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Initially, I never planned to major in Japanese Studies when beginning college. I actually had planned to major in Computer Engineering, but after taking just one class with JAPN 10A, I began thinking about switching my major to Japanese Studies. Not only was learning the language interesting for me, but the way lessons were structured and the amount of support I had gotten from lecturers and professors made learning easier for me even when faced with complex topics. Ultimately, I think it was because of this support that I eventually realized my passion for learning Japanese language and culture because even when I had to deal with difficult materials, I never felt worried about asking questions or bored of doing assignments. So, by the end of my first year of college, I was happy to pursue Japanese Studies as my major.

In general, I liked how most courses in the Japanese Studies major allowed you to choose the topic you wanted to discuss and research, but JAPN 130B and JAPN 190 in particular were interesting to me. While JAPN 130B had students learn about high-concept topics like technology while learning Japanese, JAPN 190 had students research and discuss modern issues regarding Japan. With these two courses, not only was I able to use knowledge I already had, but they also allowed me to learn more about Japan and the language because everyone had different topics to discuss with the class. Due to this, I felt very engaged every time I went to these classes because it felt like everyone was passionate about the topic for the day.

Even more so, these classes gave me a great foundation for using Japanese in my career. Given that I work in PR And marketing, apart from translating contemporary topics, being aware of ongoing trends and issues in Japan ensure that I understand both the Japanese and American perspective in my work. Of course, this knowledge does require me to learn more about Japan outside of what I had learned in my classes, but because I was exposed to various topics through other students, their passion for Japan was also passed on to me, thus piquing my interest in the things they talked about. From that, I was able to build the skills that I now use in my career and have even built strong relationships in my personal life through my Japanese language.

So despite graduating in a turbulent time like the COVID pandemic, my passion to learn more about Japan is what led me to realize that I didn't need to go to Japan to bridge Japanese and American culture, but instead I could use digital media. In that respect, for current students of the Japanese Studies program, I'd say use your interest for Japan to fall into a rabbit hole that makes you actively use your Japanese skills. Whether you're translating a song you like or following a Japanese TikToker, once you find your passion, you'll keep using your Japanese knowledge everyday, especially if you make friends along the way.