

CHUBU CONNECTION

University to fund those seeking study abroad

Nagoya University of Foreign Studies in the city of Nisshin, Aichi Prefecture, plans to start a new program from next fall that subsidizes all the costs necessary for its students to study abroad.

Its objective is to alter the prevailing mood among Japanese students who do not aspire to study overseas.

"This program will be the first trial of its kind in Japan," a university official said, adding it also aims to demonstrate its uniqueness among domestic universities amid the nation's declining birthrate.

The average grant per student will range from ¥1.5 million to ¥1.8 million. The size of the grant will be decided based on the costs required to cover expenses, including return airfare, university tuition fees, textbooks, accommodations, insurance and a visa.

There are currently about 150 students who are likely to apply. The university forecasts the program will cost at least ¥50 million annually, in addition to the cost for the current study abroad grant programs that cover part of the financial cost for students.

Applicants must obtain a TOEFL — Test of English as a Foreign Language — score of more than 500, the standard for international students to be accepted by Western universities. Students are able to choose a university from 61 partner institutions in 11 countries, including the U.S., U.K., France, Australia, China and South Korea. The term of the grant is from six months to a year, according to the university.

University officials say the new program is being launched to counter the inward-looking trend among students who prefer not to venture overseas.

"Through this program, we hope to stop this trend so that the students will become more outward-looking," said Takashi Tsunekawa, an official in charge of the program.

According to tomorrow, Inc., which publishes study abroad-related magazines, Japanese studying abroad decreased from 130,000 in 2004 to fewer than 100,000 in 2009.

"I am concerned about this country 20 or 30 years down the road, as less students go overseas nowadays. I am not sure if we can continue this program permanently in terms of financing, but as long as we can afford it, we would like to keep it," said Osamu Mizutami, president of the school.

Nagoya University of Foreign Studies has schools and departments including a School of Foreign Languages, a School of Contemporary International Studies and a Graduate School of International Studies. It also provides courses in Japanese studies for international students.

The university's total number of undergraduates is about 3,500. While it dispatches 500 to 600 students abroad every year, it also accepts nearly 200 international students.

This section, appearing Saturdays, features topics and issues from the Chubu region covered by local daily Chunichi Shimbun. The original article was published Dec. 4.

The Japan Times: Saturday, Dec. 18, 2010
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