

NEWS

Welcome to the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center



Stephen Covell, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Japanese Religions, Director of the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center, and the Mary Meader Professor of Comparative Religion, has been promoting the mission of the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center since July 2006. In a recent interview, Dr. Covell shared the mission, objectives, activities and funding opportunities of the Center.

How was the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center established?

The Center was established under the auspices of the Diether H. Haenicke Institute for International and Area Studies in 2006. The Center was formed on the foundation of thirty-five years of building connections with businesses, Japanese partner universities, and individual visitors. Dr. Michitoshi Soga, a WMU professor emeritus of physics, led this effort establishing ties across the Pacific and acting as mentor to WMU's many Japanese exchange students.

How did the Center's activities become important for WMU and West Michigan?

Western Michigan University's links to Japan date back more than 50 years, with WMU's first Japanese alumnus earning a graduate degree in psychology in 1955. In 1961, the first academic partnership with a Japanese university was established with Keio University. We now have partnerships with six universities and more than 700 WMU alumni who reside in Japan.

The mission of the Soga Center is "to make fundamental advances in our knowledge of Japan, and to communicate that knowledge to students and other scholars, as well as business, labor, government and the general public." So, we have a commitment to generating knowledge and cultural experiences that will be shared far beyond the university community.

In addition to our connections to alumni, universities, and businesses in Japan, we serve the employment needs of approximately twenty Japanese businesses located in Battle Creek and the surrounding areas.

What activities are planned for the Center in the future?

The WMU Friends in Japan Endowment together with support from the Heanicke Institute and outside grants sponsors academic programs that enhance the understanding of Japanese culture, society and history among WMU students. For example, last year we hosted several guest speakers including Dr. Susan Long who spoke on Japanese attitudes towards

death and Dr. Rachel Hutchison who spoke on the famous author Nagai Kafu, who lived here in Kalamazoo at one time.

Our future program plans involve a WMU-Japan Speaker Series, which would include distinguished alumni, visiting scholars, and faculty presentations on campus, and in the community as well as a WMU in Japan Speaker series. We also envision a Cultural Events and Film Series that will promote Japanese visiting artists as well as provide a venue for important film offerings.

In addition, key components for the Center's future success include increased resources for Japanese studies faculty research, establishment of a graduate assistant position to provide research and administrative support to the Center, and procurement of sustainable funding to support student experiences in our cultural exchange and study abroad programs.

An endowment of approximately 1.5 million dollars would fully fund all of the activities. Of course, any of the goals can be endowed separately, and gifts can support programs on a year-to-year basis as well.





Soga News

Soga Center director meets Japan's new Prime Minister

Dr. Stephen Covell was one of 50 alumni of the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET) invited to meet Japan's new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at a reception in Washington D.C. April 25. The event was held at the Japanese Ambassador's residence. Covell was selected for the honor to represent the region by the consul general of the Japanese consulate in Detroit. Prime Minister Abe was on a diplomatic tour of the United States and attended the reception just after a visit to Camp David to meet with President George Bush. For more on this story, visit the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center on the Web at <http://www.wmich.edu/sogajapancenter/news-events.html>.



DR. COVELL AND PRIME MINISTER ABE

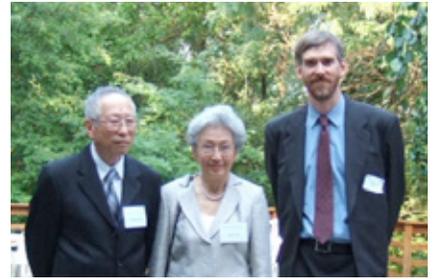
Alumni Receptions in Tokyo and Hong Kong

A delegation of current and retired WMU faculty and administrators traveled to Asia in early March to host alumni receptions for more than 140 WMU Japanese alumni in Hong Kong and Tokyo. The Tokyo reception celebrated the July 2006 opening of Western Michigan University's Michitoshi Soga Japan Center.

Dr. Soga and his wife, Mrs. Ryoko Soga, received special honors at the Tokyo reception with the presentation of a plaque announcing that four undergraduate scholarships valued at \$32,000 each will be awarded for the 2007-2008 academic year as the "Soga Presidential Scholarships." For more information on the alumni trip, visit the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center on the Web at: <http://www.wmich.edu/sogajapancenter/>



ALUMNI AND WMU DELEGATION AT TOKYO RECEPTION



DR. AND MRS. SOGA AND DR. COVELL AT THE FETZER CENTER

Yes, I want to be a part of the success of the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center!

I would like to support:

- Cultural exchange and study abroad with a gift of _____
- WMU-Japan Speaker Series with a gift of _____
- Cultural Events and Film Series with a gift of _____
- Faculty Research with a gift of _____
- Support all of the Soga Japan Center programs with a gift of _____

Please contact me about my giving plans, a matching gift, or to discuss a gift to the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center Endowment Funds.

NAME _____

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PLEASE E-MAIL THE SOGA JAPAN CENTER NEWSLETTER TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS

Tax-deductible contributions in support of the WMU Soga Japan Center may be mailed to the WMU Foundation.

日本での寄付金につきまして、税金控除に関してご質問がありましたら、コベル博士にご連絡ください。

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Contribute online:

www.wmich.edu/foundation/gift

(Under "other designation" indicate the Soga Japan Center)



Japanese Studies Student Highlights

Kendra Combs Awarded Fulbright Fellowship

Kendra Combs was recently awarded a Fulbright Fellowship worth \$36,000 to conduct a year of research in Japan on special education policies and pedagogy beginning in September.



