

Kobe College Corporation Japan Education Exchange

Newsletter



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President
Dr. Yuki Ohigashi

V.P. Finance/Treasurer
Ken Tornheim

V.P. Programs
Dr. Cindi SturtzSreetharan

V.P.
Administration/Secretary
Tami Mizuno

Dr. Liv Coleman
Angie Gaspar
Elizabeth Hartung-Cole
Dr. David Janes
Toyoko Kodama
Abbi Mayland
Dr. Seiko Okada
Go Sugiura
Dr. Roberta Wollons

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
Ms. Kanae Takenaka

KCC-JEE
5 Revere Drive
Suite 200-#0024
Northbrook, IL 60062

KCC-JEE Partner Appreciation Reception

We are grateful for the many ways you support KCC-JEE, whether by hosting KCHS students during the summer, by hosting KC students during their internship program, by serving on

committees, by serving on the Board, or by giving financially. We hope you will be able to join us in Minnesota.

Please register [here](#) by August 12, 2025.



- Share Your Memories on Kudoboard -

If you have memories of our partnership, please share on our online message board by contacting our office at office@kccjee.org to get the link. You may include texts, photos, videos, or voice recordings in your message. The Kudoboard is open for you to share a message through the end of August. We ask for only one post per person/party.

2025 KCC-JEE Annual Meeting

2025 KCC-JEE ANNUAL MEETING

SEPT 19 - 7PM CDT
SEPT 20 - 10AM JST

[Register Here](#)

VIA ZOOM
(REGISTRATION REQUIRED)

Our annual meeting this year will be on Zoom and will be a simple business meeting, reporting the results of the elections for the board of directors and any other updates to our members.

We will send an official invitation soon. We hope you will be able to join us.

Warm Welcome to the New Gottschalk Teacher!

By Elizabeth Hartung-Cole



Adetomiwa Oluwaseyi Ibukun Adesokan (who goes by “Ade”) has a B.A. in English and secondary education from Salisbury University, Maryland and a secondary teaching credential from the state

of Maryland. He has taught in Maryland public schools for five years and in the JET program in Shizuoka for two years. He is deeply interested in Japanese culture and language. He is very professional and kind with a delightful sense of humor. He looks forward to sharing not only his own American culture but also his Nigerian cultural background to help students learn about a variety of other cultures.

Graduate Fellowship Program

By Liv Coleman

Our 2025-2026 KCC-JEE Graduate Fellowship winner is Zane Casimir, a Ph.D. candidate in Visual Studies at the University of California-Irvine. His project is titled, “Play by Play: Ludic Spaces, Interventions, and Media within 20th Century Japanese Visual Cultures.”



The project sits at the intersection of play studies and art history and examines how the human activity of play in Japan is related to modernization, modernism, and postmodernism in visual culture. He will spend his fellowship year at the University of Tokyo and begin in September 2025.

Essay Contest Winner for 2025

By Cindi SturtzSreetharan



We are delighted to announce the High School Essay Contest winner for 2025. It is Emma Taylor from Virginia. Emma first began studying the Japanese language on her own when she came across old Kumon

worksheets in a friend’s backpack. She grew from those worksheets to taking online study aids in middle school and finally, in high school was able to take Japanese language classes. You can read Emma’s full essay [here](#). We are excited to be a part of Emma’s language and culture study and can’t wait to hear how her summer in Kyoto goes!



**Your support makes
a difference!**

By donating today, you are helping to empower students, teachers, and scholars in the U.S. and Japan, including those at Kobe College. You can make your gift online from [here](#) or sending a check to the KCC-JEE office.

Ten Years at Kobe College: A Foundation for a Global Career in Hospitality and Academia

By Keiko Nishimoto, PhD
Professor, Ritsumeikan University



Engaged in volunteer work at a primary school in the mountainous region of Nagarkot, Nepal.

At the age of twelve, I took the entrance exam for Kobe College Junior High School simply because it would free me from the stress of future entrance exams. The school offered a seamless ten-year journey from junior high through university, allowing me to explore my interests without interruption.

This freedom enabled me to immerse myself in what I loved—especially theater. I trained at acting schools, developing communication skills and stage presence. These experiences were not just hobbies; they became powerful tools later in life, particularly in my professional career. My first job was with a fiber industry in international sales. The English proficiency I had gained at Kobe College, combined with the confidence and expressive abilities honed through theater, proved essential in cross-cultural negotiations. Yet as I climbed the corporate ladder, I began to feel the limits of the so-called “glass ceiling.” It was during this period of reflection that I shifted my career to the meetings business.

