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Kobe College Corporation Japan Education Exchange

# Newsletter

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## With Gratitude

Yuki Ohigashi, departing board member




A gift from KCC-JEE. "To Yuki Ohigashi. From KCC-JEE. Our appreciation to the presidency, 2022-2026." To be hung from a fruiting tree that is also a gift from KCC-JEE.

My personal interactions with KCC began when the Pextons visited our class taught by their daughter, Elizabeth, when I was in seventh grade. The experience taught me that KCC was important to Kobe Jogakuin. As I was leaving for college in Illinois, Keiko Harada, the KCHS Principal at the time, encouraged me to contact KCC. I got connected to the Sugiuras and Margaret Larson, who let me stay with her during spring breaks. I attended annual meetings during my undergraduate and graduate school years and met members of KCC. I was invited to be a panelist one time, too. Each interaction increased my appreciation for KCC.

As I returned to the Chicago Area for my postdoctoral training, Ed Grant contacted me and asked if I would consider joining the Board. I was not ready to do so at the time but decided to join the English Teacher Recruitment Committee. Seeing the love and dedication that the committee members (Lynn Cohee, Marjorie Kinsey, Kay Sugiura, and Fumiyo Young) had for Kobe Jogakuin and its students made me want to join the Board to give back to KCC.

I am grateful to have been a part of this organization that fosters mutual understanding, appreciation, and respect among people in the U.S. and Japan, especially because of the long-standing relationship with Kobe Jogakuin that has lasted over a hundred years. The personal connections we have with each other are such great assets to this organization.
THANK YOU to the fellow directors with whom I had the privilege of working, to the former directors for their support, and to all the KCC-JEE members for advancing the mission of KCC-JEE together.

## Introduction by the new president of KCC-JEE

Ken Tornheim, President of KCC-JEE



It is an honor to introduce myself as the new President of KCC-JEE. As I step into this role, succeeding Yuki Ohigashi, I do so with deep gratitude for her leadership and with great enthusiasm for the work ahead. Having served on the Board for the past fourteen years, I have seen firsthand the dedication, care, and vision that Yuki brought to our organization, and I look forward to building on the strong foundation she helped shape.

My connection to Japan began more than four decades ago, with my first of many trips in 1985. Those early experiences sparked a lasting appreciation for Japanese culture and the value of cross-cultural understanding. My introduction to KCC-JEE came in 2000 through my professional work as a CPA, when my firm conducted the audit of KCC-JEE's financial statements. What began as a professional engagement quickly grew into a personal commitment to the mission of supporting Kobe College and fostering educational exchange between the United States and Japan.



In 2014, I had the privilege of visiting Kobe College, an experience that deepened my admiration for the institution and the students it serves. Not long after, my wife and I welcomed Kobe College students into our home for two consecutive years as short-term homestay hosts while they completed 4-week internships in the Chicago area. Sharing our home, our community, and our daily life with these students remains one of the most meaningful experiences we have had. It reminded us how transformative cross-cultural exchange can be, not only for students, but for the families and communities who support them.

As I begin my tenure as President, I am committed to strengthening KCC-JEE's role in supporting Kobe College and expanding opportunities for educational and cultural exchange. Our mission is more important than ever. In a world that benefits from deeper understanding across cultures, the work we do has lasting impact.

I look forward to working with our Board, our partners, and our supporters to continue advancing this mission. Thank you for your ongoing dedication to KCC-JEE and to the students whose lives are enriched through our shared efforts.

