

Greetings from the President's Office

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Kanto Festival

One of Akita's traditions is the annual Kanto Festival, which starts on August 3rd. I will participate in it as the president, while holding a lantern and walking ahead of the party at the last day this year. My first participation was six years ago, and to be honest, I felt a little awkward to take such a lead role. But now I am more comfortable and can smile back to the cheering from roadside like "Go! GAKUCHO (president)!" I realized that the two-hour parade fascinates me a lot.

My duty at the Kanto Festival is to give the audience along the roadside a greeting out loud like, "Thank you for coming today. I am the President of AIU. Please enjoy the great performance by our Kanto team." I do this shouting greeting three times during the two hours. In the past, I have received a big applause, which made me feel like I fit in with Akita Culture as a local resident.

Our Kanto team will perform with the two heaviest *OWAKA* poles this year. Back in April when they started practicing, some students could not perform properly and was rather unsteady; but hard training for several months have made them great performers. There is a final competition on the last day of the festival every year and two AIU Kanto teams with elite performers have advanced to the final round out of more than 100 participants. Both AIU groups won third and fourth prize respectively and attracted a lot of attention.

Our international students from abroad actively join the *sashite*, the performers with the pole. It is invigorating to see them practicing in *hanten*, the traditional attire with *tenugui-hachimaki*, a stylized headband made out of a thin Japanese towel, as well as wearing the traditional *tabi* socks. Once I asked them how they came across Kanto, and some of them told me that they got advice by former students who previously studied at AIU to join the local festival.

It is delightful to know that our international students have connected generation to generation via the Kanto culture and carry on our AIU Kanto team tradition. Former international students and graduates who used to be in the Kanto team even come back to Akita just in order to participate in it again.

The most impressive thing though is that every single student in the Kanto team is polite and well mannered. In particular, international students who participate in regular practice seem to fully understand and respect the Japanese manners, such as what to say and how to bow in greetings, which occasionally even Japanese people might forget or omit. This demonstrates that all movements and attitude of the team looks well organized, which is very impressive.

The AIU Kanto team, with its members, students, faculty and staff members, has established its status among our student activities and created a truly international community culture despite their short history. It is a pleasure to learn that the team has grown to also successfully join performances with an Akita-city Kanto team abroad in Moscow, Taiwan, and the United States. I am thrilled to see how Akita's culture will continue to spread globally through our Kanto teams' activities.

The Kanto festival is said to have been held for about 270 years, and I am sure that it will continue to head steadily toward greater internationalization on our campus. As president, I do not express explicitly but I am proud of them implicitly.



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<http://www.asahi.com/area/akita/articles/MTW20190806051550001.html>

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