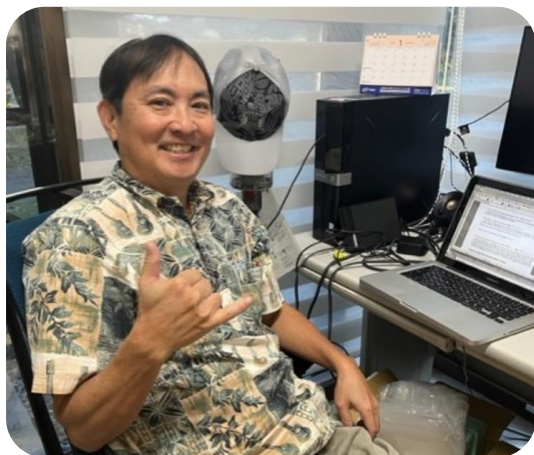


Interview with Daniel Chinen about the Obuchi Okinawa Education and Research Program!

[Hawaii East-West Center, Okinawa branch Liaison Office]
2023.01.10



East-West Center Liaison Office (desk)
University of the Ryukyus, Okinawa, Japan

Daniel Chinen is a staff member of the East-West Center Liaison Office* established within the University of the Ryukyus. Mr. Chinen is also involved with the Obuchi Program. The East-West Center is an international research institute, that offers many educational programs. Many students and researchers have studied at the University of Hawaii graduate school and the East-West Center.

*On October 17, 2016, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the University of the Ryukyus and the East-West Center establishing the Liaison Office at the University of Ryukyus.

01. Where are you from?

I am from Oahu, Hawaii. I grew up in Honolulu, the capital of Hawaii. My hometown is called Kaimuki, which is near Diamond Head and Waikiki.

02. What do you do for fun?

I love the outdoors, especially hiking, biking, and golf. I also like traveling and playing the ukulele.

03. What was your major in college/graduate school?

My major was Electrical Engineering. I earned my bachelor's degree at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa (UHM) and my master's degree from Arizona State University. In the United States, when choosing a graduate school, many students choose a graduate school that is different from the university they attended. This has many advantages, such as meeting new people and being in a new environment.

04. What made you decide to live in Okinawa?

I was a visiting researcher at the University of the Ryukyus for one year in 2007. However, I decided to extend my stay for another year to understand Okinawa better. After spending time with the warm and hospitable Okinawan people, I realized that one year was not enough, so I decided to extend my stay in Okinawa even further. I am grateful for all that I have been able to learn on this beautiful island and am still very excited to meet new languages, places, and people!

05. What is your favorite quote/saying?

My grandfather, who emigrated from Okinawa to Hawaii, used to say, "You are not educated until you travel!" This phrase means that when a person travels and steps outside of their comfort zone and environment, it can widen their understanding of their world. Travel broadens your outlook on life. I have visited 20 countries. When I lived near NYC, I traveled to Europe several times using affordable airfare. My favorite country is the Czech Republic in the late 1990s. It was a country full of old-world charm and local delicacies. I still have more places I want to visit such as Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand to name a few.

06. How did you get involved with the East-West Center?

While living in Hawaii, I was involved in the World Uchinanchu Business Network Conference (WUB)* activities. Through the cooperation between WUB and the East-West Center, I began supporting the Obuchi scholars. Even after moving to Okinawa in 2007, I continued to support the East-West Center by being involved in their events and assisting Obuchi scholars. Eventually, I became an official staff member of the East-West Center and contributed to the establishment of the East-West Center Liaison Office.

*An organization composed of people with Okinawan roots

Regarding the Obuchi Okinawa Education and Research Program



East-West Center Liaison Office (entrance)
University of the Ryukyus

07. What is the role of the East-West Center Liaison Office in relation to the Obuchi program?

The Liaison Office serves as a link between the Okinawa Prefectural Government, Obuchi Program applicants, and the East-West Center. The Liaison Office mainly provides communication support. We also assist students selected for the Obuchi Program to prepare for their trip to Hawaii (visa application, communication with EWC, etc.).

08. What are the advantages of studying abroad through the Obuchi Program?

The biggest advantage is that students can obtain a graduate degree in the United States for free. After graduation, they can become a member of the East-West Center Alumni Association family. In addition, students who study abroad return home with increased confidence as their English skills improve dramatically and they become capable of self-assertion. Through the program, students can build connections with other international students, thus building a community that may lead to a future career.

09. What do you think are the characteristics and strengths of past scholars?

The most important characteristic of a student is to have a strong enthusiasm for learning. Other characteristics include: 1) the ability to communicate freely in English, 2) the ability to adapt to a new environment, 3) the ability to make friends with foreigners while studying abroad, and 4) the ability to understand different cultures and values from other countries.

10. Please give a word of encouragement to future applicants.

You don't have to be an honors student! The most important thing is a willingness to learn and a willingness to accept different cultures and ways of thinking. Through this program, meet many talented and successful people overseas.

Daniel Chinen's email:
ChinenD@EastWestCenter.org