**Follow Our Socials!**

@KCCJEE

@kcc_jee

@kcc_jee_hs_essay_contest

## The 106th KCC-JEE Annual Meeting

September 25, 2026
Ken Tornheim



This year's Annual Business Meeting was held on Zoom, bringing together members from near and far. We had the privilege of hearing from Dr. Keiichi Nakano, the new Chancellor of Kobe College. We also received thoughtful written messages from Dr. Tatsuru Uchida, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Kobe College, and Dr. Mitsuho Okado, Principal of KCHS, who were unable to join the live session, in addition to Ms. Hiroko Yonezu, Chairperson of Megumi-kai—the Alumni Association of Kobe Jogakuin. KCC JEE Board members Yuki Ohigashi, Ken Tornheim, Cindi SturtzSreetharan, and Roberta Wollons provided updates on ongoing business and program activities. An announcement was also made by Roberta Wollons regarding the upcoming program on The Future of Liberal Arts. The meeting concluded with closing words from Ken Tornheim, the newly elected President of KCC JEE. After adjournment, attendees enjoyed a time of casual conversation, reconnecting with one another and sharing stories from past and present relationships. Whether you were able to join us this year or not, we look forward to welcoming you at next year's Annual Meeting.

## The Partner Appreciation Reception in San Francisco, CA

September 19, 2026
Ken Tornheim



KCC JEE's programs are possible because of your support, and we remain deeply grateful for the many ways you contribute to our mission. While we wish we could see all of you in person more often, we were thankful for the opportunity to gather in San Francisco. About 20 people attended and shared stories of their experiences with KCC JEE and KC. We were honored to have Dr. Keiichi Nakano, Chancellor of KC, join us and offer a few words. We were also delighted to welcome several KC alumni from California. It was wonderful to meet Dr. Gary Mukai, Director of the Stanford Program on International and Cross Cultural Education, and Beth Cary, the great granddaughter of the first Chair of KC's Board of Trustees. Beth's family has been involved with KC since its earliest days. We were equally pleased to reconnect with Marina Powers, a former Gottschalk Teacher. These relationships are a tremendous asset to KCC JEE, and we look forward to strengthening them as we continue working to make our programs even more meaningful.



## Bryant and Alberta Drake Guest Professor

Ariel Genadt



Ariel Genadt is an architect, a lecturer, and a scholar. As an architect, he has collaborated on a wide range of buildings, urban design and landscape projects in France, U.K., Italy, Greece, Israel, Morocco, Senegal, UAE and China. He has taught architecture at the University of Pennsylvania (2011-2025), and was a visiting lecturer at Swarthmore College, Ecole nationale supérieure d'architecture de Normandie in Rouen, France, the Cité internationale universitaire de Paris, and the Technion in Israel. His scholarship and teaching focus on the relationships between construction technology, sustainability, and architectural expression across cultures. He also specializes in modern and contemporary architecture in Japan and architectural resilience. Genadt holds a PhD in Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania, with certificates in Ecological Architecture and University Teaching, an MA in Histories and Theories from the AA School, London, and a B.Arch cum laude from the Technion. He was a Research Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science at the Kengo Kuma Lab at Tokyo University (2012), and the first visiting scholar at the Fondazione Renzo Piano in Genoa, Italy (2013). He has published scientific articles in a wide range of journals and is currently collaborating on a book about bioclimatic architecture towards the environmental transition. As the 2026-27 Bryant and Alberta Drake Guest Professor in Kobe College's Department of Life and Environmental Sciences, he is teaching Japanese architecture from an environmental perspective and advises architectural design studios.

## Gottschalk Teacher Farewell

Jocelyn Newman



A lot can happen in five years, and they surely did for me. The J1 girls that welcomed me are now young women in S2, a year away from becoming full-fledged KC graduates. I can gratefully say that I grew up with my students, too. I will always cherish my time at KC. If someday I can still be welcomed within its halls, I will not hesitate to go back to the place that changed my life for the better.

## Graduate Fellowship Committee

Liv Coleman, the chair of the committee



Madison Archer-Morrison

The KCC-JEE Graduate Fellowship Committee was pleased to award the 2026-2027 Graduate Fellowship to Madison Archer-Morrison, a Ph.D. candidate in Musicology at Ohio State University. Madison is studying Japanese video game music communities, with a project titled, "For the Love of the Game: Cultural Memory, Musicality, and Transnational Community Formation in Japanese Dōjin Creative Spaces." Madison will be affiliated with Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto.

New recruitment for the 2027-2028 Graduate Fellow will begin in January 2027.

