

International Student Recruitment and the G30 Admissions Office at Nagoya University

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Universities in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia have a long tradition and experience in recruiting international students from overseas. According to the “Noel-Levitz Report on Undergraduate Enrollment Trends” four-year colleges in the United States spend from \$450 to \$2,185 per new student for recruitment.² Experts argue that universities recruit students overseas because they help increase the diversity of the student population, they help promote the exposure of domestic students to new ideas, and they are potentially future alumni³. If Nagoya University seeks to participate in global education then placing a value on international recruitment should be a priority. The purpose of this brief report is to introduce the ideas behind the recruitment strategies and activities at Nagoya University for its English taught programs.

International Students and the Internationalization of Nagoya University

「名古屋大学からNagoya Universityへ」, the current slogan of Nagoya University, reflects the priority that the Japanese Government and Japanese universities place on the internationalization of Japanese higher education. Along with sending more Japanese students abroad and hiring more international faculty, a key goal

in this process is increasing the number of international students on campus. Recruitment, therefore, is necessary if the number of international students, and the diversity of their backgrounds, is to increase.⁴

The International Admissions Office (AO) and the G30 Program at Nagoya University

The Nagoya University's Admission Office for the G30 International Programs (AO) was established in 2009 and started recruiting students from early 2010. The AO played a key role in finding students at the launch in October 2011 of the Global 30 International Programs at Nagoya University. The successful launch of this program opened the door for non-Japanese speakers to complete a full degree at Nagoya University⁵.

AO Recruitment Strategies and Activities

After Nagoya committed to recruiting international students overseas, the AO first set the short-term and long-term goals consistent with the overall mission of the University. One of the most important decisions was deciding where and how to meet the most promising pools of potential candidates. Although Nagoya University is well-known within Japan, the AO faced the hurdle of a lack of brand name reputation and awareness abroad. This was especially problematic in non-Asian countries.

¹ The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of, and should not be attributed to, Nagoya University.

² Noel-Levitz. (2011). *2011 Cost of recruiting an undergraduate student: Benchmarks for four-year and two-year institutions*. Coralville, Iowa. Author. Retrieved from: www.noellevitz.com/BenchmarkReports.

³ Mary E. Baxton. 2010. International Student Recruitment: Framing the Topic. 2010. The AACRAO International Guide: A Resource for International Education Professionals. Page 13.

⁴ Michinari Hamaguchi. Message from the President of Nagoya University. Retrieved from <http://www.nagoya-u.ac.jp/about-nu/president/index.html>

⁵ For more on the G30 program, please see Linley's report in the same volume.

A second problem was that the target audience of students, parents and schools tended to be unaware that it was possible to enter a Japanese university without Japanese language proficiency.

The initial goal then was to inform the right audiences about the newly launched international programs and study opportunities at Nagoya University. In other words, “branding”. After four years, however, the AO has shifted its attention somewhat towards maintaining established relationships and expanding its activities to university-wide recruiting such as by providing information about graduate and short-term exchange programs.

The AO typically divides its recruitment activities into three categories – armchair recruitment, domestic recruitment and overseas recruitment. Typical arrangements consist of high school visits; information sessions such as parent’s nights or small receptions; and participation in large-scale education fairs.

Armchair recruitment

Armchair recruitment is the most cost-effective means to recruit new students as it does not entail leaving the office. Rather it mainly involves providing information on the website, the use of social media and communicating through email and by telephone throughout the admission process. The AO office is sure to support students interested in Nagoya University at different stages: prospective applicant, applicant and admitted applicant. Students can detect the attitude of staff towards them in the “tone” and “voice” they use for communication. How they are treated is pivotal for students deciding which university to enroll. In this regard, the university or office needs guidelines for staff members. After a first encounter at a school visit or education fair a representative from the AO should continue communicating with the school and the prospective applicant in a timely manner. Despite what many may think, recruiting is not only traveling abroad, it is the overall impression a student receives when communicating with university representatives both face-to-face, via email, or by telephone. Using data collected at school visits and educa-

tion fairs, the AO can use a mass mailing or mail merge system to update and stay in contact with prospective applicants. Although armchair recruitment is the most cost-effective means to recruit new students and is part of the AO’s daily work it has many limitations as it does not generally involve face-to-face meetings.

