

From Street Busker to Organic Farmer to University Lecturer - Welcome Sean!

By Rei Maeda

Many KU students are very familiar with Sean Burgoine and his teaching style, so it seems a little strange to write this welcome story. Sean was recently hired as a Lecturer in the International Studies Course but he has actually been teaching at KU for about 20 years. Many students, including me, were very happy to hear that he was hired.

Sean is from Melbourne, Australia, and has been living in Kochi since 1994. He taught English in Sapporo when he first came to Japan, but it is his other work experience and lifestyle that is so interesting for us. In fact, about 15 years ago, Sean was profiled in the *KU Campus News* in a story about him raising goats and doing organic farming. Also, Sean has worked at a bar to study Japanese and he is an accomplished musician and songwriter – both in English and in Japanese. It's not often that one of our professors wanted to be a rock star! If you haven't had the chance to hear Sean sing about life in the Japanese *inaka* in his excellent Tosaben, you are really missing something fun!



As mentioned, Sean has worked as a part-time instructor in Kochi for 20 years. He has taught at other local universities and colleges in addition to his KU classes. He found out in July that he would be hired. "I felt just great when I heard the news. After so many years with far too many classes and no office, I knew my life was about to change," he said with a smile.

Sean's area of specialization is phonetics with an emphasis on pronunciation teaching. This is a skill that is really important for communication. During my interview with Sean, he noted that pronunciation is divided into two categories – segmental and suprasegmental. He is really interested in suprasegmentals because when you make a mistake with segmental sounds, for example, 'ban' instead of 'van', it is easy to correct and understand that.

However, if we have weaknesses with the suprasegmental features of our pronunciation, that means our intonation, our stress at the word level and at the sentence level, everything we say will be very difficult to understand. Thus, it makes it hard for the listener to understand what we are saying. Everything becomes very difficult to understand. While interviewing Sean, I could realize how important suprasegmentals, or prosody as it is also known, are for smooth communication in English. Intonation and stress are very different between Japanese and English, so that makes it even more difficult.



He became interested in segmentals when he was teaching English Conversation classes so Sean has plenty of experience teaching pronunciation. He usually focused on segmental aspects such as practicing the difference between L and R and TH and S sounds because that is the more traditional way of teaching pronunciation. Recently, however, emphasis on suprasegmentals including stress, intonation, and linking words together has more appeal to him both as a teacher and a researcher. If you can use those features of pronunciation well, your speech sounds much more like a native speaker. That is easy to understand.

Now, he hopes that students who are willing and happy to work hard, and who want to know more about phonetics, will join his seminar. Sean is planning to do to things in his seminar that are related to pronunciation in different ways. For example, looking at the different kinds of British and American natives-speaker accents, but also the different kinds of non-native English accents and dialects such as Singlish in Singapore and Hinglish in India. He is planning to discuss how to talk about the difference in stress patterns or segmental features. This is closely related to a political side of how we use and speak English, and he also wants to discuss this in class. Such interesting themes will be good for students for both content and building English communication skills. It's great that students will have a wider choice of topics to choose from in their seminar study.

"I think it is important to learn as much as you can in the classroom, and to take as many English courses with foreign teachers such as EPIC, Seminar, and other classes. But it is also very important to use English outside classroom. I would recommend that students be as creative as possible to find opportunities through travel, study abroad and communication with foreign students and teachers on campus," he said in his concluding advice.

I, for one, am really trying to do just that!

Editorial

By Ayaka Ogasawara

University students are mainly busy for their studies, part time jobs or hanging out with their friends inside and outside the campus. You might be surprised to read this but we actually do not have much opportunity to know what is going on around the university. Since 2004, the *KU Campus News* has offered information to students about the latest things related to education, campus culture and foreign students.

On the front page of this edition comes a story about the Nanmei Dormitory where many KU guys live together. The dorm is well known for its unique character and has been profiled on national TV in Japan. It also has a long tradition as it was started in 1924 and their current location, with its well-used building and furniture, creates a special atmosphere that makes everyone comfortable. However, there are so many people - up to 143 students - and that can mean a lot of noise. They have to solve such problems in order to make a good relationship with the people in their neighborhood. We hope you enjoy learning in detail about Nanmei Dorm.

We also took a great opportunity to do a story related to the recent visit by the emperor and empress to our university's Center for Advanced Marine Core Research at the Monobe campus where students major in agriculture and marine science. We are pleased to profile the important work of the Center through this story.

In our now regular 'About My Country' column, we welcome stories from KU international exchange students to introduce their country. This year we have two students, Kira Wencek from the United States and Aina Nurul Chairunisa from Indonesia. Different cultures overseas are very fascinating to us and many Japanese students study abroad every year in these two countries. It is certain that you will learn something about these two very different countries which have great diversity as a common feature.

In other stories, we have an article about the Hocco Sweets Café which is actually on the west

side of the Asakura campus. Second- and third-year high school students with disabilities serve delicious desserts there. In addition, it is a part of a collaborative research project between Kochi Prefecture Disabilities Association, the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Medicine and the Kochi University Health Center.

We feature other interesting stories as well – a report from Fresno by our sempai who is currently studying there, an article about an award-winning student from the Faculty of Regional Collaboration who is working with Ootoy Town to promote local blueberry products, and a story about SKIP which is run by a dedicated group of KU students to support fair trade products.

In the center pages, where we can be a little creative each issue, we decided to ask people on campus what Kochi University needs to improve. We tried to ask as many different people as we could – old and young, students and professors, Japanese and foreign students from different faculties. We asked participants to give brief comments, but one of the people we asked, our classmate from Malaysia, Khairan, gave us such a thoughtful answer that we decided to make it an independent story. She contributes an interesting suggestion for our cafeteria.

Finally, on the back page, we are pleased to welcome Professor Sean Burgoine. He has been working as a part-time teacher for about 20 years but he just started working full-time in the International Studies Course from this year. Welcome Sean!

This is my first time to be part of the team making the campus newspaper. Looking through the articles we wrote, I found that our university students are making good relationships with the local people. As always, our stories focus from a student perspective. We greatly appreciate those students who shared their stories with us – thank you!! – and we hope everyone who reads this edition enjoys what is written, and that it inspires something in your campus life!!

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The *K.U. Campus News* aims to provide an English language forum for sharing university related news, profiling students and faculty members involved in unique endeavours, promoting a sense of pride in our university, and highlighting the international aspects of Kochi University.

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