In this new field, I discovered that even my Christian education—often taken for granted in my school days—had unexpected value. Kobe College's spiritual environment, especially the daily morning chapel services, had instilled in me a quiet discipline and an appreciation for biblical narratives. In particular, my familiarity with Old Testament teachings proved useful in understanding the cultural and ethical frameworks of international hospitality. These early morning reflections laid a foundation of empathy and humility, qualities essential for cross-cultural engagement.

To better articulate ideas and engage policy stakeholders effectively, I entered graduate school at Kyoto University. There, I developed the logical reasoning and academic discipline necessary for high-level professional discourse. Today, I am widely recognized as one of Japan's leading experts in the meetings business. I have contributed to the development of professional certification systems for meeting planners in North America and Europe. In April 2024, I was appointed as a professor at Ritsumeikan University, supported by a recommendation from the American Chamber of Commerce in Osaka, Japan. In 2025, I will undertake several extended training programs at Harvard University to further enhance my teaching. Then, in May 2026, I will serve as the lead organizer of an international meeting—my first time hosting such an event myself.

Looking back, I can say with certainty that the person I am today exists because of the ten years I spent at Kobe College. It was there that I found the freedom to grow, the support to explore, and the education to lead. The values and perspectives I gained—through academics, the arts, and the quiet ritual of morning chapel—continue to shape my decisions and aspirations. Without Kobe College, neither my professional path nor my sense of purpose would have taken the form they have today.

This year, Kobe College celebrates its 150th anniversary. In Japan today, the landscape surrounding women's universities is undergoing significant change due to declining birthrates and a broader range of higher education options. Many women's colleges have begun to suspend student recruitment or are transitioning from women-only institutions to coeducational universities, thereby opening their doors to male students. In this context, Kobe College's continued existence as a women's college carries renewed symbolic and educational significance. Responding to a voluntary initiative among fellow alumnae, I have joined fellow graduates in revisiting the school's remarkable history and deepening our understanding of the Private School Act that governs institutions like ours. As part of this engagement, I recently attended the Friday Open Program—consisting of chapel worship and an organ concert by the college's resident organist—held at the Emily White Smith Memorial Hall on campus. It was a quiet but moving experience, attended not only by current students but also by alumnae and senior members of the Kobe College community.



In any long-standing institution, there are things that remain unchanged, things that have inevitably changed, and things that perhaps ought to change. While my memories of the ten years I spent at Kobe College are deeply personal and irreplaceable, I recognize that nearly four decades have passed since then, and the social context surrounding the institution—as well as the demographics and needs of its university students—has significantly changed. I am committed to viewing the present with clarity and respect, without allowing my own nostalgia to cloud the realities of today.

Historically, women's education in Japan has often been associated with domestic roles—home management, cooking, and sewing—and even after the Equal Employment Opportunity Law, society continued to place women within narrow confines. In contrast to these societal trends, Kobe College has stood as a quiet yet resolute counterforce. Its foundation in Christianity and liberal arts has pushed back against social conformity, cultivating generations of women who define themselves not by external expectations but by inner conviction.

As a graduate, I am determined to support this beloved institution—not only in its continued growth, but in making its values and spirit be reaffirmed and exemplified in times of challenge. Now is the time for us, as alumnae, to stand together to protect what Kobe College stands for and to carry its mission forward to the generations that follow.

Dr. Keiko Nishimoto, Professor of Ritsumeikan University, has 20+ years of experience in the PCO (Professional Congress Organizer) business. She received a PhD in management science from Kyoto University in 2020. Keiko has been working with both CMP (Certified Meeting Professional) and ICCASkills, which are the education platforms and certification programs for meetings and events professionals. Keiko also serves as an advisor for various projects regarding destination marketing and management. She is one of the assessors of the GDS-Index (Global Destination Sustainability Index) and represents the country (Japan) as a board member of the Asia-Pacific Council on Hotel and Restaurant Institutional Education (APacCHRIE).



Author and other KC alumni at a Megumi-kai branch meeting

What is the DNA of Kobe College?