A native of Muskegon, Michigan, Combs will graduate April 28 with a major in psychology and a minor in Japanese. Her interest in Japan was fueled by a trip she took in summer 2005 as a participant in Dr. Stephen Covell's Japan Religion and Culture study abroad seminar. Combs currently works with autistic children at Kalamazoo's Croyden Avenue School.

“Japan is a bit ahead of the United States in some special education policies,” she said. “My Fulbright research will include looking at how they apply principles of behavioral psychology to problem disorders, their inclusion policies, and to collect data on how their classrooms work to create interventions for problem behaviors that occur in U.S. classrooms.”

Dr. Olasope Oyelaran, Fulbright program adviser and interim director of international studies at the Diether H. Haenicke

Institute for Global Education, helped mentor Combs through the Fulbright application process, along with Dr. Takashi Yoshida, history, Dr. Richard Spates, psychology, Dr. Jeffery Angles, Japanese language, and Dr. Stephen Covell, comparative religion.

Oyelaran said. “Kendra competed with the nation’s finest students and came out on top because she benefited from indispensable mentoring by her faculty advisers. Kendra’s Fulbright award is clear evidence that the large cohort of WMU students with her caliber of academic excellence will also win honors, both for themselves and for the institution, with faculty mentoring.”

Benjamin Boroughf wins \$2,500 Bridging Scholarship to study in Japan

Western Michigan University senior Benjamin Boroughf was



recently awarded a \$2,500 Bridging Scholarship for Study Abroad in Japan through the

US-Japan Bridging Foundation. Boroughf, a 22-year-old native of Orchard Lake, Mich., is one of just 13 undergraduate students from colleges and universities across the United States to receive this prestigious award.

The US-Japan Bridging Foundation was formed in 1998 to provide scholarships through the

Association of Teachers of Japanese to assist students who desire to study in Japan. Boroughf applied the award, plus a \$4,500 WMU President’s Grant for Study Abroad, to his spring semester enrollment at Nihon University in Tokyo.

“Professor Angles told me this scholarship would help reduce the financial costs of studying in Japan” Boroughf said. “When I received the award letter, I thought, finally, I can go to Japan and study the language to prepare for graduate study and my future endeavors in teaching without having to constantly worry about how I am going to pay for the costs.”

WMU offers a Japanese minor, which many students enhance with a language-intensive semester-long or academic-year study abroad experience at six partner universities in Japan.

For more information about Study Abroad and related scholarship opportunities, contact the Haenicke Institute for Global Education at 269-387-5890, or visit the Institute’s Study Abroad web page at: www.wmich.edu/studyabroad. A delegation of current and retired WMU faculty and administrators traveled to Asia in early March to host alumni receptions for more than 140 WMU Japanese alumni in Hong Kong



Faculty Highlights

Jeffrey Angles is an assistant professor at Western Michigan University, where he directs the Japanese language program. He earned his PhD at Ohio State University in Japanese literature with a dissertation entitled *Writing the Love of Boys: Representations of Male-Male Desire in the Literature of Murayama Kaita and Edogawa Ranpo* (2004). Recently, he has translated a number of modernist short stories for *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature, Critical Asian Studies, and Harrington Gay Men's Fiction Quarterly*, and several more of his translations are forthcoming in *Modanizumu: An Anthology of Japanese Modernist Prose* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press).

Other recent projects include co-editing the short story anthology *Japan: A Traveler's Literary Companion* (Berkeley: Whereabouts Press, 2006), for which he was interviewed on a national broadcast of "All Things Considered" on National Public Radio. He has also recorded the optional voice-over commentary for the Criterion Collection's release of the 1954 classic of Japanese film *Sansho the Bailiff*.

Currently, his main research interests focus on the representation of same-sex desire in Japanese literature, expressions of ideology in the modernist literature of the 1920s and 1930s, and the development of modern Japanese poetry. He is also interested in literary translation and the ways that it has spurred literary development both in and outside Japan.

Dr. Angles is working on a book manuscript about representations of Same-sex desire in the writing of the Taishō and early Shōwa periods (1912-1937). This was an era of monumental change in Japanese society. During this time, one saw the spread of many new ideas, including medical psychology, modern educational methods, feminism, and leftist thought—all of which helped shape gender roles and the ways that people interacted on the personal level. This study will focus the ways that these modes of thought helped shape the ways that popular writers described friendship, sexuality, and love between men. For more information, visit <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~jangles/>

Dr. Takashi Yoshida is an assistant professor of history. He has been on research leave since May 2006. He will teach history courses again from September 2008. Between October 2006 and July 2007 he was a Jennings Randolph Senior Research Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington D.C.. At USIP he has organized a one-day conference on historical reconciliation in East Asia http://www.usip.org/events/2007/0330_japan.html and focused on his research on a project that analyzes various museum displays of Japanese aggression and colonialism in China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

Between August 2007 and August 2008 he is planning to complete a book manuscript on postwar peace movements in Japan. This project is supported by the Abe Fellowship. In 2006-07, he gave presentations in Austria, Lithuania, Japan, and the United States. His book *The Making of the "Rape of Nanking": History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States* (Oxford University Press, 2006) is available at amazon.com. For more information, visit www.wmich.edu/history/facultystaff/facultyprofiles/yoshida.html

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