

[私の名前]: Letter of Intent

When I started living in the U.S., one of my dreams came true. However, the “honeymoon period” did not last long due to “identity crisis” that I experienced as I settled into this new culture. Growing up in Japan as an upper middle class Japanese (only during my childhood), I was in a privileged position. In addition, from elementary school to undergraduate school, I was one of the smartest students. However, in the U.S., I suddenly became a marginalized minority, something I had never experienced before. In my first semester of the master’s program at [私の修士の大学], I unexpectedly dropped to the “bottom” of every class, due to the language barrier. I struggled to make American friends, although in Japan it was easy for me to make friends.

All of these changes conflicted with my own identity, and as a result, negatively affected my health. However, my persistent, diligent, and aspirational personality did not allow me to give up. In fact, such plight led me to study intercultural friendship formation as well as to explore ways to promote development of intercultural friendships in my program. This is why I became an international liaison of my program’s graduate student organization, [組織の名前]. My job in this position is to provide important information that is relevant for international students and to encourage that might bridge the interests of American students and those of us from other countries. In order to achieve that goal, I hosted a “Cultural Exploration” colloquium, in which international students gave presentations about their home culture.

In my role of graduate teaching associate (GTA), I have been teaching three undergraduate public speaking classes every semester since August 2014. Several of my students have expressed an appreciation for having me as their instructor—a young, female, and person of color from a country very different from their own. This made me realize that adding diversity to

a faculty is very important and necessary. These experiences have inspired me to seek out new knowledge and education through a Ph.D. program. Specifically, I am interested in learning more about intercultural, interpersonal, and health communication, as well as the influence of social media and identity. My ultimate goal is to become a tenure track professor at a research one university. In order to achieve this goal, [出願している大学]'s Ph.D. program is the best option for me. How I developed this important goal is best described by going back to the roads I have traveled to arrive where I am now.

I earned my Bachelor's degree in English at [日本の大学], in [私の地元], Japan. Japan does not have Departments of Communication. However, I had a rare opportunity to be educated by professors that earned their Ph.D. degrees in Communication in the U.S. I was first inspired by the introductory communication course that I took with, the now deceased Dr. [教授の名前], who created [理論の名前] with Dr. [教授の名前]. Other inspirations included the interpersonal communication course with Dr. [教授の名前], who is a president of [組織の名前]. These courses motivated me to pursue a Master's degree in the U.S.

After attending the [語学学校] at [私の修士の大学] for a year to improve my English and to adjust to this new culture, I entered the Communication Master's program at [私の修士の大学] and was awarded a GTA position. I wanted to take intercultural communication, however, the professor that taught the seminar left the semester after I arrived, so the course was no longer offered. Thus, I instead focused on taking methods courses in order to better prepare myself for the Ph.D. program, and in such classes, I wrote about intercultural communication. So far, I have taken Ethnography with Dr. [教授の名前], Advanced Communication Theory with Dr. [教授の名前], and Quantitative Methods with Dr. [教授の名前], where I learned how to use the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). I rounded out my methodology training with

a rhetorical theory seminar. At present, I am furthering my methodology training by completing an independent study with [教授の名前], in which I am collecting data about intercultural friendship formation through Qualtrics. Last but not least, I chose to take the comprehensive exam option, rather than writing a thesis, in order to gain more thorough knowledge and fluency in communication theories, paradigms, and methodologies, before proceeding to Ph.D. degree. I believe the coursework that I have accomplished and will achieve at [私の修士の大学] prepares me well for the Ph.D. program. In addition, my teaching experience and writing sample demonstrate that my English ability is highly developed and proficient enough to pursue the Ph.D. degree as well as continue teaching through a GTA position.

As the next step to achieve the ultimate goal, first I would like to learn and create new knowledge from a critical perspective at [出願している大学]. I want to continue examining intercultural friendship formation as well as the negotiation of interpersonal cultural identities with Dr. [教授の名前]. Conducting research about intercultural friendship is something that I am passionate about because developing meaningful friendships is critical for international students like myself, yet this is exactly where many students struggle. Additionally, as a Japanese student from a very conservative and homogeneous region, I need to constantly negotiate my cultural identities in the U.S. The complexities of immersing and then thriving in another culture are fascinating to me.

Second, I would like to work with Dr. [教授の名前] to learn more about the embodiment of intersectionality, especially Japanese identity, when teaching and mentoring. My teaching experience at [私の修士の大学] has taught me that my intersectional identities and representation influences students' attitude toward me as their instructor, which is transferred to their perception toward the overall course, as well as their selection of speech topics. I realized

that I am not alone in recognizing these complexities. At the 2015 [学会] in Las Vegas, I attended a panel discussion titled “Mentoring, Faculty of Color, and Intersectionality: Rethinking Opportunities and Possibilities” where I learned that many people encounter similar situations as I have, and this motivated me even more focus on Ph.D. research in this area. I know that a teaching position at [出願している大学] would not only enhance my teaching expertise, but offer an opportunity to learn more about the range of communication complexities experienced by international students.

Last but not least, I would like to work with Dr. [教授の名前] in focusing on communication about family member's mental health issues. My [家族] suffers from [病名] and her illness has raised my awareness of communication among family members as they cope with the illness and try to support their loved one. I hope my research will shed light on the stigmatized issue and offer insight into family communication, support, and mental illness.

I hope that I have effectively communicated my determination to pursue the Ph.D. degree, and will be able to obtain acceptance as well as financial aid and a teaching or research assistant position because I do not have private funding. I believe that I am capable of accomplishing my goals because of my knowledge, skills, and experiences. Meeting and talking with professors and students at [出願している大学], and also listening to their presentation at [学会] informed me of the program's excellence and diversity, which will assist my intercultural research.