## KCC-JEE High School Essay Contest

Angie Gaspar, the chair of the committee

The 2027 KCC-JEE High School Essay Contest will be up and running in October. This year, we are fortunate enough to have two winners who will attend three weeks of Japanese language instruction and a homestay experience in Kyoto. The second award is funded by the Rob Mason Fund. Rob was a former board member, Drake professor, and incredible human being! He devoted his life to education, sustainability, and the environment. For this reason, the committee will select from the options that were put forth by the board.



Atticus Lee

The 2026 winner, Atticus Lee, shared his journey on the new Essay Contest Instagram account. He shared photos and wrote a reflection about what a powerful experience it was for him and how grateful he was for earning this award. His reflection and photos in Japan are on the next page!

The Essay Contest is pleased to announce that Ms. Alison Buchelt will join the committee. Other members include David Janes and Pat Gottschalk. The 2027 contest prompt is: ***How would you explain Japan's relationship with nature and the impact it has on their approach to environmental issues?*** More details are coming soon. Stay tuned to our website, and please spread the word about the upcoming contest.

## KCC-JEE's Archival Materials Are at the University of Chicago Library Now!

Yuki Ohigashi

With 106 years of history, KCC-JEE has accumulated a large volume of archival materials. The documents from the early part of our history can be particularly interesting. There is correspondence between Kobe College and the charter members of the KCC Board, between KCC and potential donors, records of fundraising efforts and responses from donors, records of interactions between the KCC community and the KC community, and records of challenges faced by KCC and KC, etc. They are all now safely stored at the University of Chicago Library and are available to the public. We hope they will be a blessing to many researchers as well.

The University of Chicago and KCC are not strangers. Dr. Shailer Mathews, the second president of KCC (from 1925 to 1941), was a faculty member at the University of Chicago. With this connection and the fact that KCC was a Chicago-based organization, the university was glad to receive our archival materials. We also plan to send them digital archives of these materials when they are ready. These digital archives should become available for anyone to view.

The Deed of Gift was signed on April 30, 2026.

A special thank-you goes to the Archives Committee (Marjorie Kinsey, Yasuko Sanborn, Fumiyo Young) and others who helped to sort and organize the materials in our office.

# Japan Reflection

Atticus Lee, 2026 Essay Contest Winner

I am grateful to the Kobe College Corporation Japan Education Exchange for gifting me the experience of my past month in Japan. During my time in Osaka and Kyoto, I was able to experience many sights and experiences I otherwise would not have had. My host family was kind and provided me with a look into the normals of day-to-day life I wouldn't see if I were just visiting for vacation.



One of my favorite parts was being able to explore Osaka and Kyoto by myself. It was incredibly freeing to walk through Osaka and see the buildings, busy streets, vibrant neon lights, and atmosphere of the city around me. Living in such a different environment made everyday life exciting and inspiring. Early mornings and late evenings left me aspiring to my own future. It made me want to work toward having a life where I can travel and experience new places, people, and culture. Even the music I already listen to felt more captivating because of the wonder of the cities, turning even ordinary experiences like the morning train and konbini into something alive.



Another notable aspect of the experience was the cultural exchange, or the Sort of lack thereof; not to say I didn't learn or meet new people. During classes at the language school, I met many different people from all over the world. I made friends with people from countries including France, Italy, and Portugal, as well as other parts of Europe. While we were all from different places in the world, I found that, funny enough, they were all kinda the same as those I already know. We all had, for the most part, similar hobbies and interests, as if I was just talking to another friend from the States. Even the music and trends from the States transcended global barriers as we made the same jokes and listened to the same music despite being from across the globe. This is not to say I didn't experience any new cultural aspects while in Japan; aspects of Japanese norms and traditions were different from those in the States. Whether it was the reliable and abundant public transport, spotless taxis, or the quieter personality of most, but not all, Japanese people. It was also funny to note that many aspects from the States bled into Japan. Almost all the big stores and brands in Japan, such as Starbucks and McDonald's, were also common and popular in Japan.

