

International students from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, North America, and just about everywhere else in the world are studying at TMDU. What are they studying? What are their aspirations? International students currently at TMDU report on their life here.

Reports by TMDU Overseas Students

Report 01

The TMDU Journey so far...



Kofi Dadzie Kwofie
Department of Environmental Parasitology
TMDU (from Ghana)



“INTELLIGENCE, PLUS CHARACTER—that is the goal of true education.” Martin Luther King Jr.’s words embody my perception of what a holistic education should be and also describe what I find at TMDU.

I come from Ghana on the Gulf of Guinea within the western bulge of Africa. I am a first-year Environmental Parasitology doctoral student at TMDU. Previously, I studied biological sciences and clinical microbiology in both un-

dergraduate and master’s degree programs at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, one of Ghana’s most prestigious universities. As an undergraduate, I undertook internship programs during my summer holidays at the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR), a notable research center named after the famous Japanese researcher, Dr. Hideyo Noguchi, who died in Ghana while working on yellow fever. I discovered



Smiling toward a bright future
(At the entrance ceremony for international students)

my passion for research at NMIR, subsequently becoming a research assistant there.

As a young biomedical research scientist at NMIMR, I was involved in a few research projects on infectious diseases with protozoan causes such as malaria, trypanosomiasis, leishmaniasis and toxoplasmosis. I developed a particular interest in issues concerning infectious diseases affecting Africa and the world at large. At NMIMR, which is a major collaborator with TMDU, I received mentorship and acquired skills and values while working with expert Ghanaian and Japanese researchers. Among those researchers was my current PhD supervisor, Prof. Nobuo Ohta, who has inspired and encouraged me. My desire to pursue a PhD degree at TMDU was stimulated by my admiration of the manner in which my immediate supervisors, Dr. Mitsuko Ohashi and Dr. Irene Ayi (alumnus of TMDU), conducted their research, paying attention



With fellow students of the Disease Prevention Science Course
(During a study tour of the Toshiba Science Museum)



With Japanese language kenshu classmates

to every detail in their quest for excellence.

It was a dream come true when I finally arrived in Japan in October 2015. I had become a student at TMDU. My feelings were a mixture of exhilaration and anxiety. My first impressions of TMDU fulfilled my high expectations, virtually confirming the positive standpoint I always had concerning TMDU. Despite the generally cold weather, the love shown me by staff and students in my department keeps me warm. My initial anxiety has been dissipated by the excitement and passion with which both students and staff in my department conduct their research. One thing I have noticed is the slight difference in studies being conducted in Ghana and

in Japan: whereas most studies in Ghana focus on disease epidemiology, those in Japan tend to focus on basic research. TMDU's commitment to cultivating professionals with knowledge and humanity is vividly seen in the contents of our weekly Global Leadership Program (GLP) lecture series. These lectures are opportunities to meet experts in different fields related to global disease prevention using a multifaceted approach. I look forward to acquiring important skills and ideas in these areas and hope to effectively combine them in combating the menace of infectious diseases in Africa and elsewhere through high-quality research.

Life outside the laboratory gets better



Receiving a warm welcome from staff and students of the Environmental Parasitology Section

with every passing day. The language barrier was initially one of the hurdles I had to clear, but the Japanese language kenshu course has helped me appreciate everyday Japanese culture, and also equipped me with a few Japanese phrases to enable me to get around. I have also been able to make a lot of good friends. I believe these associations will provide a strong foundation for future international research collaboration.

Finally, when I look to the future, I am confident that after four years at TMDU I will be a better person than I was when I arrived here.

To everyone who is helping me make my dream a reality, I say: Doomo arigatou gozaimashita!!!

Report 02

More than just knowledge: experiencing Japan through TMDU PhD program



Anastasiya Blizniuk
Department of Oral Health Promotion
TMDU (from Belarus)



THE DECISION TO study in Japan was one of the most difficult in my life — but I have never regretted it. Back in Belarus, I had a successful career, working as head of the dental division of a district hospital and as chief dental officer of a region with a population of sixty thousand people just 3 years after graduating from the Dental Faculty of Belarusian State Medical University in

2006. Besides administrative duties, I was practicing as an oral surgeon. The job was not easy, often challenging and tiring, but at the same time highly fulfilling. I knew that my job was important for people coming to the hospital every day, and that was a reason to work even harder. However, the longer I worked as an oral surgeon, the more I realized the importance of prevention.



Anastasiya Blizniuk

In Belarus, dentists are very busy providing treatment, usually seeing 20-30 patients a day. I thought there must be a better way of improving oral health, and that was the main reason I decided to pursue a postgraduate degree in dental public health.

But why Japan? Japan and Belarus are as much as 8000 kilometers apart. But



Group photo of Oral Health Promotion Department at a conference in Tsukuba

then again it happened that during my high school years I discovered the books of Haruki Murakami—and that is how my fascination with Japan started. Later I began seriously studying the Japanese language, and no matter how busy I was, attended classes for more than three years. Later it would be my Japanese teacher who introduced the MEXT scholarship program to me. Living in Japan was a dream for me, so I thought my chances were slim. Nevertheless, I gave it a try—and it was the best decision in my life!

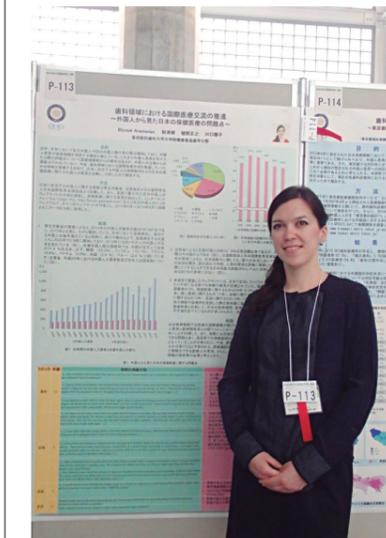
I knew there was a national health insurance system in Japan, which greatly improved people's health over the past 50 years, and so I was eager to learn more. During an Internet search, a TMDU research database helped me to de-

cide. The department where I will spend the next 4 years is called Oral Health Promotion. Promoting health instead of dealing with disease consequences—that was exactly what I wanted to do. Together with the fact that TMDU is a long-established dental school with a good reputation, this made the university my first choice. The paperwork was smooth and fast, and in April of 2012 I arrived in Japan to start a new chapter of my life.

Japanese science and technology are well known, and thus I had high expectations of TMDU; but the actual PhD Program was even better. The research facilities in TMDU were perfect. I had everything I needed to do my research, from the best scientific journals to up-to-date statistical software. But the



Enjoying azaleas at Nezu Temple together with department members



Poster presentation at Japanese Society for Oral Health conference

most important thing was the atmosphere in the department. Professor Kawaguchi was always there to help us not only with academic, but also with personal matters. This is especially important for foreign students, and I was really lucky to be surrounded by kind and patient teachers. With their help I was able to participate in many international conferences and published several papers in prestigious journals.

My friends say I have changed a lot since living in Japan. Besides research, I learned much about personal interaction and hard work. Not only the health care system, but also people who provide care are very important, and I think Japanese people are the best example of patience and respect for others. Studying in TMDU gave me a unique experience: helping with the undergraduate course, participating in health education activities, taking part in a thorough cleanup of the university clinic with dentists and other staff, seeing the cherry blossom together with our department members... I learned much more than dentistry, I got a rare chance to know this country and its people. I think Japan has made me a better person, and I am grateful to every one of my Japanese and non-Japanese friends, colleagues, and teachers who supported me along the way.