



## **Panel 1: Passing the Torch to the Next Generation**

“Passing the Torch to the Next Generation” was the first of two panel discussions held at the CULCON Seminar in Washington, D.C., on September 27, 2015.

### **Panelists:**

**Moderator:** Prof. Naoyuki Agawa, Professor, Keio University; CULCON

### **Panelists:**

Amb. Tatsuo Arima, President, The Middle East Institute of Japan

Dr. Junichi Hamada, President, University of Tokyo, Retired

Dr. Teresa A. Sullivan, President, University of Virginia

D. Patricia Steinhoff, Professor of Sociology, University of Hawai'i; former CULCON

### **Introduction:**

When CULCON was created in 1962, Prime Minister Ikeda and President Kennedy were far sighted in their vision of what could be accomplished through the U.S.-Japan alliance, but they probably could not have foreseen the full value of the partnership as it has developed over the ensuing years. The strength of the partnership that exists today is due in part to the many person-to-person exchanges that have taken place over the years. In the decades ahead, a new generation of Japanese and U.S. citizens will be responsible for maintaining this valuable alliance, and it will be important that they develop their own personal connections with each other.

Only 6000 U.S. students studied in Japan in 2011-12. Between 1997 and 2012, the number of Japanese students studying on U.S. campuses dropped by half. What can universities and institutions do today to facilitate more exchanges and study abroad opportunities for U.S. and Japanese students? How can we continue to encourage young people to take advantage of these opportunities? How else can we prepare the next generation for the global challenges ahead?

### **Summary:**

When we talk about passing the torch in Japan and in the United States, we are talking about passing it from a relatively larger group of older people to a smaller group of younger people. In years ahead, both Japan and U.S. societies will be preoccupied with the needs of older citizens. At the same time, our young people will face an increasingly globalized world, and we will have to prepare them for that. To thrive in the future, students will need to gain a global perspective, not only from books, but also by making personal connections with students and faculty across national lines. Panelists in this session discussed ways that educational institutions are working to help students make these personal connections and develop a broader understanding of the world around them.

Young Americans are interested in Japanese popular culture as never before. However, most don't have the experience of connecting personally with Japanese students. At the university level, much can be done to encourage more U.S. students to study in Japan. Over the past 15 years, the

University of Virginia (UVA) has worked to increase the number of participants in its study abroad programs. The university has created non-traditional programs, including January and May study abroad sessions, that offer other options for students who cannot commit to a full semester or more. The university has also created a work or volunteer year abroad program after graduation. New partnerships with other universities, including in Japan, also provide additional opportunities. Finally, UVA is also working to integrate study abroad into its curriculum more explicitly. A new course, beginning in fall 2015, will include one semester of study comparing U.S. society to that of Japan, Spain or another country, followed by a semester of study in Japan or Spain.

In Japan, several universities, including the University of Tokyo, are undertaking broad reforms designed to help undergraduate students prepare for an increasingly global economy. Through more interactive learning, increased opportunities for international exchanges, and other changes, the University of Tokyo aims to expose students to different ideas and ways of living, and better prepare them to take on challenges in the future. As part of this reform, the university is introducing a new academic calendar, with matriculation in the fall, that will align more closely with the U.S. academic year and facilitate study in the United States. While the new calendar will be a big adjustment for parents and students, who will be faced with a six month gap after graduation from high school in March, the calendar is being phased in slowly to accommodate this.

Beyond student exchange, encouraging Japanese Studies in the United States or American Studies in Japan will be important to promoting understanding between the two nations. Japanese studies are thriving at U.S. universities. The field has grown since 2005; the number of Japanese Studies programs as well as the number of Japanese specialists and doctoral students have all increased. Japanese Studies programs are widely available at universities across the country. Much of this growth can be attributed to Japanese popular culture; young Americans become fascinated with Anime or Manga or other aspect of popular culture and want to learn more about Japan. The current trend in Japanese Studies at U.S. Universities -- cultural studies -- aligns well with these interests. Popular culture may also be responsible for the growth of Japanese language studies; Kanji is more approachable for today's students because they are visually familiar with the symbols. Advances have been made in Japanese language courses in the United States, and students are learning Japanese earlier. Exchange programs to Japan have become much more accessible both at the college and high school level, and after their experience in Japan, many want to go on to Japanese Studies. Finally, these developments will have positive effects on the long-term health of the field. Student demand for Japan-focused courses helps stabilize and continue the programs. A portion of all the students drawn to Japanese studies enter academia, and become tomorrow's Japanese Studies professors.

Finally, high school student exchange programs can play an important role in fostering strong, positive personal relationships. Ambassador Tatsuo Arima entered St. Paul's Academy high school as an exchange student from Japan in 1951. He received a warm and friendly welcome from faculty and students, despite the fact that World War II had ended only six years earlier, and the San Francisco Peace Treaty, officially ending the war and re-establishing Japan's independence, had been signed only a few days before his arrival. As he says, "my experiences at St. Paul's, and later Harvard, taught me about the good will of Americans and contributed significantly to my optimism about the relationship between our countries." Today, he continues to be passionate about the

importance of the alliance, and believes that together our nations can not only secure peace and stability but also lead other nations in solving problems from global warming to economic equality. A participant in the question and answer session echoed the importance of exchanges at the high school level. The participant noted the importance of personal trust in maintaining the bilateral relationship, and said that kind of personal trust is more easily engendered at the high school level.

One of the panelists noted that American academicians have become concerned with a proposal in Japan to restrict studies of humanities and social sciences for Japanese students. This thought was reiterated by a participant in the question and answer session. A representative of the Japan Ministry of Education responded that while it has been reported in the press that the Ministry of Education has asked universities to eliminate liberal arts and social sciences programs, this is not exactly true. Instead, the ministry has said that those departments may need to undergo reform. Curricula and goals in these departments should be reexamined to see if their courses are giving students the skills they will need in the new global economy.

Finally, the moderator closed on a positive note. Despite the concern among many that Japanese students are losing interest in study in the United States, the United States is still the first choice among Japanese students wishing to study abroad.