Website and Social Media

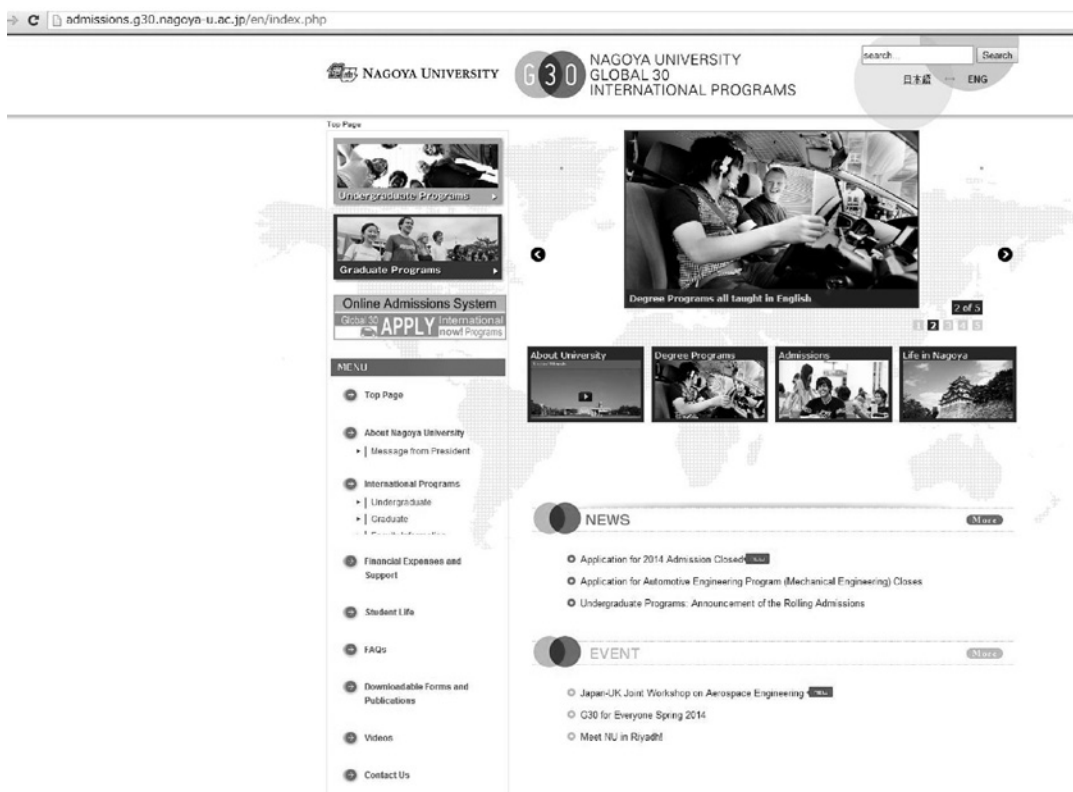
The Nagoya University or G30 Program website is the easiest way for a prospective applicant to contact the university. All information about the available programs must be visible and easy to find. The website should be easy to navigate and information should be found with a few clicks. The design, purpose and content should be clear and fit the overall idea and strategy of the University.

To build relations with prospective applicants and students prior to application and enrollment, the Admissions Office at Nagoya University added student voices and monthly newsletters to the website. Including current international students in recruitment activities is important because they provide a trustworthy and authentic voice.

Social media tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, especially when dealing with younger audiences, are an efficient way to reach prospective applicants worldwide. It was important to secure Nagoya University’s name for social media tools to avoid misuse of the name by external parties. Furthermore, when communicating with students in Asia, country specific media, such as *RenRen* in China, is used when possible.

PR materials

For all recruitment activities, information material such as brochures, flyers and other print matters are essential so need to be reviewed and updated each academic year. Information materials about Nagoya University include: Introduction to Nagoya and Nagoya University; programs offered and their syllabi; description of life at the University, including student voices; and other information on admissions, deadlines, student life, housing,



costs and financial support. The information should be easy to read and understand and needs to be tailored to a specific audience. Factors such as the prospective audience's age, background and likely interests have to be considered for content and design. For example, when promoting the G30 undergraduate programs, interested

parties are not only high school students, but also their parents and college counselors. This information must be easily available electronically on the website. During fairs and school visits the AO distributes university goods showing Nagoya University's name and website address. This includes items such as pens, folders or

bags with the Nagoya logo. Objects that students frequently use remind them of the name of the university. Goods with the name of a Japanese university tend to be especially popular with audiences.

