

Campus News

"By the students, for the students" "By the students, for the students" "By the students, for the students"

KU Student Enjoying Research Potential in Kochi Caves



By Yakumo Yokoyama

University is the place where students can research, explore, and deepen their understanding of a chosen field. We students are the rising stars in our respective fields, and we are taking the first steps to what might become a big discovery.

Mr. Keita Maeda, a second-year student in the Faculty of Agriculture and Marine Sciences, is one such rising star. He is a model student who is active doing very interesting things that connect his university study with his passion for caving. This story profiles his activity which contributes to our understanding about how creatures evolve.

Mr. Maeda is from Kochi, and he has been crazy about collecting insects since he was in elementary school. This is the origin of his interest that's continuing today. However, his curiosity didn't stop at the surface of the ground.

In January 2025, he seriously started caving. His first caving experience was when he was a high school student, and after entering KU, he found peers who have the same interest. Although he explores caves, the main reason for his research exploring the underground world is just to follow his curiosity to see the rare creatures that never appeared above ground.

Mr. Maeda investigates caves mainly in Kochi and Ehime prefectures. While Kochi is known as one of the most cave-rich regions in Japan, the number of researchers is few. As a result, many caves in Kochi remain unexplored or insufficiently studied, making it rich in potential for new discoveries.



According to Mr. Maeda, the most important point about caving is that we can observe the unique evolution and adaptation among underground insects. A closed and dark environment makes it possible to see diverse species and their special forms.

For example, there are some creatures whose body color seems white or even skeleton-like. This is because sunlight never reaches deep into caves, so there is no need for pigment. Moreover, in even deeper and darker areas, some creatures don't have eyesight. In this environment, eyes are not necessary because of the darkness, so they move around and develop their sense of touch.

These features cause these insects to look very strange, and we can understand their evolution for surviving this unique environment.

Another difference between insects found in caves and those above ground is most cave insects don't have wings because they live in such narrow spaces. Mr. Maeda thought he would mainly study insects found above ground before he got interested in caving, so this is like a new world of research for him. "This is one of the most interesting points about my activity and the reason why I can learn how these creatures change their shapes to adapt to the environment," he said.



Although Mr. Maeda talks about his activity and research with obvious enjoyment, caving is not exactly a safe activity. Research conducted in caves involves many dangers. We can predict several accidents like not only getting injured and feeling bad while exploring, but also

falling down from higher rocks, and becoming trapped between rocks. Such accidents have may even cause death in the worst situation.

If such things happen in a particular cave, it must be closed, or the hole might be filled with concrete so that nobody else gets hurt. This means we will never be able to research the

history of that cave in the future. As a result, an important opportunity for learning about our environment will be lost preventing potential big discoveries.

To avoid such worst-case situations, Mr. Maeda prepares a lot of things before entering a cave. He carefully checks the route and weather conditions in advance and makes sure he has proper equipment. In addition, he never enters a cave alone and always sets a rescue time in case of an emergency.

Rescue time means a connection with another person who doesn't conduct caving is coordinated. The researcher contacts this person before entering a cave, generally giving notice about when he will do it and when he plans to return. If the person is not contacted, they should start a rescue operation. With such measures, researchers like Mr. Maeda can carry out their research as safely as possible.



Mr. Maeda and his fellow cavers often get some requests to research caves in Kochi even though they are still students. This is because the number of caves and research about them are unbalanced. These experiences connect them to a variety of researchers, which helps them to develop and grow in this field. It seems clear that student-researchers like Mr. Maeda are on a path that leads them to becoming a respected researcher.



"My goal is not to die," he said, laughing. "Through this caving activity, I hope to discover new species with my own hands and write scientific papers about them," he proudly noted.

It's great that we have such a talented student like Mr. Maeda exploring undeveloped caves and opening new paths for research. In the deep darkness where few people go, his small steps as a student may lead to big discoveries for the world.

Our 23rd Edition: *KU Campus News!* Read all about it!

The *Kochi University Campus News* aims to present a voice for the students at our university. It is meant to profile the great potential of the many KU students who take initiative and action during their university days. There is much to learn from the experiences of those who are taking steps to make something special and unique from their university experience.

This newspaper will introduce some people who might inspire other students. These people encourage us to try something new. Although it is hard to try things that we are not sure about, it is very important for us as university students to take advantage of our time here and make the most of our opportunities. Now is the time to think about our future and gain valuable life experiences.

The purpose of publishing the *KU Campus News* is to inform students about what is happening around the campus. Profiling students from the various faculties helps us to see what other students are interested in. We believe students will see that our university is a lot more dynamic than we might think. It's a small regional university, but all students have the potential to open up their world. As we present some aspects of our university, we hope that this will give students an opportunity to think about how university life should

be and inspire students to be more active.

Another ongoing feature of this newspaper is to promote the many international aspects of our campus. As always, our focus is on the word 'exchange'. There are many international students, teachers, and researchers here at Kochi University, and there are many Japanese students who are involved with international projects. Hearing about them helps us to understand more, develop relationships and start friendships. International opportunities abound for us, both inside and outside Japan. Let's learn more about these opportunities and do what we can to fulfill our potential. Profiling this aspect of our campus is good for us as students.

Last, but not least, we would like to follow the lead of the students who have worked hard on the *KU Campus News* over the past years. This newspaper represents the voice of students. Although we are always trying out new column ideas, the theme remains the same for this 23rd edition, "By the students, for the students". We thank you for taking the time to read our paper. Comments, suggestions, criticisms and feedback of any kind are welcome. We hope you enjoy our stories!

