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## An Overview of a Nursing Exchange Program with a Health Science University in the US



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*This short report overviews a 10-day nursing exchange program in the United States in partnership with Samuel Merritt University (SMU), a 4-year private health science university in Oakland, California. This is one of the study abroad programs offered at Seirei Christopher University (SCU), a 4-year private health science university in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka. The international academic exchange agreement between SCU and SMU was signed in 2013. In this report, the history, content and challenges of the program will be introduced.*

Along with social changes in the era of globalization, the roles and expectations of nurses have expanded in Japan. The model core curriculum currently in the process of development clearly states that nursing students need to acquire understanding of global health problems and skills to provide care for patients with diverse cultural backgrounds (Ministry of Education, Sports, Culture, Science and Technology, 2017). Higher education in nursing has a responsibility to provide these learning opportunities. Seirei Christopher University

(SCU), a 4-year private health science university in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka, has a history of exchange programs and offers short study abroad trips as well as clinical attachments in the United States, Singapore, and China. This report overviews a 10-day nursing exchange program with Samuel Merritt University (SMU), a 4-year private health science university in the United States, based on an international academic exchange agreement

### History

In the beginning of this exchange program with SMU, there was an academic mentoring relationship between two Japanese nursing researchers at SCU and SMU. In November 2012, a delegation from SCU, including the president, the dean of the School of Nursing along with other chairs from the School of Rehabilitation and the Director of the International Exchange Center, visited SMU. They observed classroom lectures, lab teaching, and clinical learning; toured the Health Science Simulation Center; and attended several meetings with SMU faculty members and senior administrators. Their mission was to explore the possibility of a future partnership, including student exchanges, continuing education opportunities for graduates, academic staff exchanges, and collaborations on projects and research. In the following year, when the delegation from SMU visited SCU and related health care facilities, the universities concluded an international academic exchange agreement.

The first student visit to SMU was carried out the subsequent year in March 2015 (2014-2015 academic year) with four participants. Thanks to promotional efforts including these participants, the number of applicants in the following years increased, exceeding the capacity of 10 students. Participants were selected through applicant screenings with interviews conducted partly in English. The group was accompanied by two teachers.

## Program

### Objectives

The learning objective of this program is for students to develop intercultural understanding and global health awareness. They learn about the medical system, roles and practice of nursing, and interprofessional teamwork in the U.S. The goals of this program are as follows:

- To compare nursing roles and practice in the US and Japanese healthcare systems
- To learn about various healthcare professionals and their roles in patient care
- To understand the lifestyles, society, and diverse values in the US through cross-cultural experiences
- To reflect on Japanese culture, values, and family lives
- To actively participate using English.

### Program Schedule

### Activities

Day	TIME	ACTION
1	AM	Depart Japan
	PM	Arrive San Francisco
2	AM	Orientation, Campus tour
	PM	Lecture of "The Role of RNs in the US Healthcare System"
		Welcome party
3	AM	SIM Lab: IV, IV pumps, IVPB, IM injections
	PM	SIM Lab Cardiac/Lung assessment
4	AM	Tour of George Mark Children's House
	PM	Class Lecture: Healthcare in the USA
5	AM	"Healthcare in USA" – Student clinical experience
	PM	Shopping/Sightseeing in SF
6	AM	Shopping/Sightseeing in SF
	PM	Homestay meeting
7		Spend with host family
8		Tour of John Muir Concord (Nurse shadowing)
9	AM	Tour of St. Mary's Center and St. Paul Tower
	PM	Farewell reception
10		Return to Japan

The program is held on the SMU campus in Oakland, California or at nearby facilities for study tours and nurse shadowing. There are three main activities arranged for the trip: lectures and simulation lab exercises on campus, healthcare facility visits and nurse shadowing, and social events.