Domestic recruitment

Domestic recruitment, also known as “backyard recruitment”, consist of visits to local international schools. The focus of the AO is on international schools offering the IB diploma curriculum and education fairs, which are mostly organized directly by the schools or a group of local international schools. Before choosing which school to visit or which fair to attend, it is important to confirm if the students of this school are eligible for the programs offered. Domestic recruitment can also include welcoming independent visitors, e.g. a possible applicant with or without parents, or groups, such as from high schools or universities, on-campus. This is known as “on-campus recruitment”. Through on-campus recruitment the visitors can see campus life first-hand and at the same time be informed about study opportunities. On-campus recruitment has the advantage that prospective applicants already will have some experience of life in Japan.

Overseas Recruitment

The questions “Which countries should Nagoya University target?” needs to be answered before starting to organize overseas recruitment. The following questions help to determine possible markets: Where are our current international students from? Where are the students likely to be interested in the programs we offer?

A recommended source to learn about the current trend in international student mobility is the Open Doors Report.⁶ The annual report shows data for the United States, but is helpful to understand in which countries students are eager to study abroad. But, we need to keep in mind that quantity does not equal quality. The

experience of the recruiter might be a more accurate source of information than just numbers. In some countries and at some schools, recruiters may meet 50-100 students but receive no applications. At other schools, we may meet a handful of students but all of them apply. The key factor, therefore, is not the number of students met, but rather their interest.

It is also important that before recruiting begins in earnest that you are sure that the university is prepared to welcome international students. This includes an easily understandable admission process, sufficient financial support such as scholarships and tuition waivers, student services and support, and housing facilities. It helps to understand the current situation of international students, their difficulties and troubles, and what can be improved. If the university does not provide a good infrastructure for international students, students might enroll, but not stay. Therefore, it is important to always keep in mind that recruitment does not stop with enrollment. The reputation of the university in providing a feeling of belonging for current students will often get back to prospective applicants. A high withdrawal rate or negative feedback that can be amplified using social media can damage a university’s reputation as a good place to study. A high retention rate is strong evidence of high quality education. Students are sensitive to how they are treated on campus and will make their voices heard if they think it is not acceptable.

School visits and information sessions

School visits (and information sessions) are directly organized by the AO. In general, a representative from Nagoya University visits selected high schools to meet with college counselors, interested students and sometimes invited parents. The advantage of school visits and information sessions is that it is easier to identify the audience and academic level of possible applicants.⁷ However, our experience shows that it is important to

⁶ “Institute of International Education. (2013). Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>”

⁷ This process is part of the enrollment management. Refer to: 2010. The AACRAO International Guide: A Resource for International Education Professionals. Page 13.

read the body language of your conversation partner. The AO representative needs to filter the information and apply a suitable tone depending on the background of the person they are talking to (country, age, position, etc.). Oversharing is not appreciated so a sense of tact is required to know when to close an information session. To maintain a good relationship with educators at the chosen high schools, e.g. counselors or Japanese teachers, visits should be repeated, preferably within a one year interval.

Education fairs

Education fairs have the advantage that the audience is broader and the university is able to meet candidates that might not initially be interested in studying in Japan. Rather they learn about the opportunities and advantages of studying at Nagoya on-site. As previously mentioned, the idea to study at a Japanese university in English is still a novelty and education fairs are perhaps the best platform to increase publicity. Meeting prospective applicants at their school or at an education fair can already provide valuable information for admissions officers, such as English language ability, personality and interest in coming to Japan in general and Nagoya University in particular. While most fairs provide excellent service and prospective applicants are sometimes literally delivered to our admissions officers, privately-organized fairs can be expensive.

Professional Conferences

Another opportunity to build relationships with college counselors and academic professionals is through professional association membership and conferences. The Nagoya University AO tends to participate in two major conferences per year focusing on recruitment and international admissions: the CIS Forum hosted by the Council of International Schools annual conference in Europe, and OACAC, the Overseas Association for College Admission Counseling annual conference in the

United States. These platforms allow our team to meet with international school college counselors and admission and recruitment professionals from universities world-wide. The conferences consist of first, seminars that teach recent topics in recruitment and international admissions, and second, a university and high school fair that allows counselors to exchange information and contacts.⁸

OACAC and CIS also offer group visits hosted by regional professionals to specific regions. They include visits to local and international schools in the area and networking sessions with local school counselors. Most school visits are organized as small education fairs.

