

JETAA International Meeting
November 29th to December 1st, 2019
Tokyo
Matthew Gillam

2019-2020 Core Team	
Chair	Board of Advisors
Ashlie O'Neill / Australia	Matthew Gillam
Vice Chair	Ryan Hata / US
Nathalie Ng / Singapore	Xander Peterson / US
	Megan Buhagiar / AJET
Webmaster	
Eden Law / Australia	

Friday, November 29th

Opening

The International Meeting opened with greetings from CLAIR, the JETAA-I Chair Ashlie O'Neill (now Reilly), and NAJET. Besides the full members, there were observers from China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and the Tokyo chapter. This was really the first full working conference for "JETAA-I 2.0", the revived and reengineered version of the international organization, as the 2016 gathering was reportedly very short on time for actual working sessions devoted to the alumni.

JETAA-I and National AJET Overviews

The conference started with overviews of the two organizations, since one major objective for JETAA-I was to interface and partner with NAJET to more effectively collaborate on supporting the JET Program and the entire JET community. Due to many factors, however, neither side was well-acquainted with the other. Issues of concern raised by NAJET included the mental health support network, housing, disparities in PA duties across prefectures, and dealing with sexual harassment and assault.

Opinion Exchange with NAJET

Topics discussed included improvements to the Peer Support Group and other mental health resources, alumni involvement in predeparture orientations (PDOs), the problems Tokyo JETs were having with finding housing, access to information on JETs finishing the Program, and a long discussion on sexual

security. This included the “Saseboanon” case of alleged rape, which had gained media and online attention. The CLAIR representative attending was asked if they could help address these issues, and participants were told that CLAIR was aware of these things and working to address them where possible.

Post-JET Opportunities

JETAA-I Core Team (Officers, Webmaster, Board of Advisors) members gave a presentation of the efforts of the PJO initiative to provide support to alumni in connecting with post-graduate study opportunities and career development resources. US Country Reps talked about outreach efforts there, and everyone was asked to consider developing study and career support initiatives in their countries.

KenJETkai

KJK was an initiative that started in the US but was handed over to JETAA-I not long before the IM, since it was really an international undertaking. Core Team members gave an overview of its development and objectives, and discussed ways to move it forward, such as connecting with prefecture AJET groups, etc. KJK was explained as being a Facebook-based community for new, current, and former JETs, as well as other people connected with the Program to come together and share information in their various prefecture-specific groups. One hope was that it would strengthen the “JET pipeline” (of new, current, & former JETs) and the relationship between JETs and their prefectures.

Opinion Exchange with CLAIR, the Three Ministries, and JNTO

A second OE was held with the Japanese government agencies responsible for JET, which was joined by JNTO, which was hoping to enlist help from the alumni.

CLAIR opened by describing the results of the 2016 gathering, including the JET Declaration, changes to the mental health support network, new professional development opportunities for second-year JETs, and support for the JETAA-I website. Participants were thanked for alumni support for the Rugby World Cup and asked for similar support for the upcoming Olympics and Paralympics. Increased participation by JETs from smaller countries was also noted, although with the caveat that more needed to be done there.

After more general greetings by other participants, Core Team members gave presentations on JETAA-I / NAJET collaboration and KenJETkai, and these were discussed.

The next topic was improving communications with MOFA and diplomatic outposts. The central topic revolved around the establishment of chapters in Indonesia, Guam, and the Philippines and various issues that arose from poor communication between MOFA and JETAA-I. Discussion here revealed that MOFA had created an email address for alumni leadership to use (jet@mofa.go.jp) and that MOFA was unaware of JETAA-I's activities or policies regarding creation of new chapters.

Alumni involvement in PDOs was also discussed, and MOFA was asked about alumni having a more active role in those. However, the ministry position was that such matters should be left to each embassy and consulate.

Core team members gave a presentation on supporting sister state and sister city relationships and how alumni can get involved, and then asked CLAIR and the ministries if there were any ways they could help assist in those efforts. CLAIR and MIC both expressed general support for such efforts.

JNTO gave a presentation on their work and discussed issues such as the drop-off in inbound tourism between 2017 and 2018 and the problem of over-tourism. They then asked the alumni to work with them to promote local tourism to destinations beyond the “Golden Route” (Tokyo / Kyoto) and to help review content created by JNTO and local governments. Some alumni expressed interest in this. JETAA-I then announced that they had created a set of guidelines for working with JNTO on promoting KJK.

The final topic was sexual safety, with JETAA-I calling on alumni to work with everyone involved to make JET into “a beacon of hope” for people dealing with harassment or assault by instituting effective mechanisms to help prevent and address such incidents. CLAIR noted the delicacy of the topic and advised everyone to work with people in each prefecture to improve prevention and support protocols.