Who's Working Where? Student Part-Time Jobs

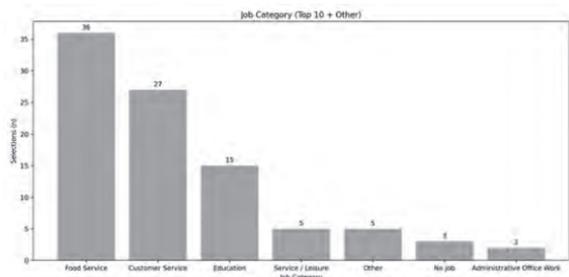


By Keiichiro Kojima

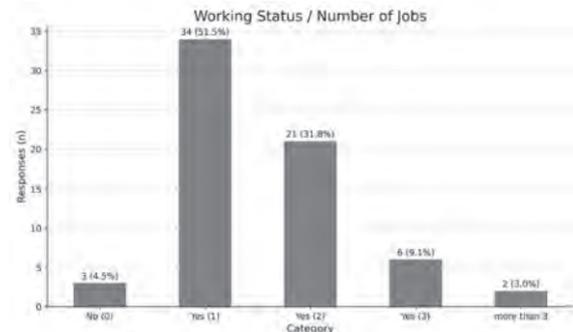
As a member of the KU Badminton club on the Asakura campus, I meet many undergraduates from each of the six KU faculties including students based at different campuses.

I also work at the school cafeteria with KU students from other faculties. This piqued my interest in what part-time jobs KU students do so I created an online survey form to find out more. Sixty-four people did the survey and I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who cooperated.

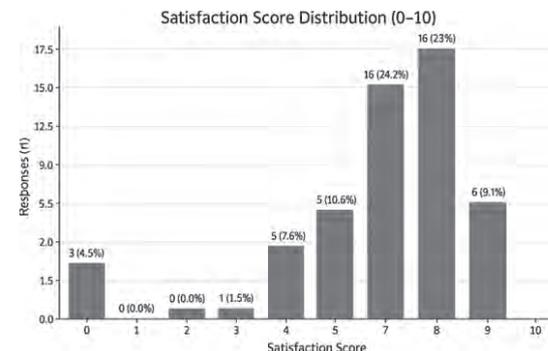
Let's have a look at the data to see the kinds of part-time jobs students do and how much they enjoy this important part of student life.



By far the most popular category was Food Service with half of students working in this area. Customer Service was also higher than other categories. I often hear that customer service is very hard because workers have to look after customers, doing a great number of things simultaneously.



More than half of students have just one job, but many do two or even three jobs to earn more money or to save for study abroad. Some don't work at all, which was surprising to me, and a couple of hardworking students work more than three jobs for financial reasons or for building skills and fulfillment.



As expected, the majority of the students are generally satisfied with their jobs, even if there are some inconveniences. A few offered comments like 'The boss isn't nice' or 'Low salary' as negative comments but most were positive noting things like 'Having good friendships and community', 'Staff meals are delicious' and 'Nice balance with study' as satisfying aspects of working part-time.

It's clear that we need to take into account the conditions of the part-time job itself and also how to balance work with study. But it's also clear to everyone that part-time experience is a great part of university life!

Green Bird: A Cleaning Organization Started by KU Regional Collaboration Student



By Kenji Ogi

Create your own team! If you are a university student, this is a concept you have probably thought of at least once. For this story, I interviewed a young man who made this dream come true.

His name is Mr. Koki Bando, a second-year student in the Faculty of Regional Collaboration at Kochi University. He is the Kochi team representative of a cleanup organization called Green Bird.

Green Bird was launched in Omotesando, Tokyo in 2002, and its activities spread throughout Japan with the support of like-minded friends. There are currently more than 50 teams around the country, including a team from Kochi.

When I asked him why he started this activity, Mr. Bando mentioned that he joined Green Bird in Tokushima during his high school years and experienced various activities. Then, after enrolling at KU, he learned that there was no Green Bird team in Kochi, so he decided to create a Kochi team. While coordinating with the representatives of the Tokushima team and the office in Tokyo, he began organizing the Kochi team during the summer break of his first year and established Green Bird in April of his second year.

Currently, the team is led by four people, and local residents also participate in the activities whenever they

are held. So far, a total of 100 people have taken part in the Kochi Green Bird activities.

Also, when I asked him what he gets from these activities, Mr. Bando answered, "It's all about meeting new people." He said that he was happy because some of the people who participated in the activities came after visiting the website, and some of them came regularly after that.



Next, when I asked him what kind of difficulties he faced in his activities, he replied, "I don't consider difficulties to be a problem and that it is always important when taking on challenges."

Since university students are the main participants in the activities, they can only be active on weekends and holidays and figuring out how to engage during weekdays is one of the challenges the team faces moving forward. Also, in summer,

local high school students participate as volunteers, which increases the number of participants, but in autumn and winter, there are not enough people taking part. Mr. Bando noted that Green Bird is considering more publicity activities as a way of building the organization.

Although Green Bird was created just recently, it has

already begun receiving collaboration requests from local companies. For example, in February, they will collaborate with Starbucks Coffee to carry out a local cleanup activity. Mr. Bando shared that, "By working in collaboration with the community in this way, I have learned to take initiative and become more organized."

