

Hello! My name is Jack Stovold, and I earned a bachelor's degree in Japanese studies, my major, from UCSD in Spring quarter 2007.

As a kid, I had long been interested in Japan, its culture and the language, but I didn't have a lot of opportunities to study or speak it, aside from a few courses here and there, and all of my home study books. That all changed when I got into UCSD and was able to fully engross myself in my studies. I was immediately excited by all the new resources and opportunities available to me! So many classes to take, and so many people to talk to.

One of the great things about the UCSD Japanese studies program, is that it's not just the language. You will encounter a whole range of different avenues for study. You'll learn a little, no actually a lot, about a variety of fields, be it politics, culture, history, literature, cinema, pop culture, or any number of others. Some of my favorite classes were the ones where I learned about topics I never imagined I would study, sometimes things I had never even heard of. And while the language classes were my favorites, the knowledge I built in my other courses enhanced my language studies and gave me more context with which to appreciate them, as well as the reverse being true.

The program also gave me the opportunity of a lifetime, when, through UCSD, I was able to study abroad in Japan for six months, something I likely never could have done otherwise. To this day, those are some of my most cherished memories and I'm still thankful for the opportunity and for what it meant for my future.

Not long after graduating, armed with the skills and knowledge I obtained at UCSD, I moved to Japan, and have been living there ever since, for over fifteen years now. After many rewarding experiences teaching English to Japanese students in all walks of life, I was able to pass the highest level (N1) of the JLPT, Japan's most widely recognized international test of Japanese Proficiency. This enabled me to be employed in my current position as an Associate Liaison Specialist for the International Affairs Section at the Fukuoka Institute of Technology (FIT), in Fukuoka, a lovely city in southwestern Japan. In addition to helping both Japanese and foreign students in their studies, the position also requires some translation, presentations, and other skills requiring competence in Japanese, which I am still happy to be able to use every day. All of this is thanks to that journey I began not too long in the Japanese Studies Department at UCSD.

To the students today, I say go for it, and really put your heart into it! The more you learn, the more you'll want to learn, and take as many opportunities as come your way to use your newfound skills in real life and build relationships. Talk to people. Language, is after all, at its heart, all about people.