Disability and Higher Education In Japan

• Japan introduced anti-discrimination legislation (effective April 1, 2016) to ensure all levels of public education are disability-inclusive and to mandate reasonable accommodations.
• People with disabilities (PWD) access higher education in Japan at significantly lower rates compared to those without disabilities. In 2018, students with disabilities (SWD) only made up 1.05% (or 33,812) of all students in higher education (JASSO, 2019).
• The percentage of Japanese universities with a department, center, or office dedicated to disability services more than doubled between 2012 (8%) and 2018 (21%) (JASSO, 2012, 2019).

Opportunities for U.S.-Japan Shared Learning & Exchange

• In the U.S., the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) and the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008) have made disability inclusion a national priority. Lessons learned in the implementation of the ADA are a valuable resource for Japan, as the two anti-discrimination laws are very similar.
• This legislative context led UMass Boston’s Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) to partner with U.S. and Japanese organizations to develop and implement initiatives aimed at building disability leadership capacity both at the individual and organizational (university) level.

YOUTH DISABILITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM IN JAPAN (2014–PRESENT)

Purpose
To engage Japanese individuals with disabilities, ages 18–35, in a 5-month intensive disability leadership and advocacy training in Boston, Massachusetts.

Goals
• To enable trainees to develop their leadership and advocacy skills.
• To enhance their knowledge and skills related to SWD and inclusion.
• To cultivate a cohort of leaders who will engage in advocacy, policy, and service in their communities.

Program Activities
• Competitive application & selection process
• Intensive orientation to the program and life in Boston
• Individual internship with a disability government or community organization
• Weekly leadership seminars and individual supervision
• English language or American Sign Language (ASL) training
• Other community and service-learning experiences
• Summary presentation of trainee internship experience & awarding of certificate of completion

Impact
• These developing disability leaders have been sharing their experiences and promoting self-advocacy and self-determination in their communities since returning to Japan.
• They are actively engaged and making a cross-cultural contribution.

Program Funding
2014—2016: The Daisuke Arakawa Foundation (supporting 8 individuals).
2016—present: The TOMODACHI Initiative, a public–private partnership between the U.S. and Japan

For more information:
www.communityinclusion.org/tomodachi-en/

LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE ON SERVING COLLEGE SWD IN JAPAN (2016–2019)

Purpose
To train disability and career services professionals (DS/CS) from Japanese universities to better support SWD.

Goals
• To build the capacity of participants and their institutions to support the academic success and career development of SWD.
• To cultivate a cohort of leaders who will help engage DS/CS and promote comprehensive disability student support in Japanese higher education.

Program Method & Activities
• Competitive application & selection process
• Cohort design and peer-to-peer mentoring model
• One-week intensive Boston-based training, including action planning
• Follow-up support with action plan implementation

Impact
• The program trained 18 professionals from 9 Japanese universities who implemented action plans and brought about positive change for SWD on their college campuses.
• Alumni formed a network to support one another.
• Several alumni are active members of AHEAD Japan.

Program Funding
• The TOMODACHI Initiative, supported by the Japanese government.

For more information:
www.communityinclusion.org/inclusive_campus/eng

U.S.-trained program participants are bridge builders – a critical force in developing localized networks and sustaining project impact.

The TOMODACHI Initiative, a public–private partnership between the U.S. and Japan, is dedicated to building disability leadership capacity in higher education in Japan. The program is funded by the U.S. Embassy Tokyo.

For more information: www.communityinclusion.org/tomodachi-en/