

## **The 47th START Program (United States of America)**

For around two weeks from September 9th to 24th 2017, 30 first-year students led by Fuyuko Takita (Associate Professor at the Institute for Foreign Language Research and Education) and two other faculty members participated in the 47th START program. The students spent this time studying at James Madison University (JMU) in Virginia, U.S.

JMU is approximately two hours' drive away from the capital, Washington D.C. Like Hiroshima University, JMU is also a member of the International Network of Universities (INU).

During their two-week stay there, the START program participants shared dorm rooms on campus with student RAs (resident advisors) and experienced communal living with local students. During the weekdays they attended lectures on American culture and society taught by local professors at JMU, and regular classes together with their host RAs. Participants who were not comfortable with English because they were not used to the speaking speed and couldn't understand what the local teaching staff and students were saying in the beginning eventually got used to the life there and started to interact actively with local students.

Some students also spent their free time after class at the recreation facility called UREC (University Recreation) doing sports activities with local students. Aside from the university, students also experienced a wide range of activities such as visiting the Mount Vernon (the residence of George Washington, the first President of the United States where he lived from age 22 until his death at age 67), Shenandoah Caverns, Frontier Culture Museum, watching a football game, and interacting with international students at the Japanese Club and Asian Mixture.

On the last day of the program, the students invited their host RAs to the group presentation where they made presentations in English on topics such as "Differences in American and Japanese Education Systems", "How American and Japanese Interpret Peace", "Differences in Lifestyle and Custom", showing their impressions and achievements from their two-week stay. At the Final Banquet, HU students conveyed their gratitude to the teachers and students of JMU with their performance of the "Koi (Love) Dance". Both HU students and their hosts were sad to say goodbye to each other.

During the follow-up session after returning to Japan, the students were asked to

give a three-minute speech to share their experience and what they had learnt at JMU. Many students made remarks saying “At first, I was embarrassed to make mistakes, and so I was shy to express my opinions. But after staying in the U.S., I realized that not being able to voice one’s opinion is the biggest embarrassment. And since then, I began to make statements without fear of making mistakes.” Others commented about their determination such as “I want to continue studying English”, “I want to go on a long-term study abroad program”, “I realized that I don’t know much about my own country. After this, I need to study more about Japan”, “I hope to be able to help international students in some ways” etc. It is hoped that students will stay highly motivated and make use of the invaluable experiences gained through this program for their lives in the future, and we wish them all the best in life.



Host RAs welcoming HU students



Having meal with local students at the cafeteria



Interacting with local students during lecture



Introducing Japanese culture



Group presentation given in English



Visiting Washington D.C. on the last day of the program