In addition, it is not just companies that collaborate; other Green Bird groups located throughout the country do the same. Every year, a meeting is held in Tokyo for the leaders of

each team. Mr. Bando mentioned that it is important to gain new insights and perspectives through communication with leaders from other prefectures, and that new



connections can be formed, connections that he wants to value and cherish.

Mr. Bando has a particular belief that he values highly, apart from his cleaning activities. Building a team where people feel they belong, and valuing connections is another vision that the Green Bird Kochi team aims for.

The original purpose of Green Bird was to create a society without littering. The organization started from the idea that littering can be eliminated by showing others a large group of people cleaning while wearing the same clothes. Among Green Bird's activity goals is to create connections with the community, and the Kochi team has set valuing connections as its own unique theme.

The Green Bird Kochi team carries out cleaning activities mainly in the central downtown area of Kochi City, using the first and second floors of a building called Harimaya Ensemble as their base. Although irregular, they carry out activities on weekends two or three times a month. We hope that their activities will proceed steadily.

To conclude, I would like to share his words one last time. "If anyone is interested in our activities, we would love you to join our team. Regardless of nationality or age, let's value our connections and work together!"



Lost in Translation...? Five Indonesian Exchange Students Thriving at KU

By Nur Izzah Nabila Binti Maarof



It amazes me how soft the sound of pouring rain in Japan is! I always thought the director of Korean dramas made the rain fall softly on purpose to make the scene more romantic. But, in Japan, that is simply how things are. You don't even realize it - just like how shy Japanese people are."

This is just one of the many interesting comments shared by Charlie, one of five Indonesian students from Tanjungpura University currently studying here at KU for six months in the Faculty of Regional Collaboration, when asked about what surprising things he found while living in Kochi.

At the beginning of the 2025 fall semester, we welcomed these wonderful exchange students from Indonesia into our EPIC Program classes. Pinkan, Charlie, Genos, Dila, and Susanti are the five bright students who were chosen from their international class department and were given scholarships to represent their university. They were chosen based on their active participation at Tanjungpura University and their excellent performance in studies.

When asked about what the biggest challenges that they faced when arriving in Japan, Pinkan gave a short and simple answer - "It's the language barrier". She continued by explaining that it's challenging to communicate with people in Kochi because most don't speak English. This was also complicated by the fact that none of the Indonesian student could speak Japanese when they first arrived here.

Even things that might seem simple proved

challenging for them. Each of them commented about the difficulties they faced when trying to pay for food in convenience stores when they first came to Kochi. "It's really, really hard!" Susanti emphasized with a laugh.

Susanti also shared how she used her hands to signal what she wanted to the cashier. She didn't know how to talk to the cashier since she can't speak Japanese and didn't know what suitable words to use. Of course, not having any basic Japanese language skills makes it harder to survive in Kochi.

"We always lose something in translation," Pinkan explained, and even speaking in English can lead to misunderstanding. Especially when speaking English with other Japanese, miscommunication always occurs.

Fortunately, once they settled here, they all started attending an online Japanese class. After a few weeks, they came to understand and speak some basic shopping Japanese like "fukuro" and "ikura desuka." Phrases like these are enough to help them shop in supermarkets and convenience stores. It might not seem like much to us, but it's a big help for their everyday survival needs here.

Pinkan also noted that, "Basically, we use apps to translate. It's convenient especially when shopping." While still in the process of learning the Japanese language, Pinkan mentioned how they rely more on google translation for unexpected situations.

Dila shared something interesting about how they learn and use Japanese. "Learning and then practicing here is a kind of active learning. That's what we're doing here". In other words, they use what they learn one day to communicate with Japanese people the next day.

I found myself impressed when they said such things

like, "We try our best even if it is wrong" or "We try to learn from our mistakes." This clearly shows how determined they are to learn Japanese. Although there are lots of awkward and embarrassing situations when using Japanese in the wrong way, for them this is how they learn and improve their Japanese language skills.

While facing such obstacles during their stay here, they have visited a lot of the beautiful places that Kochi Prefecture has to offer. For Genos, visiting the Ryugado Cave was impressive. "I had never been to a cave before. It was so well maintained, and it's safe for visitors to wander around," he said. For Dila, it was an unforgettable experience of seeing the clear blue sea near Yashi Park and how

it mixed with the beautiful clear sky.

On an organized school visit to Otoyo in the Kochi mountains, they experienced how to pick yuzu for the first time. "Suddenly we became yuzu farmers!" said Susanti. This is not an experience that can be found anywhere especially not in Indonesia. They learned a lot of new skills like how to use special scissors to cut yuzu.

'Tanoshii', 'fond memories,' and 'cool adventures' - these are the words and phrases the Indonesian group used to describe how they feel about Kochi. It's obvious from these words, and from sharing time with them, that despite all the hardships they might have faced since coming here in early October 2025, it has been a wonderful experience for them to spend this precious time in Kochi.

At the end of the day, they still smile brightly about everything before falling asleep each night.



A Semester in Sweden: Learning, Living and Growing

By Nao Yamasaki



Studying abroad is an opportunity to experience new cultures and values, but few people can manage to live life easily right from the start in a new place. But even in such awkward and unfamiliar daily life situations, there are plenty of new discoveries and things you come to love.

I studied abroad at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden for about half a year, from September 2025 to January 2026. In this article, I share my daily life at a Swedish university and the discoveries I made during my study abroad experience.

Gothenburg is a port city located in southwestern Sweden and is known as Sweden's second-largest city. The University of Gothenburg, located in the city, attracts students from around the world and has a student exchange agreement with Kochi University.

