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Tanaka & Green Reflection Essay

Had I been able to draw an ideal picture of what my study abroad at Keio University would look like, it would have matched the reality of the past four months exactly. My classes in Japanese cultural studies and Asian business offered me the vastly unique opportunity to hear a wide variety of perspectives from both Japanese and international students alike; in both my dorm and at school, I forged meaningful and lasting friendships with Keio students of all nationalities; and every single day in Tokyo or nearby prefectures offered me continual adventures and new culinary experiences. During my time in Japan, I was even able to participate in a marketing internship at medical company HekaBio, K.K., where I was able to apply and hone my market research skills in the context of the Japanese oncology market.

Academically, the two classes from which I reaped the greatest benefit and enjoyment were “Consumer Psychology in Global Markets” and “Japanese Society and Communication.” As is descriptive of Keio professors as a whole, both teachers of these classes were highly dedicated to their students and worked very hard to ensure that we got the most out of the classes that we possibly could. The former class allowed me to study and research the exact area which I was hoping to examine—how cultural differences impact advertising and product messaging across cultures—while the latter class enabled me to expand my knowledge base of Japanese culture through fascinating social topics like gender, motherhood, class, homelessness, ethnic minorities, and cuisine. It was fantastic to be able to study these topics in an academic context while simultaneously observing their place in daily life. Everything I learned inside and outside the classroom not only cemented my fascination with Japan as a

culture, but also affirmed my desire to continue to learn about these topics as a marketing professional with a specialization in Asia.

Undoubtedly, the people with whom I experienced Japan are an integral part of what made my entire experience so special. Before arriving in Japan, I signed up for Keio University's "Tomodachi Program," which places international students with Japanese students to facilitate the formation of cross-cultural friendships. I could not have asked for a more wonderful group of girls (two Japanese, one Korean)—some of my absolute favorite memories come from our adventures going to see fireworks on the beach, getting a bird's eye view of the city from Tokyo Tower, eating dumplings in Yokohama Chinatown and soufflé pancakes in Harajuku, and spending a day at Tokyo Disneyland. The fun we had on these outings together was rivaled only by the joy of our fascinating discussions about the cultures of our home countries. Additionally, I was fortunate enough to be placed in a dorm with an extremely tight-knit community of students from all over the world, including Japan, Korea, Australia, Taiwan, and Luxembourg. This living situation afforded me even more friends with whom to explore daily life in Tokyo, as well as valuable friendships that I believe will last a lifetime.

All in all, I could not have imagined a more fulfilling and incredible semester abroad. I'm already thinking of additional ways that I can incorporate this experience into my long-term career goals, and am actively looking for opportunities to return to Japan to develop professionally, visit friends, and make spectacular new memories.