On September 23, 2015, the East Asia Institute hosted the JET Information Session given by Ms. Alisa Tobin, JET Program Coordinator from the Consulate General of Japan in Houston. More than 40 students were in attendance. While they were listening to the presentation, they were also treated to Japanese snacks, rice crackers and candies.

JET Program stands for Japan Exchange and Teaching Program. This 29-year-old program gives English native speakers the opportunity to teach the English language, their country's customs and cultures in Japan while learning about Japan and its society. The program's goal is to promote international exchange at a local level. The JET Program offers two types of positions: Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) and Coordinators for International Relations (CIR).

About 90 percent of JET participants work as ALTs. An ALT is usually placed at a specific school or will visit many schools by working from board of education. These schools can be primary schools, junior schools, and senior schools. ALTs do not need to be fluent in Japanese since they will be assisting the Japanese teacher of English. Although some proficiency in Japanese would prove beneficial. They may have to design lessons and activities or grade exams. They may also be asked to help with foreign languages and clubs, school festivals, or speech competitions. They could even be asked to teach adult or community English classes. ATLs' mission is to motivate their students to study English and other countries.

"Only about 10% of JETs are CIRs," said Tobin. "CIRs work in prefectural or municipal offices and are required to speak Japanese fluently to do their work." CIRs are asked to have the equivalent of JLPT N2 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test at the time of the interview. CIRs have many duties including translating documents, interpreting for overseas visitors or local officials, giving presentations,
and coordinating sister-city relations. However, similar to ALTs, CIRs still teach. They may teach English in schools or they might provide language instruction for employees and residents.

Candidates interested in applying must be adaptable, have an outgoing personality, a sense of humor, creativity, patience, humility, initiative, a desire to learn about Japan. Understanding Japanese would be helpful, but is not required unless it is for a CIR position. Having a teaching certification also looks good, but again is not mandatory. One student said, “Personally, I’ve always wanted to work in Japan, and an understanding of foreign cultures is very beneficial to a wide range of majors. I can’t wait to apply myself!”

“Despite how fun living and working in Japan may be, the JET Program is a job,” said Tobin. “It is a one-year contract and can be renewed up to four times.” Qualified candidates will be employed by a contracting organization/school - not the JET Program. The program only manages and facilitates in the hiring process. The annual salary of JETs is approximately 3,360,000 yen (about $30,000) for the first year. Afterwards, the amount gradually goes up. JETs are covered by health, accident, pension, and employment insurance. Their flights to and from Japan (upon fulfillment of their contracts) are also remunerated for them.

Generally, JETs work 35 hours a week, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Saturday and Sunday are usually days off. Participants get at least 10 days of paid holidays and 15 days of paid national holidays per year. “JET Program provides a great opportunity for our UTSA students to immerse themselves in Japanese language and culture full time,” said Erina Romanowich, Japanese Lecturer and Program Coordinator of the East Asia Institute. “At the same time, the experience our students will get from working in an international community will be critical for those that would like to engage in international business, foreign affairs, and education.”

Throughout the presentation Tobin mentioned multiple times how no two situations are the same meaning that one should not compare themselves with another and just enjoy what their city or town has to offer. While in Japan you are not just representing yourself but you are representing your nation.

For more information please see the official JET Program website at [http://jetprogramme.org/](http://jetprogramme.org/) or visit the homepage for the Japanese Embassy to the United States at [http://www.us.emb-](http://www.us.emb-).