February 22, 2019, marked a special day for the East Asia Institute at UTSA. For the first time ever, the East Asia Institute hosted a Japanese business workshop, appropriately titled “Business with Japan 101.” This event was part of the East Asia Institute Business Workshop Series and featured several lectures and presentations on business etiquette.

The workshop was presented in collaboration with the Consulate General of Japan in Houston, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), and Toyota Motor Manufacturing of Texas, and supported by the UTSA College of Business’s International Business Program.

Featured presenters included Mr. Toshinaga Hirai and Mr. Naoto Nakagawa.

Special thanks to UTSA College of Business’s International Business Program for their sponsorship.
Nakagawa from JETRO in Houston, Mr. Mark Schneider from the office of the Consulate General of Japan in Houston, and Mr. Doug Stringer from Joyson Safety Systems, Inc. Mr. Terutoshi Kameyama from Toyota Motor Manufacturing of Texas, and the East Asia Institute’s Japan Outreach Coordinator, Ms. Chinatsu Oku. Speakers and participants were encouraged to sit together and network. The participants consisted of not only students; also in attendance were professionals in higher education, business, and military fields who were grateful for the opportunity to make new connections.

Dr. Wanxiang Yao, Director of East Asia Institute, opened the event by welcoming the participants and speakers as well as thanking Consul General Hideo Fukushima for his continued support for East Asia Institute’s events. Dr. Lisa Montoya, Vice Provost of Global Initiatives and Senior International Officer of UTSA also addressed the guests, stressing how important it is that we strive to understand different cultures. Lastly, Consul General Fukushima expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the participants for attending the very first Japanese Business workshop at UTSA.

After the opening remarks, the afternoon began with a colorful sushi meal, generously provided by the office of the Consulate General of Japan in Houston, which participants enjoyed during Oku’s presentation on Japanese Table Manners and Etiquette. Oku’s presentation was detailed and informative; guests even learned the correct way to split...
wooden chopsticks! Keeping in mind this new information, participants enjoyed a light meal of Japanese-style fare and delicious sushi, and had a great time socializing and networking before the rest of the lectures began.

Starting off the lectures for the afternoon were the representatives from JETRO. Mr. Toshinaga Hirai, Chief Executive Director of JETRO, and Naoto Nakagawa, Office Director of Shipbuilding, shared a detailed lecture on Japan’s economy, and current Japan-US business relations. Hirai outlined Japan’s economy and GDP, its improvement under the Abe administration, the Japanese market and consumers, Japan’s role in business in the United States, and potential obstacles for business between Japan and the US. Participants had many questions for Hirai and Nakagawa, and the pair were happy to share their thoughts on various subjects. Mr. Hirai explained to the participants that one of the greatest needs in current Japanese business with the U.S. is adequate human resources, and added that networking before the rest of the lectures began. the greatest difficulty in business affairs often stems from the language barrier between the two countries.

The next lecture was presented by Toyota Motor Manufacturing of Texas. Mr. Terutoshi Kameyama was unable to attend the event, but he was able to provide a video of his lecture for the participants, which included clips of Toyota’s fascinating manufacturing process. During his lecture, Kameyama emphasized the importance of placing value and respect on every single person in the company. He and the other representatives from Toyota, Ms. Luisa Casso, Manager of Corporate Communication, and Ms. Stephanie Melchor, Specialist of Internal Communications, made it clear that Japanese values can make a great American company!

Mr. Doug Stringer of Joyson Safety Systems, Inc., gave the next presentation. Stringer, who has enjoyed a long career with Japanese companies across multiple industries, shared his experiences, lessons he has learned during his career, and personal anecdotes from his early years in Japan. The participants enjoyed hearing his perspective on how to properly conduct—and enjoy—business in Japan.
The final presentation of the afternoon was conducted by Mr. Mark Schneider of Information and Cultural Affairs from the Consulate General of Japan in Houston. Schneider, who has extensive experience promoting U.S.-Japanese cultural exchange, gave a detailed lecture covering almost every aspect of Japanese Business Etiquette.

Appropriate attire, bowing, communication, and conducting business outside of the office are just some of the topics Schneider covered for the audience. He even included an entire section on meishi (business cards), that enlightened and entertained the participants.

After the presenters finished, Mimi Yu, associate director of the East Asia Institute gave closing remarks and presented gifts to each of the speakers. This event provided students with plenty of new information and anecdotes that should prove useful in future international endeavors.

The East Asia Institute hopes this event and others like it will continue to enrich the lives of UTSA students and the San Antonio community, and help to prepare them for new experiences in international business.