Looking back on my time in Japan, I feel I came home with more than just improved Japanese and memories of the places that I visited. I gained a greater sense of independence and inspiration to work towards a future life where I can again feel and experience similar and new experiences. At the same time, meeting so many new people from all over the globe made me realize that although we all come from different places, we can still have so much in common. I am incredibly grateful to the Kobe College Corporation Japan Education Exchange for giving me the opportunity to experience Japan, and I hope this is only the beginning of many more experiences like it.

**Want to see more of his artistic photos? Click here**

## From Kobe College/Kobe College HS Alumni

# Collaboration spirit cultivated during my time at Kobe College High School

Toshiko Jinsenji



Takarazuka Hotel
I enjoyed the collaboration

During my twenty-year career at Nikken Sekkei Ltd. which is the biggest architectural and engineering firm in Japan, I worked as a structural engineer on a wide variety of buildings, such as schools, research facilities, hospitals, hotels, offices etc.
Designing a building is a process that relies heavily on collaboration among professionals such as architectural designers, electrical and HVAC engineers, interior designers, and landscape designers. Once the design phase is complete and construction begins, that collaboration extends to the contractors. That collaboration work is a lot of fun. By respecting one another's perspectives, we strive to create a design that is both rational and highly functional for the building owner. Needless to say, the structure has to be earthquake resistant. This spirit of mutual respect is something I believe I cultivated during my time at Kobe College High School.

I have left Nikken Sekkei and now assist with structural design review work. I hope to contribute to society from a different perspective. I also hope to contribute to my alma mater as a member of the Kobe College Board of Councilors.

# Classmate's Reunion

Natsuko Furuya

Seventeen of my classmates (17, a noisy bunch) from KC Junior-Senior High School came to visit me in Toronto, and we had a wonderful "class reunion". Our house is pretty big but not big enough for 17 guests! So, we had all gatherings at our house, and some nibbles too, but for sleeping, luckily, there was a Japanese Prince Hotel about seven minutes from our house. My husband and I know the general manager there well, so they made special arrangements for the biggest rooms at the best price for us. Everyone was happy. And all of us remember this gathering as a typical KC gathering.

KC graduates always have close friendships with each other. We love to get together whenever possible and have a great time together. We also love to have nice meals together. Someone always finds great restaurants within our old stamping grounds. As I am one of those who live outside of Japan, whenever I visit Kobe, even for only a few days, my KCHS classmates have at least one great meal together. Both Kobe and Osaka, and the in-between, are full of good restaurants, and they are not very expensive. This is a picture of such an occasion in Kobe some half-a-century ago.



This is a photo of my classmates' get-together in Kobe when I visited Japan on business. The farthest left is Kyoko, Toyoko's (former board member) mother who was my classmate from J1 through KC 2nd year. Both Kyoko and I came to the US to finish our undergraduate and graduate studies. For the last 75+ years, many of us still keep in touch, and also visit each other in Japan or Canada. We still call ourselves by our old nicknames!

# Where There Is a Will, There Is a Way

Yuri Ito



Born and raised in Kobe, an international port city, I set my sights on a career with an international organization while still in high school. To pursue this goal, I studied English at KC and international relations at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC). I began my career as a local government official with the Kanagawa Prefectural Government. I later joined the State of Maryland, where, as a representative of Maryland Center Japan, I promoted exchange programs with Japan. After working for local governments in Japan and the United States for approximately 20 years, I established a content-based English school. To further develop my expertise, I earned a TESOL certificate from Columbia University in New York.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of JETS Academy. As part of our content-based instruction, I organized “JETS Candystripers,” a volunteer group of students who serve as interpreters for foreign patients at a hospital in Kobe.

My career has always been guided by “Think Globally, Act Locally,” a principle I learned at KC. Without the educational and spiritual foundation I received there, inspired by the founders’ vision, I could not have pursued my dreams. I am deeply grateful to my alma mater. At this challenging time, when the relevance of women’s colleges is increasingly questioned, I am committed as a council member to supporting KC’s continued growth. I was deeply moved by the Kobe College Orchestra’s powerful performance at the college’s 150th anniversary celebration in 2025. Composed exclusively of women, the orchestra reinforced my belief that outstanding women’s universities will always be needed in Japan.