Taking classes are an essential part of studying abroad. The teaching style at the University of Gothenburg differs



slightly from Japanese universities. While lectures with large numbers of students are common in Japan, the University of Gothenburg often offers smaller classes of about 30 students. As a result, group discussions are frequently held in class.

One example is the "Intercultural Communication" course I took. The class focused on differences in thinking

and expression across cultures, with frequent group discussions and presentations. We compared "rich points," or values considered important in each country. Because participating students came from many different backgrounds, we were able to experience intercultural communication firsthand.

My favorite part of living in Sweden has been frequenting the many secondhand stores. Since I've always loved vintage clothing, Sweden's secondhand culture really appealed to me. Secondhand stores in Sweden sell not only clothes but also everyday items. In Japan, vintage clothing is often associated with expensive items, but in Sweden it is a more accessible and natural part of daily life, regardless of age. This made me realize how deeply sustainable thinking is rooted in Swedish daily life.

Visiting secondhand stores became one of the small joys of my study abroad experience.

Living in Sweden also prompted me to re-examine my perspective on Japan in unexpected ways. The first moment that made me reflect more deeply on Japan was when my professor asked me about the meaning of "mono no aware" in class. Despite being Japanese, I couldn't properly explain it. That experience made me realize I didn't fully understand my own country and culture.

When living in Japan, most people around us are Japanese, so I rarely had opportunities to consciously think about my own Japanese culture. But after coming to Sweden, I was asked about Japanese culture much more often, which made me realize how limited my own knowledge was.

I also realized that not only traditional culture, but popular culture plays an important role in attracting people's interest in Japan. When people found out I was Japanese, many of them started talking to me about anime.

Since I had rarely engaged with anime before, I often struggled to continue the conversation and felt that I did not fully understand this important part of contemporary Japanese culture.

Through my study abroad experience, I've also noticed some subtle changes in myself. I feel I've become better at prioritizing what I truly want to do compared to when I was in Japan. Instead of forcing myself to keep doing things I'm not excited about, I now spend more time on things that interest me and try new challenges.

My perspective on the future has changed as well. I no longer think that working for a big company or choosing the most "stable" path is the only option. I've started to see freelancing or working in a small organization as future possibilities for me. Since our time in life is limited, I now genuinely want to choose a path that makes me feel alive, rather than pushing myself into something that doesn't.

Looking back, these five months of studying abroad were truly meaningful to me. At 19, a time when I was still finding my way, living away from the country where I was born and raised taught me a lot. Even though I often felt lost and made mistakes, the experience of managing life on my own has become something very important in my life. I don't know how this experience will shape my future, but I am certain that these five months are something I will never forget.

If anyone reading this has even a slight interest in studying abroad, I encourage them to start by looking for a destination where they can explore what they enjoy and what truly interests them. There is no single right way to study abroad, as each experience is different. However, choosing an experience based on your own interests and passions can become something that supports you throughout your entire life.



Kuroshio Festival 2025



I was inspired by the runners' enthusiasm



Relay Marathon: New Way to Connect University Staff and Students at Kuroshio Festival

On the first morning of the Kuroshio Festival, a pistol sound rang out. With the sound, a few people started to run around the campus.

The relay marathon is a new event aimed at fostering interaction between members of Kochi University, especially staff and students. There are no limits on the number of team members or the running order. Runners do the same 400- or 800-meters courses until they reach the goal. Members can freely divide the number of laps they run within the team, not just once per person. Each team runs a total five kilometers.

On the day, 25 professors, university staff members and students join this event. Several teams were formed by staff and students, and they got a sense of unity through passing the baton. Mr. Shinji Idani, an operation staff member who works at KU said, "the smaller number of participants created a cozy, intimate atmosphere and allowed attendees to connect more closely with others."

The relay marathon utilized our large campus, and it was a great success!



Yosakoi Suiren: Energetic Performance at Kuroshio Festival

Most KU students have experienced yosakoi at least once. At KU, there are four yosakoi teams for students. One of them is called Suiren. The Suiren team participated in the Kuroshio Festival, performing yosakoi in front of many people on the campus streets such as on the road in front of the education building and in front of KU's library. The dancers proudly showed their smiles while enthusiastically performing.



It was a fresh experience that a team danced and came toward the center of the campus from the north gym.

Performer comment:

"I waved the team flag and was very tired because it was so heavy. But I strongly felt that I wanted to entertain the audience. It seemed like the audience was amazed by my performance and I received lots of praise."

"Through this festival, I received a lot of love from the audience. I really felt glad that I participated in this activity."
- Kenji Ogi



I was delighted not only to watch the student groups but also the famous teams that came.



The student dancing was really passionate.

Day 1

- Relay Marathon
- Opening Ceremony **10:00**
- Yosakoi Team (Suiren)
- Capella Circle (On-air)
- Yosakoi Team (Tabigeinin) **11:00**
- Symphony Orchestra **12:00**
- Dance Club **13:00**
- Comedian Project "Gorgeous" **14:00**
- Sea Breeze **15:00**
- Folk Song Club **16:00**
- 17:00**

Day 2

- Feel U with Teachers Fes x Kuroshio Fes
- Yosakoi Team (Murakumo)
- Monthly KU Recording
- Capella Circle (On-Air)
- Sea Breeze
- Fork Song Club
- Yosakoi Team (Homura)
- Comedy Circle (Ryoma)
- Actor Himari Hitomi
- Yosakoi Team (Nabura)
- Brass Band Club
- Closing Ceremony

Visitors Comments



The atmosphere made by the music fans was wonderful



I waited in a very long line to eat delicious food, like yakitori, yakisoba and crepe



Yummy French Fries at the Yosakoi Stall

The Suiren team sold French fries for 200 yen per small cup. Over two days, people bought a lot of fries. Lots of people commented about how delicious the fries were. Motivation to sell fries was high because of the positive reviews. Over the course of two days, the team sold about 300 cups of French fries in total, yielding total sales of 60,000 yen. The 75th Kuroshio Festival was brilliant success!



