On Tuesday, October 2, 2017, the East Asia Institute hosted Alisa Tobin, JET Program Coordinator of the Consulate-General of Japan in Houston, who gave an information session on the JET program to more than thirty students.

The information session consisted of the establishment of the program, stories of life as a potential JET and important tips for the application process.

A former Assistant Language Teacher and UTSA student, Fahad Khan, was also present to give UTSA students insight on the JET program and life in Japan.

JET program stands for Japan Exchange and Teaching Program. This 30-year-old program gives English native speakers the opportunity to teach the English language in Japan as well as their country's customs and cultures, 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 under the board of education. The schools JET participants can be placed at range from all levels between elementary to high school. Participants must design lessons and activities or
grade exams. They may also be asked to help with foreign language clubs, school festivals, speech competitions and/or community English classes.

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." The requirement to become a CIR is to have an equivalent command of the Japanese language to that of an N2 or N1 level. CIRs have many duties including translating documents, interpreting for overseas visitors or local officials, giving presentations, and coordinating sister-city relations.

The JET program is a full time job and a contract of a minimum of one year is required. 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.

“This is a job”, commented Tobin. “Candidates interested in applying must understand that the program is not an internship. The candidates must take the JET position seriously, and be ready to enter a working environment. While in Japan, you are not just representing yourself, but you are representing your country.” Tobin went on to express the differences between rural and city locations concerning transportation, living arrangements, weather and social norms.

Fahad Khan also added that learning Japanese helped him become a part of the Japanese community and make local friends while he was there.

After the session, the audience was given a chance to direct questions towards Tobin and Khan. They asked questions about the application process and living in Japan as a foreigner.

"The JET program provides great opportunities for UTSA students to learn, not only Japanese language and culture, but to also expand their knowledge of the world," said Erina Romanowich, program coordinator of the East Asia Institute.

For more information visit: http://jetprogramme.org/ http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp