

My lasting impression of the East-West Center

I participated in the East-West Center (EWC) as an Obuchi Scholarship Masters student from year 2001 to 2003 after I received my bachelor's degree at the University of Hawaii. My days at the East-West Center were full of beautiful memories of friends and events. As much I as I appreciated the chance to enhance my academic knowledge as a graduate student, what I most enjoyed was the friendship of the fellow students.

From day one at the East-West Center to the end of our scholarship, we spent most of our time together through the orientation, seminars, and of course, fun events and recreations. Most of us stayed at Hale Manoa or Hale Kuahine, sharing our country foods and most importantly our thoughts. I was fortunate to meet so many people from various countries and learned about different customs, beliefs, and opinions. As an undergraduate student with no relationship with an institute like the EWC, my friendship with people was limited to those who I met in class or people from English language classes. Of course these people were/are good friends, but the friendships which I gained from the people at the EWC were experiences that I could not gain at any other places. I have both good and bad experiences, but I also realized my own prejudices and misunderstandings toward people or country which I did not realize I had. The EWC gave me a chance to know and understand what other people think and also to rethink my own fixed opinions. In this high-technological world, we can get lots of information through TV, Internet, and social-networks. However, as we often say "Seeing Is Believing," I believe that we must meet and talk to people to understand them, which I believe will promote mutual understanding and world peace. I now have friends all over the world and this is the best gift that I received from the East-West Center.

What I am doing now

Since I came back to Okinawa, I have been working for a local company which has 10 affiliated companies. My jobs range from preparing documents to creating an active plan for a business. I worked at the import-export division and the construction division. At the import-export division, my jobs were cost-accounting work and sales and marketing. It was fun and interesting to learn how to do a business negotiation. At the construction division, my work included preparing documents to making bids for construction jobs at the American military base as well as translating documents. And now I am working at the corporate planning division. We research and make plans for new business chances, and review existing businesses. As a part of a new business, we

will open a new hotel in Naha City in Okinawa in 2012. I have seen a plan on paper that actually takes the form (of a hotel) and it has been an amazing experience.

I work in a field which is different from what I studied at university, but I believe that my experience at the East-West Center is in use for so many occasions at work. Through my studies at graduate school and at the EWC, I learned that persistence and enthusiasm are necessary for any paths that I take in the present and in the future. What you study in the academic field is important but also your enthusiasm and willingness to make fun of yourself are also important, too. For people who are thinking of applying for the Obuchi Scholarship or are already in the program, I hope you enjoy your study and your life-time experience at the EWC because there is no such program to let you study what you want to study and to experience the multi-cultural world that you can rarely have the opportunity to know.

How the Obuchi program contributes to the future of Okinawa

There are two major things one can learn while you stay at the East-West Center through the Obuchi Program. The most important thing is the academic study that enhances one's knowledge and the opportunity to realize your plans for the future. Another important matter is the multi-cultural experience while you spend your time at the East-West center. These experiences will certainly open your horizons and to see the world and Okinawa differently. You may realize the goodness of Okinawa, Japan, and the world, and also see the weaknesses of them. By being able to see the world with a wide horizon, you can communicate with people from various countries. Okinawa is a small island that has to survive the world full of economic competitions and we must learn to create a sustainable community and economy for Okinawa. In order to do so, we can learn an example from the islands of Hawaii of which the environmental and economic environments are similar to Okinawa. We can also learn from other countries in both academic and non-academic terms. By cooperating with people around the world, you may develop ways to enhance Okinawan society and protect our beautiful islands. One has to go outside to see the inside, and the Obuchi Program is the way to see the world. The Obuchi Scholarship is the best opportunity for Okinawans to experience the world.