Kuroshio Kun kawaii!

I was worried which food to eat but the French fries were the best



Leader's comment

Rena Inobe

I was a leader of the 75th Kuroshio Festival. At first, I felt under a lot of pressure and responsibility because of the anniversary significance.

Since June 2025, we started to prepare for the festival. I wanted to make this festival a big event in Kochi. We moved to the main stage from inside last year to outdoors this year. Also, we allocated an original Yosakoi Dance Street and 55 teams set up their booths for the festival. We prepared everything by ourselves. It was a lot of hard work, but we made it successful though trial and error. The festival was fun for everyone.

Even when facing difficult problems, organizing members never forgot to respect each other, and we really enjoyed ourselves. I was so proud to be the leader for this festival. The 75th Kuroshio Festival was brilliant success!

Main Stage



I came here to see Mr. Gorgeous!



I was happy to see the new star from Kochi - Hitomi Himari!

Thinking about Job-hunting? Fourth-year Students Share Experiences

By Reina Tonosaki



As graduation approaches, many fourth-year students are reflecting on the challenges and achievements of their job-hunting journeys. I interviewed several fourth-year students, Ms. Moeko Fukami, Mr. Izzat, Ms. Kirara Hosokawa and Mr. Tokiya Hirosawa, to learn about their experiences, struggles, and hopes for the future. Their stories offer valuable insights for students who will begin job-hunting soon.

Ms. Fukami completed her job-hunting in May 2025 and will begin working as an office employee from April 2026. Although she initially aimed to join the global logistics industry, she ultimately chose a different path after going through the process. She started applying around the spring of her third year and prepared by joining several short-term internships.

The hardest part for her was not knowing which company she truly wanted to work for. This uncertainty made the process feel endless at times. When she finally received her job offer, Ms. Fukami felt an enormous sense of relief. After spending almost six years as a university student, she is excited about the next chapter of her life.

Mr. Izzat, who is from Malaysia, is still in the middle of his job search as he nears the end of his fourth year and is considering opportunities in both Malaysia and Japan. Companies have contacted him through LinkedIn and Engage, and he has already passed several first-round interviews. He originally planned to work in fields such as Human Administration, International Relations, or positions requiring strong language skills. His preparation involved researching companies, understanding their cultures and goals, updating his resume, and expanding his professional network.

For Mr. Izzat, the hardest part is deciding between work-life balance, salary expectations, and a tight schedule.

Finding the perfect balance has been challenging. Still, he feels proud whenever he receives an offer and is excited, though he's slightly nervous about starting work next year. He looks forward to personal growth and meeting new people.

Ms. Hosokawa has already completed her job-hunting process, successfully passing exams to become both a junior high school English teacher and a City Hall official in Kochi. She took a test to become a teacher at the end of May and interviewed in August. At the same time, she went through the process to become an official worker at Kochi City Hall.

Ms. Hosokawa has always had a strong interest in English education and aimed to become a junior high school English teacher. Through continuous efforts, she achieved her goal by successfully obtaining a junior high school English teacher's license. She started preparing in March by studying general knowledge and English skills, as well as reflecting on her motivations for each position.

Her most difficult challenge was balancing exam preparation with her studies while she was in England. The first test she would take was at the end of May, which meant she had to study for the tests while abroad. After returning to Japan, she had only two weeks to prepare for the first teaching exam, leaving her almost no time to rest. Through careful time management, she passed both exams.

Although Ms. Hosokawa was thrilled to receive the job offer, she struggled with which job to choose. Her dream was to be a teacher, but her parents encouraged her to be an official worker in City Hall. Ultimately, she followed her lifelong dream, and she has no regrets. She is excited to start her teaching career in April, though she admits she worries about managing her health and workload.

Mr. Tokiya Hirosawa received his job offer from the company he truly wanted to join. The offer was obtained in May, and he decided to begin his career with this company after graduation. He originally hoped to work in the food manufacturing industry. He started job hunting at the beginning of September 2024 and began focusing on it more seriously in mid-November.

To prepare, Mr. Hirosawa spent a great deal of time on self-analysis. He explained that understanding his own strengths, as well as reflecting on past failures, was essential for speaking confidently during interviews.

The most challenging part of the process was overthinking. He often worried more than necessary, even about interview questions that could not realistically be predicted. However, he gradually realized that overthinking was unproductive and began to respond more naturally, using his own words while paying attention to the atmosphere of each interview.

When he received his job offer, he felt relieved and excited about entering the next stage of life after graduation. Looking ahead to starting work next year, he described his feelings as half excitement and half anxiety. Although he is unsure about where he will be assigned, he believes this uncertainty will open up new possibilities for growth.

These experiences shared by fourth-year students highlight the diverse paths and challenges of job hunting. Whether securing early offers, balancing opportunities across countries, or pursuing a lifelong dream, each senior has navigated their journey with dedication and toughness. Their stories will surely inspire younger students as they prepare for their own future careers.

