazoo Public Library, Schoolcraft Library, Humphry Corporation and Shiga prefecture. Ms. Yoshimoto also developed the Japanese Culture Club at Milwood Magnet School with Communities in Schools at Kalamazoo.

<https://ciskalamazoo.org/rashon-learning-and-letting-it-flow/>

<https://ciskalamazoo.org/tapping-into-students-curiosity-about-the-world/>

GRANT ACTIVITY: During this academic year, SJC received \$2,500 from Japan Business Society of Detroit.

FUND RAISING: In AY2019-2020, the total amount of the endowment spending bucket available to SJC was \$15,437. In addition, SJC received a total of \$8,650 donations in honor of Dr. Michitoshi Soga, SJC's namesake who passed away in 2013. Ms. Yoshimoto also raised additional \$4,109.

COST-SHARING: SJC continued its mutually beneficial relationship with the Battle Creek Saturday Japanese School (BCSJS). SJC dispatched one graduate student to teach at BCSJS on Saturdays and Ms. Yoshimoto to teach and be a financial officer. In return, BCSJS paid SJC \$38,250 in AY2019-2020.

ON- and OFF-CAMPUS LECTURES & WORKSHOPS: SJC organized and sponsored a number of lectures, workshops, film screenings and discussions over the year.

- ◆ Special talk "Japanese Language and Culture" on October 31 at Milwood Magnet School (7th grade 150 students)
- ◆ Japanese film screenings in October ("Where I belong": 25 people, "Born Bone Born": 25 people, "Where I belong": 30 people)
- ◆ JET program information session in October
- ◆ Curry and rice social with Doshisha University students in November 21 (14 people)
- ◆ Special talks by Dr. Reo Matsumura on December 5 at WMU (40 people) and December 6 at Milwood Magnet School (50 people)
- ◆ NHK Documentary Screening in Spring <10 Years with Hayao Miyazak> (25 people)
- ◆ NHK Documentary Screenings in Spring <Letters from A-Bomb survivors> (WMU: 30 people, Milwood Magnet School: 26 people)
- ◆ Virtual job information session of International Language House in March
- ◆ Japanese Lessons for Teens in Spring
- ◆ Virtual Japanese Conversation Tables in Summer II

