

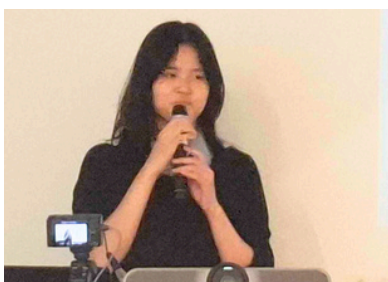
# NEWSLETTER

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## From Class to Stage at Open Forum

On a cozy October lunch break that felt perfect for a nap, **Bianca Astra Ferlingga**, a GSEP first-year student from Indonesia, gave an inspiring talk titled *"Why We Should Never Underestimate Napping"*. The talk was organized by Academy for Leadership, Science Tokyo, as part of **the Open Forum** series — a lunchtime event where students give short presentations in English on various topics, followed by casual discussions with participants.

"The Open Forum is truly a valuable experience and opportunity," shared Bianca. "Because we had the freedom to choose our presentation subjects, the topics were diverse, ranging



Bianca on how naps can boost productivity and creativity



A lively Open Forum with participants

from dark matter, music, and business to more unique subjects like UFC, the best sauce for rice, romanticizing life through cinema and many more. I found everyone's topic incredibly interesting".

The Forum not only offers the audience a chance to explore a variety of engaging topics, but also provides valuable learning experiences for the students who run it. Graduate facilitators from Academy for Leadership practice leading lively discussions, while undergraduate presenters — including many first-year GSEP students from **Prof. Lorinda Robertson Kiyama's** English Speech Seminar — have the opportunity to refine their presentation skills in front of a public audience.

Much of their preparation begins in Prof. Kiyama's class, where students learn how to structure effective presentation,

use rhetorical techniques, design slide construction and handle Q&A. With regular peer feedback and private coaching, they polish their talk before the final presentation.

Prof. Kiyama notes: "Through their enthusiastic participation in weekly Open Forums, GSEP students contribute to the intellectual life of the university. Not only do they showcase the extremely high level of critical thinking and English mastery, their warm camaraderie brings a welcoming atmosphere to all who participate. University professors have even come to hear them speak and to invite them to collaborate in their research. The value of GSEP students' participation in Open Forum cannot be underestimated".

The Forum continues to be a place where ideas are shared, voices are heard, and students grow together.

# Creativity Meets Culture at ASPIRE UEDC 2025

Science Tokyo hosted the **ASPIRE Undergraduate Engineering Design Challenge (UEDC)** from June 23 to 27 at Ookayama Campus. Organized as part of the ASPIRE League—a consortium of leading Asian science and technology universities, the program brought together 26 students from KAIST, NTU, HKUST, Tsinghua University, and Science Tokyo for a week full of creativity, teamwork, and cultural exchange.

The students learned the basics of design thinking through interactive workshops, and worked in mixed-university teams to take on the challenge: “Design a product, system, or service that only Japanese people would purchase, inspired by Japanese events.” Each group selected a uniquely Japanese event—such as cherry-blossom viewing, fireworks festivals, *Setsubun*, or even Valentine’s Day—and conducted interviews with local people to deepen their understanding. Over the week, they brainstormed ideas, built prototypes, and refined their concepts before presenting their final designs on the last day.

The week was filled with fun, discovery, and collaboration, giving students a chance to experience Japan’s culture while developing their creativity and engineering skills.



**Albert Phuoc Kien Van Truong**, a GSEP third-year student from Canada, shared his impressions: “The week that I spent doing the ASPIRE UEDC was one of, if not the most enjoyable and impactful week I have spent during my university years. I was able to share Japanese culture and learn about other cultures in a truly meaningful way that I have never experienced before. The ASPIRE program was the catalyst that allowed this to happen.

Going into the program, some people may think that it would be impossible to become well acquainted with students that you will only meet for five days, with the majority of the days being taken up by working on the challenge. In reality, it allowed us to learn about each others’ personalities and communication styles through working with each other, but not too deeply about our personal interests and background. This was actually a blessing in disguise because it encouraged us to spend as much time as possible with each other after class. Combined with a 5-day time limit, we felt the urgency to try to quickly bond with each other. From this, I was able to become close friends with people who were complete strangers to me just a few days prior, and have one of the most unforgettable experiences in my life. ASPIRE was truly the perfect storm.

Over the week, we went all around Tokyo and Yokohama, visiting Shibuya, Minatomirai, Shimokitazawa. We went to karaoke, watched fireworks, and even saw live music, among many other activities.

After the week of ASPIRE, some students stayed in Tokyo longer, and I took the opportunity to spend more time with them, going to Enoshima, Kamakura, and even driving all the way to Mt. Fuji together. Since the program ended, I have still kept in touch with the friends I made through the program and was given a wonderful opportunity this past summer to visit some of them in Singapore and Malaysia.

ASPIRE has introduced me to so many incredible people and provided opportunities that I never could have imagined. I would encourage everyone who can participate in ASPIRE to give it a try, because you never know, it could change your life.”



Spending time together in Shibuya and near Mr. Fuji



## Special Report: Education Fair in Malaysia

As part of our outreach efforts, GSEP joined an overseas education fair for the first time — an exciting opportunity to connect directly with prospective students, parents, and educators in Malaysia. The event, held on August 24 in Kuala Lumpur, offered a chance to introduce what makes GSEP unique. 38 Japanese institutions took part, including prominent universities such as the University of Tokyo, drawing 1200 visitors from across Malaysia. Our **Specially Appointed Associate Professor Vinayak Gupta**, or Vin-sensei, shares his firsthand impressions from the fair.



A crowded venue with participants

“Our university, particularly the GSEP, participated in Japan Graduates’ Association of Malaysia (JAGAM) Japan Education Fair 2025, held in August in Malaysia. Prof. Abe, GSEP Chair and I attended this significant event, marking an important milestone for Science Tokyo. We showcased our university’s scientific achievements in Malaysia and had the honour of engaging with distinguished individuals, including HE Shikata Noryuki, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Malaysia.

This was our institute’s first participation in such a fair, and the insights we gained were invaluable. Many students and their parents approached us with inquiries about our university and the English programs we offer, including GSEP and our master’s programs. A personal highlight for me was when the president of JAGAM praised our university stating that he would strongly endorse Institute of Science Tokyo. Despite our university’s recent



Our busy booth

name change, it seems that it continues to maintain the charisma it has always had.

As a newly appointed professor, I observed that students were particularly interested in international exchanges with universities abroad.

For GSEP students, I strongly recommend exploring these opportunities, as they provide unique experiences. In my opinion, participating in an international exchange promotes personal growth and development; navigating daily life in a new culture fosters self-sufficiency, enhances self-confidence, and encourages independence. Additionally, you will be exposed to new ideas, traditions, and different ways of life, which will broaden your worldview and challenge your assumptions.

Regarding career prospects, international experience is a valuable asset on a resume, making you more attractive to employers who value global awareness and cross-cultural skills. Moreover, you will make international friends and professional contacts, building a valuable network for future opportunities.

In conclusion, I believe we made a positive impression of Science Tokyo and GSEP among the participating universities. This event also provided us with insights into what other universities in Japan are doing and what we can do to attract more talented students like you. Our booth remained busy, and we received encouraging feedback from both attendees and other institutions. I am grateful for this experience and look forward to participating in many more events in the future”.



Abe-sensei (right) and Vin-sensei (left) at the booth