Faculty and Students Enjoy Imoni Stew Extravaganza

By Takaya Murase



Upon entering through the main doorway of the Humanities and Social Sciences building one late autumn afternoon, the air filled with the most delicious smelling of imoni stew and pot-au-feu aromas. Just inside the building entrance, a fun magic act by students had the audience laughing and clapping.

The Imoni social event was held on November 26th in new faculty community space on the first floor. Over 70 teachers and students, including exchange students, joined the festivities. The purpose of this event was to facilitate interaction between teachers and students outside of classes.

Everyone was amazed with the clever tricks and a smooth performance of the student magicians. They did tricks using rings and involved the audience to create a lively atmosphere. Once the magic show was finished, it was finally time to eat some imoni stew.



Two varieties of imoni stew were on the menu: soy sauce-based and miso-based. Students were each given one bowl of either imoni stew or pot-au-feu, along with a rice ball. Some students were seen chatting while eating with teachers, while others were seen eating heartily on the benches

outside. These stews were cooked by professors and staff from the Humanities faculty. Outside the building, it was a little cold and windy, so the hot stew warmed our bodies.

After a short break, a KU band club held a jazz session. Students enjoyed live jazz music, including improvisation by the performers. The relaxed rhythm and energetic sounds made the event enjoyable even for those who were not familiar with jazz.



Another important event was a presentation by students who had studied abroad. They shared their personal experiences including cultural differences, challenges, and personal growth. Their stories inspired many students who are interested in studying overseas.

The highlight of the day's event was Professor Sean Burgoine's special guitar performance. He appeared on stage with his acoustic guitar and performed three original songs that he had composed himself.

There were Okinawa-style tunes, rock, and folk-inspired songs in both English and Japanese. As the performance continued, the atmosphere became more excited. Professor Burgoine's performance connected both professors and students. Looking a little like John Lennon as he sang, it was an unforgettable performance.

The event concluded with a bingo game, bringing the entire program to an exciting conclusion. Students gathered with bingo cards, and the atmosphere quickly became lively as numbers were called one by one. Each time a participant came close to winning, cheers and laughter filled the room. When several students finally shouted Bingo, the audience responded with applause and excitement. The winners received small prizes, but more importantly, the game created a sense of unity among participants. The bingo successfully added a fun and friendly element to the event.

Through eating, performances, presentations, and shared activities, participants had a splendid time. Students had a chance to see the professors in a different light, while the professors could better understand students' interests and personalities. The event helped break down barriers



and encouraged open conversations across campus.

It would be wonderful if the campus could come together as one at such events more often!

Wandervogel Club's Unending Challenges



By Keita Hattori

“No matter how far I run, it’s never too hard. Even if my legs hurt or I feel sleepy, I never feel the pain,” Mr. Sora Ichikawa said with a smile. There are many wonderful people who journey through Japan and access the beautiful nature. Mr. Ichikawa is one of them and he belongs to the KU Wandervogel Club.

The name “Wandervogel Club” means migratory birds and the purpose of the club is to enjoy the wonders of nature. In this article I will introduce three people who are the most interesting and exciting adventurers that I know.

The first person is Mr. Sora Ichikawa, a third-year student in the Faculty of Science and Technology at Kochi University, who joined the Wandervogel Club because he



loves hiking and all kinds of outdoor activities. He also has a very unique interest in moss, often giving talks about moss at elementary schools and home centers.

But for him, it’s more than just a hobby. He runs 250 kilometers every month and is now training to cross the 400-kilometer Shikoku Mountains. He has already completed many tough challenges, like walking 90 kilometers to Muroto, joining adventure races by bicycle and kayak, and running a 100-kilometer ultramarathon. “It was really tough,” he laughed.

In the future, Mr. Ichikawa dreams of joining the “Tor des Geants,” one of the world’s longest trail running races, held in northern Italy. It’s 330 kilometers long and tests

the limits of human strength. “I feel alive when I challenge something,” he says. Mr. Ichikawa is always looking for the next race to run.

The second adventurer is Mr. Haruto Yamamoto from the Regional Collaboration Faculty. He frequently climbs various mountains in Japan. When he was in elementary school, his grandfather took him hiking near his house, which sparked his interest in mountains, and he joined the Wandervogel club during his junior high school and senior high school years. While on summer vacation, he works at Tateyama Mountain in Toyama prefecture for six weeks every year. However, his

interests are not only mountains but cycling, rock climbing and kayaking. He certainly is a man of many talents!

Last spring, Mr. Yamamoto tried to cycle around Lake Biwa, which has a circumference of 200km all the way around, as a club activity. Unfortunately, he met some terrible weather and couldn’t make it all of the way. Now his goal is to succeed next year, no matter what the cost. His journey of challenges continues.

The third person I profile in this story is Mr. Ibuki Nasu, a third-year student in the Faculty of Science and Technology at Kochi University. He is also a member of the Wandervogel Club. He joined the club because he has loved nature and the mountains since he was a child. When Mr. Nasu entered university, he wanted to try outdoor



activities, so he thought the club looked fun. He enjoys not only hiking but also cycling and camping.

Mr. Nasu says the best part of the club is that his friends enjoy the same things. When he invites them for



an activity, they are always happy to join him and they have a fantastic time together.

Mr. Nasu has done many bike trips, touring around Shikoku by bicycle and traveling from Takamatsu to Tokushima and Matsuyama. He sometimes sleeps outside at roadside stations. He also tried to bike around Lake Biwa.