The day ended with the CLAIR Reception, celebrating the 30th anniversary of the creation of JETAA, in October 1989.

Saturday, November 30th

Chapter Presentations

After a brief review of Day 1 and its discussions, Day 2 launched into Country Rep presentations. Full members presenting (in order) were: Australia / Brazil / Canada / France / German / India / Ireland / Japan / Jamaica / New Zealand / Scotland / Singapore / South Africa / South Korea / Trinidad & Tobago / England & Wales / the US. Indonesia and the Philippines presented as Observers (no China).

Core Team Intros

Next, the Core Team members introduced themselves and talked about what each person was doing on behalf of JETAA-I in their positions as Chair, Vice Chair, Webmaster, or Board of Advisor member. Discussion during this session included a request for more information from the Core Team on JETAA-I's activities, having each country submit a regular report so everyone knows what everyone else is doing, using the JETLAG Facebook group to share information, and the desirability of having languages besides English on the website for greater inclusiveness and accessibility.

Webmaster Report

The Webmaster gave a report on his activities and the platforms used by JETAA-I (FB, Twitter, & the website). He gave some stats on those, encouraged everyone to use them, and asked them to post their events to the calendar on the website. Further recommendations for platforms to consider included Instagram, LinkedIn, Meetup, and YouTube. The Webmaster also said he was looking into Hootsuite, paper.li, and other tools for aggregating content.

Objectives of JETAA-I 2.0

The Chair reviewed communications channels, with Google Groups and email being the primary means of communication, and the JETLAG (JET Leadership Advisory Group) FB group being a more informal and free-flowing space for sharing ideas and information. The dearth of communication between the Core Team and Country Reps was acknowledged, and greater efforts were promised there. She noted that items she was working on included receiving funding to cover website expenses (which were covered by a Board member in the early years), holding a logo contest, preparing for the IM itself, and finding funding for Core Team members to attend regional conferences. She closed by emphasizing the critical importance of presenting a professional outward-facing appearance by JETAA-I in all its activities.

There was a brief overview of the revival process for JETAA-I, how it was structured to (hopefully) be more effective and cost-efficient, while keeping the burden on members and leadership as light as possible, and efforts to bring all stakeholders on board for the revival effort. Discussing efforts to improve communication and active participation led to a discussion of whether to form working groups. Another idea was to have regional check-in calls that would allow everyone to talk periodically while taking into account the time zone differences among members (which require some people to be up in the wee hours to participate if they are global).

A request was made to have periodic email updates on Core Team activities, and a monthly Chapter Spotlight to see what everyone is doing. There was a lot of enthusiasm for this, but also concerns about the work involved all around.

Special Interest Groups, like AJET has, were proposed as one way for people to work together, and the creation of working groups with Core Team members coordinating them was proposed.

The issue of JETs who don't return to their countries was brought up, which led to the topic of how to increase the number of JETs from less-represented countries. Working with CLAIR, sister city relationships, and business interests were all mentioned. The formation of a working group to support these efforts was proposed, and the VC noted she'd already begun creating resources for this.

Issues Facing JETAA-I and Chapters

There was a discussion of challenges faced by JETAA-I and its Core Team, especially regarding succession and transition. The fundamental problem was a lack of people to step in and take on roles and duties, and ideas were discussed for attracting more active member involvement, including more outreach to non-English speaking members and the smaller countries, whose voices are important to the organization. The creation of a handbook for incoming Country Reps was also brought up. While many thought it a good idea, others were concerned about feasibility, given the great differences in situations and resources among the countries. Beyond this, a need was cited for more resources with information for current JETs and the alumni community, and some efforts already underway were mentioned.

There was a brief discussion of achieving goals with limited resources. Partnering with other groups and working with CLAIR & MOFA to secure funding were a couple approaches mentioned.

CLAIR Grant-in-Aid

The Alumni Liaison at CLAIR Tokyo gave a presentation on GiA, outlining the different types and their uses, the application and reporting process, and some points to keep in mind regarding its use.

Breakout Sessions

Participants divided up into four groups for discussion and brainstorming. The groups were Smaller Chapters, Multi-chapter Countries, Non-English-speaking Chapters, and Single-chapter Countries. Each had a Core Team member helping to facilitate. After about 30 minutes of discussion, each group reported on their topics and takeaways to the entire room.

Information Sharing

The final session of the day covered the JETAA-I events calendar, ways the alumni network can connect people (such as when someone is visiting another country), and an overview of internal documents that had been sent out for everyone's review, covering election procedures, communications protocols, Board of Advisor appointments, JETAA terminology, and a list of projects such as KJK and PJO.

