



On his own initiative, Jean-Baptiste Gourdin tried his hand at designing official school goods for APU. He submitted a number of designs to the university for consideration, and they were accepted. He observed, "APU has a school tradition of freedom and supports students' individuality."

Living and Learning Globally in Oita

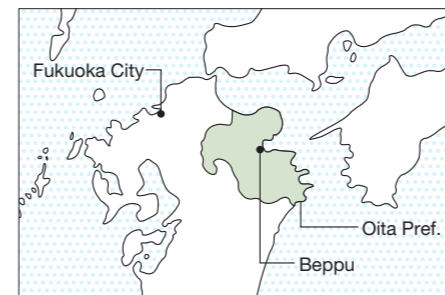
The city of Beppu in Oita Prefecture is where one will find the international university Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU). APU was established by the Ritsumeikan Trust, an educational institution with more than 100 years of history and tradition, through cooperation with Oita Prefecture and the city of Beppu. APU has accepted students from 147 countries and regions throughout the world since it first opened its doors in 2000. APU's two colleges are the College of Asia Pacific Studies, in which students study such subjects as international relations, environment and development, and tourism, and the College of International Management, in which students study business management and other such fields. APU has a student enrollment of about 6,000, with half the student body international and the other half Japanese.

Jean-Baptiste Gourdin, a student from France, said, "Before I came to Japan, the only image I had was of advanced major cities, typified by Tokyo. But by living in Oita I've also had the opportunity to come into contact with the warmth of the culture found in Japan's local areas." He paints APU as a "university at which students become able to transcend the frameworks of nations and

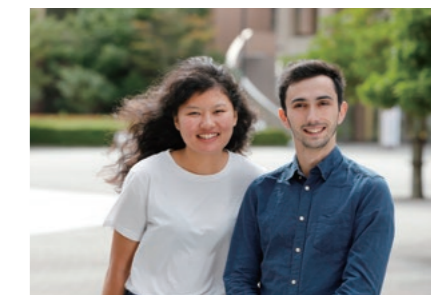
cultures to interact with each other as individuals, while learning together."

During their first year, international students live together in a dormitory with Japanese students who opt to live there. Jana Pelzom, a student from Bhutan and a resident assistant responsible for assisting lowerclassmen and women in the dormitory, talks about the significance of living in a dormitory with people from a multitude of other countries, saying, "We live together with friends from the same age group and build close human relations even with people having completely different cultures, customs, and values."

The Government of Japan is actively promoting the acceptance of international students and is developing various programs, aiming to have 300,000 international students at Japanese institutes of higher education by 2020. The African Business Education Initiative for Youth (the ABE Initiative), which provides African youth with educational opportunities in Japan, is one of these programs. Wanyama Eugene, a native of Kenya who graduated from APU's College of Asia Pacific Studies in 2005 and now works as a staff member at the university, evaluates this initiative saying, "The effects of the ABE



The city of Beppu in Oita Prefecture, where APU is located, is a city of international tourism and culture whose surrounding areas are rich in nature. In addition, Beppu is one of Japan's most famous hot spring locations. The photograph shows central Beppu, which the students affectionately refer to as "downtown," as seen from APU's hilltop campus.



Jana Pelzom (left), who professed, "I love dorm life, because the dormitory at APU is just like a family," and Jean-Baptiste Gourdin (right), who asserted, "The city of Beppu is very pleasant to live in and a very good place for focusing on your studies."

Initiative policy have been quite substantial, with twice as many Africans entering the graduate program this year compared to before the policy began."

When asked about his life in Japan, Eugene recounted with a laugh, "Before I came to Japan, I was worried about whether I could adapt to Japanese society, but I immediately became close to many Japanese people, with one family even treating me as a member of their own. Ultimately, they even gave me a key to their house." He refers to the people who gave him the key as his "Japanese family." He recalled that when his Japanese "mother" went on a trip with her friends, during the conversation she talked repeatedly about someone new—a young friend of the family who had become as close to them as a son. It was only at the end of the trip when the woman remarked, "I hope I have the chance to visit his home country someday," that her friends first learned to their surprise that the person her family regarded as a son was not Japanese, but in fact from Kenya. Eugene continued, "I was touched to hear this story. Of course Japan's advanced technologies and traditional culture are magnificent, but Japan's real treasure is the Japanese people themselves. They interact with others without discriminating based on race or religion."

Eugene asserts that the students attending APU in Oita are blessed with a learning environment that is remarkably unique, even in global terms. He maintains that the reason students come into bloom right before his eyes is the university's location in Beppu, where human relations are especially close, unlike in a large city. To illustrate the close relations students enjoy with the community, he cites APU students working jointly with an Oita condiments manufacturer to develop a halal soy sauce and later playing a role in its packaging and marketing. He also describes APU students visiting local elementary and junior high schools on their own initiative to hold cooking demonstrations and introduce their home



Wanyama Eugene joined APU as a staff member in 2010. He was in charge of alumni affairs and recruiting international students before taking up his current position of recruiting Japanese students. He notes, "It was unprecedented for a non-Japanese to be in charge of domestic recruiting. But if anyplace were to institute such a pioneering practice, it would certainly be APU."



The basic ideals of APU are "freedom, peace, and humanity," "international mutual understanding," and "creating the future shape of the Asia-Pacific region." Ninety percent of undergraduate courses are provided in a bilingual framework, offered in either Japanese or English. Roughly half of the faculty is non-Japanese.



A photo of the Masuda family, Eugene's Japanese family. His "mother" is the woman second from the left, wearing black.

cultures. Upon graduation, students spread their wings in search of a place to be dynamically engaged, at the United Nations and multinational companies, and indeed all throughout the world. "Having young people from all around the globe studying Japan and the world here in Oita, and having them contribute to building a better future—those are the things I live for," he declared, his eyes gleaming.