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Fung Scholar Report

During the spring semester, I was fortunate to study abroad at Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan. I arrived on April 1st and stayed until August 1st, and my experience in Japan was one of the best experiences of my college career. For the first time, I was the minority. While Sophia's campus is diverse with international students, most of the students and teachers are Japanese. As an international student, I studied in the Faculty of Liberal Arts, the program taught in English open to both international and Japanese students. Since my Japanese 1, Anthropology of Japan, and Japanese Popular Culture courses consisted primarily of international students, I wanted to take other courses that would encourage me to interact with the Japanese students at Sophia. My Teaching English Methods and Sociolinguistics classes immersed me with Japanese and other full-time students, and I was happy to collaborate with and befriend them. For additional course credit, Boston College also helped me arrange an international practicum where I got to teach 1st and 2nd graders once a week at an elementary school.

Overall, Sophia University is highly supportive campus. From the first day of orientation, I met full-time Japanese students who gave me advice on navigating the campus, as well as Tokyo in general. Before school started, Sophia welcomed me with club fairs, and I decided to join Kyudo - Japanese archery. Through Kyudo, I was not only able to learn a culturally Japanese martial art, but I was able to befriend Japanese students. I challenged myself to speak Japanese with the students, and they in turn practiced English with me. I am still so grateful for joining Kyudo. It is important to remember that it is okay to make mistakes when learning a new language, and, when you try, you can connect with people. On the streets of Tokyo or at shrines in Kyoto, I would do my best to speak Japanese with natives. I was sometimes uncomfortable

speaking Japanese, but I learned that speaking even with mistakes could really pay off when socializing with peers or even asking for directions!

My study abroad experience in Japan was truly a cultural awakening. In some ways, Japan is a different world than the U.S. I definitely had to get used to walking on the left-side in Tokyo and walking on the right-side in the Kansai region, riding the crowded Tokyo trains daily and navigating them, and even head bowing to people as a sign of gratitude. I can say with confidence that my abroad experience has led me to achieve the Fung program's goal "to help students develop as well-rounded, intercultural-competent, and globally conscious citizens." Overall, studying abroad was not just something to "check-off." I had amazing enriching experiences with new people and places that I will carry with me forever. I even hope to return to Japan someday and teach at an international school!