

**The News Letter, May 2015 Issue**, from the Center for International Education and Research, Wakayama University

**Greetings from Sakaedani, Wakayama Japan!**

We, all the staff at IER, hope that you, a proud “Wadai” alumnus or alumnae, are doing fine wherever you are now. Also, we are sending this e-mail with our heart-felt “Thank you” to the kind supporters who always help the university promote activities of international exchange. This is a note from us requesting you to read the News Letter of Wakayama University. We have just uploaded the 2nd Issue of the Letter to update you on the things that are taking place lately at your alma mater.

■ Foreign Students Arrived in April

Wakayama University welcomed 64 new students from abroad and the total number of foreign students enrolled as of April now reached 180. A reception therefore was organized on April 22 to welcome those newly arrived foreign students. The President and Prof. Hirokazu Taki, and the Executive Director and Prof. Haiyuan Wu, both joined this celebration and had a chance to talk with the students in a joyful atmosphere. Both executives were inaugurated in April as president and executive director respectively in accordance with university-wide teaching and administrative personnel reshuffle. Professor Taki is the first president that the Faculty of System Engineering has ever produced in the long history of the university. Incidentally, Professor Wu herself studied abroad in the past. So, she must be a good supporter the foreign students can count on. Both professors do hope newly joined foreign students have very rewarding days here at Wadai from now onward.



President Taki flanked by the students from France (left) and China (right).



A student from Guatemala sandwiched between President Taki and Prof. Nagatomo (left)

■ **Wakayama University’s New Partners for the International Joint Teaching and Research Program**

The university concluded in March this year the agreement of Cooperation and Exchange with National University of Laos and Hanoi National University of Education. We expect we can boost the Wadai’s global interaction to send and receive more exchanged students and teachers.

■ **The class report on the course, “the Introduction to Japanese Culture for Foreign Students”**

The course started in April with Ms. Keiko Yamada as an instructor. Yamada-sensei teaches the course introducing Japanese culture and she arranges opportunities for the students to experience the culture first

hand in the course. In April, for instance, the students took on making of “*Ichigo Daifuku*”. *Daifuku* in its classic version is a very soft and delicate rice cake made from powdered sticky rice with red bean paste contained inside. But, *Ichigo Daifuku* is a sort of hybrid that mixes a piece of strawberry with the stuffing of red bean paste. Making of *Ichigo Daifuku*, an assignment for April, was a very timely choice for the students to appreciate *Ichigo* or strawberry in its prime season. The students in the class experienced joy of making Japanese confectionery and at the same time they learned the very Japanese cultural heritage to savor the blessing of nature in its most prime season.

**We now describe how the students had wrestled with making of *Daifuku*.**

First, they wrapped a strawberry with sweet bean paste and made it into a round shape on their palms. *Daifuku* is shaped to “dome” when completed. So, the stuffing, I mean, strawberry covered with sweet bean paste, should be rounded. Some students even at this early stage demonstrated born craftsmanship better than the others. But, rest assured. Even those with clumsy hands, eventually managed to complete decently rounded stuffing thanks to the help by Yamada sensei.

**The snapshot of the class, the Introduction to Japanese Culture for Foreign Students;**

**Lo and behold! They are the masters of Japanese confectionery art.**



The next step was to prepare the dough by adding water first and sugar next slowly to sticky rice powder. Then, they stirred the produced gel in a bowl on each group’s table while being careful not to create lumps from the gel being stirred. Then, they put the gel into a microwave to heat very carefully for the prescribed time duration, and took it out from oven and stirred again. After repeating this process three times, the students shouted loud in excitement, “Oh, we did it.” as they witnessed the gel inflating big just like sticky rice cake normally does. Now, they tore the inflated gel (now this is more like dough) into small chunks while it was very hot and then stretched each piece of dough on their palms as they sprinkled starch powder over to make a wrapping skin. Here, they came close to the final stage of meticulous work. Each student placed the strawberry that was covered with bean paste on his or her palm, and wrapped it in a stretched thin skin. Then, they added final touch by plugging the hole if there is any at the bottom of *Daifuku* with soft skin, and by smoothing gently its entire body of *Daifuku*. The students did pretty good jobs after all although most of them had no Japanese sweets making experience before, let alone, dealing with *Daifuku*. They seemed enjoying the unique and precious experience and that’s what counts most for the students and the IER.

The class subsequently moved to the session of making a cup of tea using *matcha*, powdered green tea. Their

*Daifuku* experience as a cultural leaning would have been imperfect if there were no tea making session. After the great work, the students deservingly enjoyed green tea with *Ichigo Daifuku* they had made. They were satisfied and pleased with their work and said their *Daifukus* were better than those sitting on the shelves at nearby convenient stores. Moreover, some of them even said they would try to make *Daifuku* on their own at home.



Finally, mouth-watering masterpiece was completed!

**The happy faces of Daifuku eating students attest to their satisfaction with their work as the class assignment. Don't you agree?**

#### ■ Staff Change at IER

There was a staff change at IER that took effect in March 2015. Mr. Hyuga Noda, a lecturer and Ms. Kaori Miyazawa, the advisor resigned at the end of March as their tenures expired. Noda sensei taught the course of Practical English and additionally he helped foreign students by providing considerate advice. Miyazawa san was an advisor for Japanese students who plan on studying abroad. Not only that, she offered thoughtful assistance to foreign students coming mainly from Europe and US on various matters. We regret that we have to see both colleagues leave us. But, we wish both Hyuga sensei and Kaori san all the best in their future endeavors. Ms. Keiko Yamada, a lecturer who has been teaching at IER on part time basis is now engaged full time in the duty of both teaching Japanese and introducing Japanese culture. We believe this is an encouraging news for foreign students here as Yamada sensei's status change will surely enhance the university's Japanese teaching resource.

#### ■ Postscript

How do you like the second issue of the News Letter? This is published both in Japanese and English. We, the staff at IER, would be pleased if you gain some idea from the News Letter about how the foreign students, the followers of your path, are doing now at Wadai. Also, we would appreciate your advice to the currently enrolled foreign students, and your contact via e-mail with us telling about your latest whereabouts. Please let us upload your news on the university's website. We will be anxiously waiting for your contact with us.

#### ■ Note

Thanks from IER for the translation of the News Letter, May 2015 Issue. The help was generously provided by Mr. Toshiaki Ando, an alumnus of the Faculty of Economics, Class of 1971, Wakayama University.