

# BAKER SCHOLAR CONNECTIONS

2018



## SPRING TRIP | TOKYO, JAPAN

Our view of the Tokyo culture can be summed up in a few words: trusting, loyal, clean, dependable, genuinely kind, and conscientious. Trust was evident as we walked by unmonitored merchandise sitting outside the shops along the narrow streets. Loyalty is strong and was discussed at many business visits as the key to doing business in Japan well. As we were in transit between cultural and business visits, we were in awe of the cleanliness. Trash cans were absent yet the city and subways were always clean and trash-free. Bathrooms, subway cars, restaurants, and shops were always orderly and nearly spotless. The clean, practically perfect aesthetic extended to their processes as well. Both people and systems were very dependable: There was an underlying, unwritten code of conduct that was always present. The trains and subways were always on time and, when we went on the business visits, we ensured we were early. Everything and everyone in Tokyo seemed to have a purpose: they were aware of what they were doing and why they were doing it. Their actions to make us feel welcome were intentional and came from a genuine heart. The conscientious nature of the people did not go unnoticed nor unappreciated. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in Tokyo enhanced both our cultural and business understanding: certainly, a trip we will never forget!



# A Letter from the President

Dear Baker Scholar Alumni, Family, and Friends,

To all of you that don't know me, my name is Adam Rolain and I have been given the privilege to serve as President of the Baker Scholars Program this past school year. We have been busy during a very exciting time for the program. For those of you who do not know, Vicki TenHaken stepped down as advisor at the end of last year. With that, Steve VanderVeen has taken over her position and we have embraced a transition period for the program. His passion and experience with leadership development are going to be a great stepping stone for our progress in the future. In this Connections, you will get a glimpse into some of the fun activities we did on campus and in the Grand Rapids area, as well as the great experiences we had in Tokyo, Japan.

While in Tokyo, we had a great line-up of visits with Amway, Steelcase, Aflac, Wunderman, and Papas Factory. We gained a lot of insight from their leaders about what it is like to live and work abroad, in addition to seeing, firsthand, how different business can be in Japan. Through several day trips to Kamakura, Kyoto, and Yokohama, as well as touring around different parts of Tokyo, we were able to absorb many different aspects about Japanese culture in a short amount of time. We also had the opportunity to meet with many of the Hope alumni who live in Japan during an alumni dinner on the last night of the trip. Several other experiences will be shown in the Connections, but it truly was an unforgettable trip that will be invaluable to all of us as we move on into the next phases of our lives.

Throughout the semester, we were able to visit at Van Andel Institute, Perrigo, Meijer Gardens, and Celebration Cinema, right here in West Michigan. It is always great to be able to hear from Hope and Baker alumni about their experiences working in West Michigan. We also hosted two different panel discussions on campus that provided wisdom to students interested in learning about unconventional careers in business and the changing roles that women have in the business world. This semester also included several leadership development sessions held with the Business Club Leadership Team to learn more about specific traits that we can take into our future leadership roles.

One of the biggest changes that many of you may have noticed this year is our attempt to intentionally engage with our alumni more actively than in years past. While many of the activities from our trip to Japan will be elaborated on more throughout this letter, there are still more visits and activities that aren't mentioned, such as our visits in West Michigan. The reason for this is that we have been sending an email newsletter periodically throughout the year detailing the most recent Baker events. If you are interested in hearing more about everything we are doing throughout the year, please email [bakerscholars@hope.edu](mailto:bakerscholars@hope.edu) and we can add you to our email list.

I have had an incredible time in my role as President during this year and I am very excited to announce that Zachary Gebben will be taking over as President for next year. As always, thank you so much for your continued support: without it we would not have these opportunities to learn and grow through the Baker Scholars Program.

Have a great summer,

Adam Rolain

# Business Visits & Culture



## AMWAY

Amway was our first business visit in Japan. We heard from the president of Amway Japan, Peter Strydom, about Amway's presence in Japan, how the direct-selling business model is adapted for Japanese culture, and how "Abenomics" (economic policies from Prime Minister Abe) has impacted the country. Peter's rich history of doing international business and his leadership in Japan gave us fantastic insight into the realities of global business. We also heard from Mark Davidson (Director of Government and External Affairs) and three female employees from Japan. We learned from the employees' backgrounds and took away lessons about the effect of cultural differences on doing business. Hearing a range of perspectives and insights provided a comprehensive foundation for understanding international business and Japanese culture for the remainder of our trip.