How to promote Nagoya University

A well-trained recruiter or university representative has to know what differentiates Nagoya University from other education institutions as well as general information such as: which programs are available, university rankings, admission requirements, application deadlines, English language proficiency requirements, financial support and life on campus as well as the university vision, mission, goals, objectives and values. They must convey the message of the university in a polite, yet appropriate way. It is important to know that Nagoya may not be the best destination for all prospective applicants. University representatives should be personally involved in recruitment to build a good relationship between educators and the University. The representative is the face of the university and is able to build trust and a good relationship with the key people, especially college counselors. The representative should be able to easily answer the following two questions:

- What makes us attractive?
- What makes us different from other institutions?

Examples of positive attributes about Nagoya University are cost advantages, general recognition of the value of the degree, and students life. Many prospective students are especially interested in Japan and its culture. In this

⁸ At the 2013 CIS Forum, Nagoya University was part of the panel “Why not study in Japan?” with The University of Tokyo (chair) and Ritsumeikan University. Furthermore, at the OACAC conference in July 2014 Nagoya University (as chair) will be part of the panel: “Expand your horizons: English-taught degree programs in Asia” with Doshisha University and Yonsei University, Korea.

regard, Nagoya University aims to train representatives and equip each with the required tools.⁹

Is there a reason to rely on agents?

Some universities in the United States, United Kingdom or Australia rely on local agencies for promotion and the preliminary selection of their students in specific locations. Using agents can be a cost-efficient means to reach students in less-familiar societies. The advantages of agents include their specialized knowledge of the quality of schools and students and ability to speak local languages. This also means that university representatives do not have to travel to particular countries. The main difficulty of relying on agents, however, is in determining who can be trusted and who will be the best representatives of the university.

Before engaging with recruitment agents, Japanese universities can make use of their overseas offices. These are not only equipped with local knowledge but also have the advantage of being directly affiliated with the university. Well-trained staff at overseas offices help the AO to recruit appropriate students because their understanding of the university is better than among external actors. Local representation is a great help in the relationship with applicants and parents. This is especially the case in Asian countries where parents play a key role in the decision making process.

Conclusion: How does recruitment affect admissions?

Through recruitment and admissions Nagoya University can influence the make up of its student body, increase diversity, and decide the areas from which we wish to receive more applicants. The University can choose the academic level of high schools from which it wants to attract applicants and can also target those with Japanese language courses and/or a strong science track. Recruitment, as argued before, does not stop at the door step. Retention is a major challenge after accepting interna-

tional students into the University. Furthermore, it takes a long time to build relationships with good schools and high school counselors meaning that recruiters must take a long-term perspective. Quality applicants have many choices nowadays and the market for the best students in the world is highly competitive. Recruitment is the first step in attracting high quality students.

Despite preparation, travelers will always experience unforeseen difficulties when abroad. Recruitment is physically and mentally challenging because “office hours” are longer. Extensive traveling can affect health and well-being. Since particular attention to safety and health is important for certain travel locations, adequate research prior to traveling abroad is important.

Over the next few years, Nagoya University representatives will collect valuable country and school-specific information to be shared with future travelers. Trip reports, including evaluations of each visit, are essential for systematic planning and the organization of future trips.

Future plans at Nagoya University

Recruitment of international students is still in its early stages of development at Nagoya University. The university community should be open to new concepts and ideas to attract the highest quality international students. Some ideas currently being discussed at the AO include a virtual open day, a variety of summer programs for high school students, increased accessibility for a diverse range of university and high school students, counselor visits to Nagoya, information sessions in Japan and the development of a well-structured alumni network (the first batch of Global 30 undergraduate students will graduate in 2015). Many challenges await but what is certain is that recruitment will play a key role in Nagoya University’s continued internationalization.

⁹ 土井康裕. 2014. 学部向け国際プログラムのための海外での高校生リクルーティング—名古屋大学の経験を基に—. Yasuhiro Doi. 2014. Recruiting of high school students in abroad for international bachelor program: Based on Experiences of Nagoya University. ウェブマガジン「留学交流」 2014年6月号 Vol. 39. Page 19.