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Japanese High School Students to Complete



The English Language Institute (ELI) housed at the Global Engagement Office is offering a virtual four-day program of academic English language skills for 40 high school students from Kumamoto High School, in Kumamoto, Japan. Courses which focus on the themes of technology, business, and culture will be taught by ELI faculty. The participants will also be able to improve their conversational English skills through interaction with American conversation partners. All these activities will take place virtually through the University of Montana's online learning system, Moodle, and through Zoom for face-to-face class sessions and discussions. The classes started Monday (August 17th) for the Japanese students, but due to the time zone difference, classes actually started Sunday evening for the teachers based in Missoula.

Normally, the University of Montana hosts a group of about 24 students from Kumamoto Prefecture in person for two weeks in the summer. Unfortunately, this was not possible this year and ELI developed an online program instead. Jeanie Castillo, ELI Program Chair expressed excitement for this model of program. "Because of the pandemic, the remote version is a way to keep doing the program and improve the student's proficiency and learning. An important part of what makes this program successful is offering conversation partners for the participants to interact with and practice their English. We will still be offering this through our remote classes," said Castillo. The conversation partners are students, faculty, or staff that volunteer to be a part of the program. They help the students improve their speaking and listening skills and to create a sense of connection between the two countries.

During the week prior to classes beginning, ELI gave a special presentation introducing the program to the Kumamoto High School students, and it was very successful. "Thank you for carrying out the meeting! I haven't talked with foreign people many times. So I was nervous, but I sincerely felt like fun. I will learn a lot of things and master to myself through this program," said one of the participants during the presentation.

This growth and interest from the students are due in part to the flexibility that the program offers being online. With such success, ELI is planning to offer the program again in the winter for Kumamoto and other institutions in Japan.

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