



# ABOUT THE JAPAN-AMERICA STUDENT CONFERENCE

*Promoting peace and empowering the next generation of U.S.-Asia leaders through international student interchange.*

## Overview

The first Japan-America Student Conference (JASC) convened in 1934. Concerned by the deteriorating relationship between their two governments, open-minded and forward-thinking college students from the United States and Japan gathered to foster friendship and promote mutual understanding through the exchange of diverse perspectives. While the U.S.-Japan relationship has evolved dramatically since the Conference's founding 84 years ago, its mission has remained unchanged: to foster peace through people-to-people diplomacy and empower the next generation of U.S.-Asia leaders. Today, JASC brings together an equal number of Japanese and American college students to participate in an academically rigorous and culturally immersive three-week-long summer program.

Over the course of the Conference, JASC participants (referred to as "delegates") live, travel, and conduct peer-reviewed research together. Through the open and earnest discussion of sensitive topics, delegates develop a more nuanced understanding of their international counterparts' points of view, all while building lifelong friendships. This personal growth is paired with ample opportunities for professional development as well. Delegates have the opportunity to sit on panels alongside preeminent academics and distinguished professionals, while the very structure of the Conference inherently allows students to develop hard and soft skills including (but not limited to) cross-cultural communication, leadership acumen, interpersonal networking, and collaborative research processes.

By the end of this intensive program, "JASCers" gain confidence, insights, and experiences that leave them prepared to join the ranks of the motivated problem-solvers and policy visionaries dedicated to realizing a bright future for the U.S.-Japan relationship in an increasingly globalized and interconnected society.

## Program Structure

JASC distinguishes itself from other student exchange programs in that it is entirely student-run and student-led in nature. At the conclusion of each Conference, delegates elect Executive Committee members (ECs) in nature. At the conclusion of each Conference, delegates elect Executive Committee members (ECs) from amongst their peers to continue the JASC legacy and begin preparations for the next year's gathering. ECs are responsible for managing all aspects of the Conference, from determining the overarching Conference theme and sites to overseeing the micro logistics of delegate lodging, dining, and transportation. The Executive Committee receives guidance and financial assistance from International Student Conferences (ISC), a non-profit organization located in Washington, D.C. that oversees preparations for JASC.

ECs are also responsible for determining the roundtable (RT) topics for the Conference. RTs are an indispensable component of JASC. At the outset of Conference planning, ECs determine 7 - 8 topics for delegates to examine and collaboratively research. Each RT group consists of an equal number of American and Japanese delegates to promote a balanced exchange of cultural perspectives and views. Topics have historically addressed a variety of issues, ranging from international affairs and business to mental health and environmental sustainability. RTs foster a unique setting that encourages delegates to confront their own assumptions, welcome the input of their peers, and breach difficult topics with honesty and sincerity as a means of contributing to a greater academic enterprise. RTs expose delegates to new outlooks, build trust, and foster mutual understanding between RT members.

## Program Impact & Legacy

JASC irrefutably impacts delegates at the professional, personal, and academic levels alike. In a survey of 70th JASC American participants, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that JASC allowed them to improve upon their cross-cultural communication skills (80%) and ultimately left them with an increased understanding of U.S.-Japan relations (75%). What's more, the majority of respondents agreed that JASC allowed them to build lifelong friendships (85%) while simultaneously giving them the opportunity to develop professional leadership skills including public speaking, establishing goals, and working collaboratively (80%).

JASC's transformative nature and its ability to prepare the next generation of leaders in the field of U.S.- Japan relations has not gone unrecognized. In its 80th anniversary year in 2014, JASC received special recognition for its contribution to the U.S.-Japan alliance in a joint statement by U.S. President Barack Obama and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in which JASC was referred to as an "indispensable" bilateral exchange program between the two nations.

Furthermore, many JASC alumni have gone on to distinguish themselves in business, academia and government. Notable among them are: Kiichi Miyazawa, the late Prime Minister of Japan, who participated in the 1939 and 1940 Conferences; Henry Kissinger, the former U.S. Secretary of State, who participated in the 1951 Conference; and Kurt Tong, U.S. Consul General to Hong Kong and Macau, who participated in the 1984 and 1985 Conferences.

# JASC History

JASC is the oldest university exchange program of its kind between the United States and Japan. The structure of the Conference today remains inspired by and rooted in its rich and dynamic history.

**1934** - Concerned by deteriorating relations between their governments, a small group of Japanese students initiate the first JASC in Tokyo to promote mutual understanding.

**1935** - American students host the second JASC at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. This began the tradition of holding the Conference annually and alternating host countries.

**1941** - The Conference is postponed by World War II.

**1947** - JASC is revived by Japanese and American students living in Japan.

**1955** - The Conference is postponed again because of limited financial resources.

**1964** - American students hosted the 16th JASC. The Conference has continued annually and alternated host countries since then.

**1978** - JASC alumni create a non-profit incorporation called the Japan-America Student Conference, Inc. (JASC, Inc.) to support student efforts.

**1984** - JASC celebrates the 50th Anniversary of its founding. Conference sites included: College of William & Mary, the George Washington University, University of Pennsylvania, Barnard College, Princeton University.

**1994** - JASC celebrates the 60th Anniversary of its founding. Conference sites included: Wake Forest, American University, Columbia University, and University of Washington.

**2004** - JASC celebrates the 70th Anniversary of its founding. Conference sites included: East-West Center and University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, HI; Mills College, Oakland, CA; George Washington University, Washington, DC; and Princeton University, NJ.

**2007** - JASC, Inc. expands programming and changes its name to International Student Conferences.

**2014** - JASC celebrates the 80th Anniversary of its founding. Conference sites included: Des Moines, IA; San Francisco, CA; New York, NY; and Washington, D.C.

**2019** - In the 85th year since its founding, the 71st JASC visited Kochi, Kyoto, Gifu, and Tokyo.

**2022** - Entering the 75th year since its founding, the 71st JASC visits Tokyo, Nagasaki, and Kyoto.

