

My name is Megan Murata and I graduated UCSD as an undergrad at the end of Winter Quarter in 2019 with a major in Japanese Studies.

My interest in Japanese stems from my father. He's Japanese and growing up I thought it was so cool that he could translate manga on the fly and I wanted to be able to do that. Unfortunately, he was really busy when I was growing up, so I didn't learn the language from him. In college, I knew I wanted to pursue Japanese language study, and with UCSD's 5th year Japanese classes along with the business Japanese series, in addition to falling in love with the campus, I knew I wanted to spend my college career at UCSD.

Overall, I really enjoyed the professors and the flexibility of the Japanese Studies course — there are a number of really cool classes, of which my favourites were definitely JAPN190 with Professor Turner and the Japanese Politics course. I learned a whole lot in both and I felt both were very well taught. The language skills as well as cultural awareness I gained from the program has really ensured that I've thrived in my post-college positions and have gotten me significantly closer to that ever-elusive personal goal of native-level Japanese fluency.

Currently, I'm a Japanese Language Program Coordinator at the JFLA. I had previously spent 3 years on the JET Programme down in Yamaguchi Prefecture and the job listing came up on the Southern California JET Alumni Association email. I wanted to find a position that allowed me to utilise and continue to improve my Japanese skills and network, so I applied and was hired back in early December!

As for a message to current students, I was lucky enough last year to be invited to speak at this event and my previous message was along the lines of effective communication to manage expectations. I stand by that message (and I don't just mean managing your own expectations, nor is this meant in a bad way! Sometimes I've managed my expectations by trying not to get myself stuck in how something is going to go poorly or wrong or what have you), but would like to add the very cliché: sometimes, you just gotta go for it. The worst (most of the time) that can happen is someone/company says, "No.". Then you pick yourself up, review what you've learned, alter your course a bit, and continue.