I hope the college continues to thrive and that future generations celebrate its bicentennial in 2075. May our endeavors be blessed!



## Kobe College Digital Archives

**Did you know that you can also access the digital archives of Kobe College? They are available on the website: https://adeac.jp/kobe-c/top/**

**Since it is KC’s website, it is mainly in Japanese, but you might be able to understand enough by using online translation tools. Under “School History,” you can view The History of Kobe College by Dr. Charlotte DeForest (https://adeac.jp/kobe-c/top/01_history/index.html).**

## The Inauguration of Kobe College Chancellor Keiichi Nakano

Tami Mizuno

On May 29, 2026, Tami Mizuno, Vice President of Administration of KCC-JEE, attended the inauguration ceremony of Chancellor Keiichi Nakano at Kobe College in Nishinomiya, Japan, representing KCC-JEE.

In her congratulatory remarks, Tami expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this important occasion. She reflected on Kobe College's long tradition of providing not only academic education but also an environment in which women are encouraged to think independently and contribute to society. Having lived in the United States for over 30 years, she also shared her renewed pride in her alma mater and in the College's enduring spirit of **"Love God and Thy Neighbor."**

The inauguration marked another important moment following Kobe College's 150th Anniversary. Chancellor Nakano expressed his appreciation for the college's history and traditions and spoke of his commitment to carrying its mission forward for future generations.

KCC-JEE has maintained a longstanding relationship with Kobe College, supporting educational and cultural exchange between Japan and the United States. **KCC-JEE warmly congratulates Chancellor Nakano and looks forward to continuing this longstanding partnership in the years ahead.**



Following the inauguration ceremony at Kobe College on May 29, 2026.

From left: Rev. Nobuhiko Sugane; Rev. Dr. Renta Nishihara, President of Rikkyo University; Keiichi Nakano, Chancellor and President of Kobe College; Tatsuru Uchida, Chair of the Kobe College Board of Trustees; Tami Mizuno, KCC-JEE Vice President of Administration; and Hiroko Yonezu, Chair of KC Megumi Association.

## 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 by sending a check to the KCC-JEE office.

## Meet Our New Board Member: David Therkelsen



My involvement with KCC-JEE began in 1987, when my family and I hosted Mikiko, a 17-year-old Kobe College High School student, the first of 11 homestay girls who stayed in our Minnesota home. We've not had contact with Mikiko in a long time, but she must be in her mid-50s by now, and perhaps a grandmother! She may not remember my wife, Linda, or me, but I'll bet she remembers our three children, who were close to her in age!

From volunteering to 16 years of board service, I've been involved with KCC-JEE a very long time. Few organizations have done as much good in the world, for as long, and practically on a shoestring, as KCC-JEE. That's why I'm eager to rejoin the board, though with no plan this time to remain for 16 years!

I've traveled to Japan three times and have seen a lot of the rest of the world as well, 34 countries so far. There's no better prescription for world peace than getting around the world and getting to know its people!

## Meet Our New Board Member: Aaron Tornheim



I am originally from the suburbs of Chicago, and I grew up going to Japanese school on Saturdays. During my summer breaks, I also lived with my grandparents in Japan and attended a local school where I developed my passion for Japanese language and culture. For my undergraduate degree, I attended George Washington University where I studied international affairs and economics. Upon graduation, I moved to Japan to start my career and worked for a multinational recruitment firm in Tokyo recruiting for the financial services industry. After five years in Japan, I returned to the U.S. to pursue an MBA at Dartmouth College. Since completing my MBA, I have been working at The Clorox Company for the past year in brand management. I am honored to join the board of KCC-JEE and look forward to contributing to the organization.



**Thank you for attending**

**The Future of Liberal Arts Education:**

**US & Japanese Perspectives Part I**

**Missed the event? Watch it online at**

**https://www.kccjee.org/special-event**

**See You Again in Part II**