



INTERNATIONAL INSPIRATIONS

Awesome Students Doing Amazing Things



Kanako Otani

Home Country: Japan

Major: B.A. in Communication Studies Minor: Public Relations

Current Employer: Teklus, LLC

(Kanako is also a Social Media Volunteer for Haircuts with Heart)

Right from the start, Kanako set her mind to making the most of her experience at Chico State. As a student that speaks English as her second language, the courage it took to pursue a B.A. in Communication Studies with a minor in Public Relations was very impressive. But, she didn't stop there! Outside of the classroom, Kanako intentionally sought opportunities for growth and improvement.

Kanako quickly made herself aware of the wide variety of volunteer activities and student-run organizations in which she could participate. She volunteered and did an internship at CAVE, participated in the Women's March on Chico, worked for the Student Learning Center, attended an on-campus political rally, and joined the Speech & Debate Team, which were experiences she credits with helping her meet friends, learn more about American culture, and improve her language and interpersonal skills, all of which added tremendous value to her educational experience and to her ability to market herself to employers upon graduation.

Kanako's experience wasn't always smooth sailing. It took two full years for her to feel comfortable contributing to classroom conversations. But, she didn't give up! Having good communication skills isn't just about knowing vocabulary, she notes, "We still need to know cultural contexts to understand everyday conversations." She wisely knew that, although sometimes uncomfortable, only by interacting with Americans can one gain this skill-set.

Slowly but surely, with her continued perseverance, her efforts paid off. In her final semester at Chico State, she received first place in a regional speech and debate tournament and at a national competition, she was an Octa-Finalist (awarded to the top 25-50% of speakers). This young woman is definitely an inspirational international student!