He likes that club members always say, “That sounds fun! Let’s do it!” even for things that most people don’t want to try. It costs a lot of money to buy outdoor gear, but he thinks it’s worth it. What he gains are good memories, fun times, and better health.

Next year, Mr. Nasu will be a fourth-year student and will be extremely busy. He may not be able to join the club often, but he still wants to try fun races and keep challenging himself.

Lastly, the club leader, Mr. Taiki Sato, shared a strong message about the future: “We will keep challenging ourselves in many different natural environments. Thank you for your continued support!”

Testing themselves in nature and growing alongside their teammates - the Wandervogel Club’s journey of challenges is relentless and unending.

BLUESKY: Popular Music Club Among KU Students



By Chiaki Okada

Talk to almost any student on any university campus in the world, and you will probably soon realize that music is a big part of their lives.

This is very much the same here at KU. So many students are listening to different kinds of music. But there are a few students on campus who are actually making music. This story profiles the popular music club, BLUESKY, which attracts students who want to create music and perform for others.

BLUESKY is a KU band club that was founded in the Showa era. It is therefore a long-established music club here on campus. Old recordings can still be found in the clubroom that are labeled Showa era notation.

There is no record about the origin of the band name “BLUESKY”, but Ms. Yuzuyu Hisakawa, a third-year student in the Science and Technology faculty who is the current leader of BLUESKY, says it might come from the beautiful “Blue sky” above our campus. She feels it is a refreshing name and explained that the BLUESKY club members set “everyone enjoys themselves” as their motto. Currently the club has around 160 members with about 100 actively participating.

At Kochi University, there are other band clubs such as “SEA BREEZE” and the “Folk Song Club” besides BLUESKY, and each club performs songs with their own characteristics. BLUESKY strongly focuses on rock band music, SEA BREEZE performs Hawaiian genre music and other genres, and the Folk Song Club has an obvious

focus. Among these clubs, BLUESKY is characterized as having the most events. Their live events are held more than ten times a year.

Club members are in charge of everything from operation to backstage for on-campus live events. To determine the performers for large-scale events such as



the university school festival or a big concert at the end of the year, auditions are held. When BLUESKY has an audition, former club members judge junior performances. In addition, BLUESKY holds a summer training camp in collaboration with a travel agency every summer vacation. On the third day of this camp, they hold a “special live” so members can enjoy their club activities during the long hot vacation.



The way to form a band is perfectly up to the members and it is based on the idea that “since you are in the club with a lot of other members, we want you to interact with a variety of people.” This encourages members to gather across grades and

faculties and work with other members who want to perform together during events. Then, if they agree that they will perform at a future event, they start to work together.

Most students form their bands with mixed grades which gives you a sense of the vertical connections commonly found in BLUESKY. The ways bands interact is diverse. For example, some bands enhance their technical skill with senior members teaching their juniors, and some bands feel freer to share their opinions because the bands are formed with members of the same age. The songs that they perform are basically free to choose, and every band plays a wide range of cover songs.

Generally, BLUESKY has a committee where leaders share some information about upcoming events every Wednesday. Members practice their songs on other days in the clubroom and studio. To secure everyone’s usage time of the studio equally, there are some rules about how to use it. For example, they decide the maximum usage time. This is managed by making a reservation list.

Basically, they practice for events, but they also enjoy just playing without any specific plan to perform. In addition, they often gather for non-music-related activities as well. For instance, they gather in the conversation room for lunch and just hang out. These active communications and flexible activities attract many students.

So if you’re into music and you want to see some really cool performances, ask a member about what is coming up. Or you can easily follow their Instagram to get information about their upcoming events. They will welcome your visit with their wonderful music!

Follow BLUESKLY on Instagram here: @bluesky_.kochi

A Fond Farewell (but not good-bye!) to Prof. Noriko Imai



By Rena Inobe

The wonderful teacher standing in front of her bookshelf in the photo here, will finish her career as a professor at Kochi University in March 2026. Many KU students look up to Prof. Noriko Imai who plays a key role in teacher education as a specialist in second language acquisition (SLA).

Prof. Imai began her career as a junior high school teacher and has also taught at the National Institute of Technology, Kochi College, before starting at KU in 2011. She chose KU for a couple of reasons. First, she was born and raised in Kochi and, second, she wished to engage in education and research at a university that is deeply rooted in the local community. In this environment, she has been able to apply her area of expertise in SLA.

As a teacher, Prof. Imai strongly believes in the potential of every student and in creating an environment where they feel safe to tackle new challenges. She values not only results but also the learning processes that lead to them. In today's rapidly changing society, university students must acquire new knowledge independently and respond flexibly to change. The foundation for doing so is the ability to "learn how to learn". This includes reflecting on, planning, and improving one's own learning.

Therefore, she thinks university education should foster not only knowledge and skills but also noncognitive abilities such as communication, collaboration, and creativity. Through nurturing these qualities, Prof. Imai



tries to support students in recognizing their own growth and moving forward confidently.

When I took her SLA class, I could easily see that she treasured how students think. She taught us different ways of thinking which made us improve and think independently.

Prof. Imai spends a lot of time at KU and she is fortunate to have many fond memories, making it difficult to choose just one. While she greatly enjoyed her classes, her most memorable experiences were related to her seminar activities. Through the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) international exchange program conducted in her seminar, students collaborated in English with students from partner universities in Taiwan and Indonesia. They worked on topics such as SLA, English education, SDGs, and culture, producing presentations and videos. Through these activities, she believes students moved beyond simply "learning English" to "learning through English."