## AFLAC

While visiting Aflac Tokyo, we met with two Senior Vice Presidents, Andy Conrad and Ryan Armstrong. We learned about Aflac's history in Japan as well as Aflac's competitive advantage regarding their healthcare insurance. We discovered that cultural differences can also impact the branding of a company. For example, Aflac changed their logo of the Aflac duck by making a more peaceful, calm version in order to make it more appealing to the Japanese consumer.

## PAPA'S FACTORY

On our final business day in Tokyo, we took a visit to Papas Factory, a small metal manufacturing plant in Sagami-hara City. We met with Hitoshi Matsumoto, the President and CEO. His father was the founder, and he recently took over after practicing medicine during the beginning of his career. Now he is spending most of his time leading Papas, while still working as a doctor part-time. This visit was a unique experience for us to learn about a local Japanese company through Matsumoto-san's experiences as well as getting a tour of the factory. Their hospitality was greatly appreciated and each of us came away having learned a lot from our Japanese hosts.

## TEA CEREMONY

Hope College alumna Ikuko Okada graciously hosted us and performed the ceremony in a tea room fitted with traditional tatami floor mats and a handwritten hanging scroll reading "Glory to God". Okada-san taught us about the unique tradition of the tea ceremony while we enjoyed pastries and watched as the powdered green tea was meticulously whisked with the hot water. We did our best to follow the appropriate procedures as we drank our tea. The precise actions taken throughout the ceremony were interesting to learn and fun to watch. Alissa (Heynen) even tried her hand at making some tea as well! It was a special experience to be able to participate in a Japanese custom and learn "the Way of Tea" with a member of the Hope College community.

## ALUMNI DINNER

Our last night in Tokyo, the Bakers had the privilege of hosting an alumni dinner with nearly 80 members of the Hope College community (alumni, parents of alumni, faculty, and staff) in Japan. We presented our reactions to Japan and detailed the activities of our trip. Together, we enjoyed a dinner of American food, eaten with chopsticks of course, and networked with alumni. It was interesting to hear about their lives in Japan and they were excited to ask us about changes on Hope's campus.

## STEELCASE

At the Steelcase WorkLife Center in Tokyo, we had an extensive Q&A session with Brandon Peters, the Director of Sales in Japan. Brandon explained that, overall, the work environment within Japanese companies remains much more traditional than companies in the United States, as there is a greater focus on long hours of hard work. As a company that emphasizes a strong corporate culture, wellbeing, and blurring the edges of the traditional workplace, Brandon described the importance of bringing potential customers into the WorkLife Center to see Steelcase's products in use. In fact, during our conversation, we saw potential customers walk through the space as a Steelcase employee informed them about the importance of having spaces to improve employee productivity and engagement.

## WUNDERMAN

Another business visit included a stop to visit a Hope alumna at the digital marketing agency, Wunderman International. They focus on integrating creativity and data to inspire people to take action. We heard about the American perspective of cultural differences in Japan and how the key characteristics of trust, quality, and authenticity fit in the workplace. We also discussed overcoming challenges unique to Japan: a declining population where the biggest age group is 40 to 60 years old. This visit allows us to have a deeper understanding of how companies adjust their processes to better align with cultural differences.

# WELCOME, Selected Baker Scholar Class of 2020



Alissa Smith  
Business,  
Communication



Olivia McCalla  
Economics, Business |  
Accounting



Caleb Miller  
Business | German,  
Leadership



Kelly VanderPloeg  
Business, Spanish,  
Communication



Joseph Dawson  
Economics,  
Business



Cassidy Merten  
Business,  
Communication



Christopher Wood  
Business,  
Accounting

# THANK YOU! 2018 Graduating Senior Bakers



Gwyneth Wortz  
Herman Miller



Megan Sterba  
Herman Miller



Logan Rock  
Deloitte



Anh Trinh  
NYC TBD



Alissa Heynen  
Bethany Christian Services  
Law School TBD



Adam Rolain  
Baseball Scouting  
Spanish Immersion



Julia Toren  
Steelcase