Sunday, December 1st

Sock Exchange

The day began with a sock exchange. Each participant was asked ahead of time to bring a pair of socks to the conference representing their home country. These were then put out, numbers were assigned to each person who brought a pair, lots were drawn, and each person chosen went to select a pair to take home. This had proven to be a very popular event at the US national conferences, although it came out during the selection process that not every country really wears socks, and some members had struggled to find a pair. Each Country Rep had also brought snacks to share, which were placed out on Saturday.

Parliamentary Session

A set of proposed amendments to the JETAA-I (2.0) Bylaws adopted in 2016 had been sent out for review by the Executive Committee six weeks prior to the IM. A number of changes that did not require a vote had also been proposed. Each of these was read out to the Executive Committee, opened for final questions and discussion, and voted upon. These were:

1. Returning Officers – The amendment mandating the selection of two officers, rather than one, to oversee elections was approved unanimously (19 to 0).
2. Term Limits for Officers – The proposal to extend the maximum term for Officers from 2 years to 3 years (consecutive) was approved unanimously.
3. Term Limits for Advisors – The proposal to extend the maximum term for Board of Advisor members from 5 years to 10 years (total) was approved unanimously.
4. Terminology – The proposal to adopt the term “Election Officer” in place of “Returning Officer” was approved 18 to 1, with one person voting to retain the original.

Changes not requiring a vote were, nonetheless, presented for discussion and approval:

1. Japanese terminology – A proposal to change the Japanese translation of “Board of Advisors” from 「諮問委員会」 to 「顧問委員会」 was approved unanimously. (Because the official version of the Bylaws is the English one, changes to wording there require formal votes as amendments, but the Japanese version is a translation, so does not strictly require that treatment.)
2. Email – Adopting a new email address for confidential matters such as voting (voting@jetaainternational.org) was approved 18 for and 1 abstaining.

Finally, a document detailing how BoA members are chosen was presented but not voted upon. There were no objections to it, however.

Working Groups

After a discussion about what kinds of topics everyone wanted to see addressed, working groups were formed and members volunteered for the ones they were interested in. The groups were:

1. Mental Health and Sexual Security
2. KenJETkai
3. Onboarding New Country Reps
4. Small Chapters
5. Governance
6. Post-JET Opportunities
7. Volunteering
8. JET Tech Desk
9. Membership Growth and Development
10. JET Writers’ Guild
11. Branding (added after later discussion)

Each group had 4 to 10 members. They decided amongst themselves who would lead, how they would communicate, what timeframe they would work with (1, 3, or 5 year plans), and whether they would be open to having NAJET people join (yes).

Mascot & Logo

A rough draft of the proposed mascot, created by Teri Galvez from JETAA Rocky Mountain, was shown to the group. It still needed a name and more work, but met with general approval.

A timeline and guidelines for a competition to design a new JETAA-I logo were agreed upon, to replace the old logo from 1.0. This was also when the Branding working group was created.

The Future of JETAA International

The final session started with participants' comments on the IM and its usefulness, and what they would like to see in future IMs. Many people commented on all the useful information they gained and on how much more connected they felt to their fellow leaders.

It had not been clear at the beginning of the IM whether CLAIR would agree to hold another, but they had reportedly signaled by the end that they would be willing to support one. There were many voices arguing for giving leaders the chance to meet as often as possible - at least once a year if feasible. It was decided, however, that once every three years – in Tokyo – would be best. Every one or two years would be so much work that nothing else could get done, and less often than that would negate most of the value of gathering and building relationships. Figuring out ways to meet more often (whether in regional conferences or online) and developing better onboarding for Country Reps were the two big wishes.

There was also a discussion of where IMs should be held. It was noted that annual meetings for JETAA-I 1.0 were hosted by different chapters, but there was little enthusiasm for going back to this, especially with the difficulties involved in trying to coordinate hosting on a three-year cycle. It was agreed that CLAIR would host in Tokyo once every three years, and this would also make it easier for the Ministries to attend; an important point, since interfacing with them is one primary task for JETAA-I.

With some time left, participants broke out into their working groups for a few minutes. Then Isobe-sanyo, from CLAIR, made some closing remarks, thanking everyone for their passionate involvement and action-oriented discussions. He praised the discussions with the ministries, saying they produced valuable outcomes in terms of improving JETs' safety and strengthening relations between the ministries and alumni, and he expressed his hopes for the development of the KenJETkai initiative. He closed by saying how happy he was with the progress, and how much he was looking forward to the work ahead and seeing everyone in three years.

CLAIR hosted a bus tour to see Olympic preparations, followed by a lunch and a boat cruise around Tokyo Bay for those who could stay through Sunday afternoon.