By Yuki Ohigashi

As Keiko mentions, Kobe College (KC) and other women's universities in Japan are facing challenges, some of which might be the same as those faced by women's universities in the United States. Keiko's story encourages us to know that the education at KC and KCHS has so much to offer to the world. KCC-JEE, as a supporting organization of the institution, gets to be a part of offering such education. What are your thoughts on KC's contribution to Japan and the world today? We invite you to comment on our website or send a message to our office. We hope to share more stories to help explore the question, "What is the DNA of KC?"



A Kobe College Reunion

By Susan Coffman Enge



Ozawa-sensei(back)
Harada-sensei(front)
with Susan & Thom Enge

It had been thirty-five years since I had walked through the beautiful Okadayama campus—I had been a young Ms. Coffman back then—when this spring, I visited with my husband Thom, and I got to show him the school where I had lived and worked. The best part of our visit was getting to reminisce and catch up with some of the teachers who had been my friends, my colleagues, and even one who had been my student when I taught there from 1987-1990.

Inagaki-sensei met us on a Friday afternoon and showed us around. Most of the school was very familiar—but there were some changes. Most notably for me was that Kenwood House was now being used by the Kobe College Psychology Department. I was grateful to them (and to Inagaki-sensei who had made the

arrangements) for allowing us to go inside. This former missionary house was not only where I had lived for three years, but it was also where my parents had first met during a missionary gathering in the late 1950s.

Beyond this, I loved going into the chapels and seeing some of the new learning spaces.

Overall, this was a pivotal visit for me to realize that although I had left Kobe Jogakuin, it hadn't left me. I discovered that my connection to the teachers, students, and the campus is still strong and will always hold a special place in my heart.



Ms. Keiko Harada(L)
Ms. Junko Ozawa(R)

Susan (Coffman) Enge was born in Kyoto, as the daughter (and granddaughter) of missionaries, and raised in Hawai'i. After graduating from university in Oregon, Susan went to Japan to teach at Kobe Jogakuin for three years. She had learned about the Kobe College Corporation through Margaret Larson who was a longtime friend of her mother. Susan's career highlights include organizing and leading educational tours for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC and teaching at the American International School in Vienna, Austria. She currently lives back in her hometown of Kailua, Hawai'i. Susan has been married to her husband Thom for 34 years, and has two daughters who live in New York and Austria.

My Connection to Susan Coffman Enge

By Elizabeth Hartung-Cole

KCC-JEE Board, Chair of the Gottschalk Teacher Committee, and Former Gottschalk Teacher

In 1977, I was a recent university graduate living and teaching English to immigrants at both a high school and an adult school in Kailua, Hawaii. In July, a woman who knew my parents and had taught in Japan for several years (where she was close friends with Margaret Larson) called me. She asked if I would be interested in teaching in Japan. I vividly recall being interviewed by Mrs. Coffman at her home filled with Japanese artwork and meeting her cheerful young daughter, Susan. Six weeks later, I was on a plane to Japan to begin four amazing years teaching at Kobe College High School. I am thrilled to be connected with Susan once again!

Congratulations!

2024- 2025 Hannah Gulick Suehiro Scholarship



Ms. Chinatsu Ono

It is with great pleasure that we announce this year's winner of the Hannah Gulick Suehiro Undergraduate School Scholarship, which is awarded each year to a talented Kobe College music student. Ms. Chinatsu Ono, bass clarinet major, and Ms. Hikari Sasa, composition major, are the winners for the undergraduate scholarship. We are so proud of their accomplishments and wish them a very successful career in music. Congratulations to all!



Ms. Hikari Sasa

KCC-JEE Group to Attend Kobe College's 150th Anniversary Celebration



We are honored to announce that a group from KCC-JEE will be attending the 150th anniversary celebration of Kobe College this coming October 2025. Kobe College (KC), the institution for which KCC was originally founded, holds a deep and enduring legacy, and we are proud to be part of this historic occasion.

The KCC-JEE delegation will include Yuki Ohigashi, current President of KCC; Ed and Terri Grant, former President of KCC and his wife; relatives of Ms. Julia Dudley, co-founder of Kobe College; and relatives of Dr. Charlotte DeForest, the 5th Chancellor of KC and founder of KCC. It is a joy and honor to celebrate this milestone alongside those so closely connected to the college's founding and history. While you might not be there physically, all of you are part of it!

We look forward to sharing highlights and reflections from the ceremony in an upcoming newsletter.