She also found it rewarding to witness students who initially felt anxious gradually gain confidence, overcome challenges, and experience a strong sense of achievement. "Seeing students learning from one another through joint seminars across different year levels remains a precious

memory for me," she noted. "Presenting my research and conducting workshops at academic conferences in Japan and abroad, and thereby sharing my research outcomes with a wider audience, were also deeply meaningful experiences."

For her, working at a university has meant being part of an institution where knowledge is shared, ideas are collectively explored, and people grow together. Through encounters with both students and colleagues she has learned a great deal alongside others. "These experiences will always be invaluable to me," she said.

Prof. Imai feels the main street, lined with tall palm trees, offers a view unique to KU. She also appreciates the calm atmosphere of the campus and its beautiful natural surroundings. Additionally, what she values most about the university is its warm and friendly environment. The closeness between students and faculty, as well as the university's commitment to the local community and internationalization, truly represent the character of KU.

When thinking about retiring from KU, Prof. Imai feels a sense of sadness, but she is also deeply grateful for the opportunity to have spent such a fulfilling time at the university, supported by many students, faculty members, and staff.

Everyone will be happy to know that we will still be able to see her on campus after her retirement. She will continue to teach some classes here in the 2026-2027 academic year. "I would be very happy if people say hello to me when they see me on campus," she said with a smile. This is very good news for us as students because we can continue to learn a lot of things from her expert knowledge.

Prof. Imai concluded the interview with the following message for KU students: "Please don't be afraid to fail. Challenge yourselves in many ways, including studying abroad. Your time at university is a valuable opportunity to challenge yourself and broaden your perspectives. These efforts will surely become a source of confidence for you." It's clear that she sincerely wishes the best for us.

I respect her positive attitude towards learning so much, and she always appreciates things in such an optimistic way. Many of us think she is one of the best teachers at KU, so we're lucky to have her continue teaching here in her post-retirement days.

Editorial

By Rena Inobe
and Chiaki Okada



A lot of fallen leaves cover Kochi University's main street as we write this editorial. The temperature drops signal the end of this school year. Around KU, many interesting things happened during this current academic year. We're glad to let you know about some of it in this issue of the *KU Campus News*. These articles inform us about interesting KU students, cultural interactions and ordinary life at the university.

On the front page of this edition comes a profile about Mr. Keita Maeda, a second-year student in the Faculty of Agriculture and Marine Sciences. He caves mainly in the Kochi and Ehime parts of Shikoku. Mr. Maeda does some dangerous adventures which makes us excited.

In addition, we surveyed students about their part-time jobs. From this article, it becomes clear that most students are satisfied with their jobs. They enjoy relationships and staff service, although they are worried about low salaries and strict bosses. The findings show that we need to take into account the conditions of the part-time job itself and also how to balance work with study.

Another unique student we profiled is Mr. Koki Bando. He organizes a cleanup group called Green Bird in Kochi. He focuses on making valuable connections through this activity as a leader. After you read this, you will want to be a member of his group!

We also asked five amazing Indonesian exchange students about their life in Kochi. They sometimes face language barriers. However, they try to learn Japanese and now they can speak some basic words. "We try to learn from our mistakes" - This shows how wonderful they are. You will notice some good points about Kochi from their interviews.

One of our *KU Campus News* writers provided a story from Sweden. Ms. Nao Yamasaki wrote about her university life and daily life experiences in Sweden. She noticed something special about the importance of Japanese popular culture, and having a lot of choices in the future. Her story will be of value for everyone and even if you aren't interested in going abroad, your feeling will be changed.

In the center pages, we highlight the 75th anniversary Kuroshio Festival. This was a really amazing memory for us because many of our writers played a big role in the festival. You can get a taste of what happened and how students relate to this event.

This year's edition also covers job hunting and we aimed to learn more about people preparing for this big life event. By featuring four students with different career paths, nationalities, and job types, readers can easily find a model for their own situation. This provides concrete and realistic guidance for students who are about to begin their job search because there are not only success stories but also some difficulties. We hope this article serves as a meaningful opportunity to reframe job hunting not as something to be afraid of, but as a chance for growth.

An exchange event was held in November, 2025 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. It was an event that deepened the bonds between teachers and students, featuring a nabe meal prepared by faculty professors, live performances, and student presentations sharing their study abroad experiences.

We also highlight club activities at KU. Among these, we featured the hiking club "Wonder Vogel" and there is also the popular music club "BLUESKY". These articles on page seven show you that a lot of students belong to certain clubs, diligently pursue their studies, and fully enjoy their hobbies with their lovely friends at KU.

On the back page, we focus on our wonderful professor, Ms. Noriko Imai, who has long served as a professor at KU, sharing much knowledge with us. Starting next academic year, she will continue to share her passion and vast expertise in her specialized subjects with us as a part-time lecturer.

Looking back on this year's articles, there are several anniversaries. For example, the Kuroshio festival is 75th anniversary and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Regional Collaboration are having their 10th anniversaries. We are glad to celebrate these in the *KU Campus News* and we hope you enjoy our articles.

There are a lot of people and many activities at KU. The events that occur on this campus daily are not only small pieces of news, but also the very essence of each of our university lives. Through this issue, we hope to spark your interest and encourage you to pay more attention and support these activities. Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to the people who kindly cooperated with us in preparation for our writing.

The Kochi University Campus News

The *KU Campus News* is an English-language student production made possible by a grant from the International Studies Course and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. All articles are written by students unless otherwise noted.

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

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