**Lectures and simulation lab exercises on campus.** The themes of the lectures given by SMU faculty in the 2016-2017 academic year (March, 2017) were, "The Role of RN

in the US Healthcare System” and “Healthcare in the US.” The skills practiced at the simulation lab were IV, IV pumps, IVPB, IM injections, and Cardinal/Lung Assessment. A SCU faculty member also gave a presentation on community healthcare in Japan for SMU faculty and students. Selection of the lecture themes is made on the request of SCU according to the program objective and goals. The menu of the skill lab exercises, however, is arranged by SMU.

**Healthcare facility visits and nurse shadowing.** There were four facilities visited in the 2016-2017 academic year: 1) John Muir Medical Center, Concord, a general hospital, 2) George Mark Children’s House, a pediatric palliative care center, 3) St. Mary’s Center, a social service organization to support low-income seniors, children, and their families, and 4) St. Paul’s Tower, a nursing home. Four-hour nurse shadowing was implemented at John Muir Medical Center, Concord, where a nurse was paired with a SCU students without a translator accompanied. The time length of nurse shadowing will probably be shortened in the 2017-2018 academic year. Students visited the other sites for 1 to 2 hours.

**Social events.** There are many social events prepared for SCU students to experience American culture, communicate in English, and build friendships with SMU students and faculty, including homestay experiences over a weekend. In the 2016-

2017 academic year, for example, a welcome party and a farewell reception were prepared along with a symposium run by SMU students.

### **Program Administration**

Nursing and English faculty members on the International Exchange Committee are responsible for running this program with the support of the International Exchange Center.

### **Preparation**

There are three areas of focus in preparation for the program: 1) general, 2) academic, and 3) linguistic. Students attend eight training sessions to learn about 1) traveling abroad, including information about the destination, safety and security, passports, ESTA, insurance, and money matters, which are prepared by the International Office. As for 2), nursing faculty provide lectures on the medical system and nursing roles in the US, followed by group learning and giving a presentation on these themes. 3) English faculty teach classes for general and nursing purposes with assignments. An English simulation lab session is conducted in collaboration between nursing and English faculties.

### **Costs and financing**

The travel cost is about 300,000 yen, with some fluctuation depending on the exchange rate. This mainly covers air, hotel and interpreter fees with no program cost

required, which is prescribed in the partnership agreement. The International Office has applied for scholarships from the Japan Student Service Organization but none have yet been approved.

### Academic credits

Participants submit a report to nursing faculty after the trip. The program is recognized as equivalent to the Global Health Nursing class at SCU, so participants are granted one academic credit, based on their performance and assignment achievement. SCU is currently revising its curriculum and a credit-bearing course based on this study abroad program is being developed.

### Challenges

This program faces three major challenges: lack of financial support, health requirements for hospital visits, and lack of language proficiency.

The high participant fee is a problem for many students even though the program has been rated as highly satisfactory by participants. In order to obtain a scholarship from the Japan Student Service Organization, it seems necessary to grant independent academic credit for this program to assure that a formal evaluation has been used to assess learning.

Hospital visits demand that all the participants meet certain health requirements. The following is a list of health requirements as of the 2016-2017

academic year: flu vaccine, Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis) vaccine, Hepatitis B (3 doses) vaccine, MMRV (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella, Varicella) vaccine, Tuberculosis Skin Test (TST) aka PPD, and the University Medical History and Physical Examination Form. Administrators need to carefully manage these requirements because it may take months to meet some of these requirements.

Lack of language proficiency/training is a problem for most of the students, who have difficulty understanding lectures and actively participating in the simulation lab training without the support of translators. It is desirable for students to learn English more independently and overcome communication challenges by themselves. However, there is no set language requirement for the current program, nor any linguistic assessment on performances and assignments during and after the program. This might be an area that should be addressed in the near future.

### Reference

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2017). Model Core Curriculum in Nursing Education (Proposed). [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/shingi/chousa/koutou/078/gijiroku/\\_\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2017/06/20/1386898\\_01.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/koutou/078/gijiroku/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2017/06/20/1386898_01.pdf)