

FSM Graduate student excels at Sophia University

The Association for Promotion of International Cooperation (APIC),

TOKYO – A graduate student from Kosrae in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) was recently recognized for having one of the top academic records in the Sophia University in Japan. Ms. Tamae Waguk, who is attending Sophia University on an APIC-MCT International Student Scholarship, overcame significant odds when she got stuck on Kosrae because of the novel Coronavirus pandemic and couldn't return to Tokyo. Tamae finished her thesis and completed her final semester despite having to write her thesis in the yard outside of her home so as to not disturb her family, with the light of her laptop screen attracting swarms of mosquitoes. She completed her final year at Sophia with a Grade Point Average of 3.93, with 4.0 being only A grades.

“For Tamae to complete her written thesis in Kosrae was indeed challenging. As all islanders know, Internet access is not stable and often her ability to download academic papers and do work online depended on the weather, specifically because her home depends on solar power. That isn't something students have to struggle with when doing their studies in Japan,” said Professor Anne McDonald, a senior faculty member in the Graduate School of Environmental Studies at Sophia University.

“We are thrilled – but not surprised – by Tamae's outstanding academic performance in Tokyo,” added Executive Director William Kostka of the Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT), which is based in Pohnpei, FSM. MCT and the Tokyo-based private foundation The Association for Promotion of International Cooperation (APIC), partner with Sophia University to award two annual full-ride

graduate scholarships in Environmental Studies at Sophia.

“Our goal in sponsoring this scholarship is to train Micronesians to lead their fight on the climate change front. Tamae is showing us how that's done.” added Ambassador Peter Yoshiyasu Sato, president of APIC. APIC's mission is to strengthen Japan's relations with the nations of the Pacific and Caribbean. This is the fourth year that the APIC-MCT International Student Scholarship is being offered.

Waguk, who graduated from Sophia University this month, is scheduled to start work in September in Kosrae as a Technical Officer with the FSM Ridge to Reef project. She also earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Guam in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance and Economics. She also studied at the College of Micronesia-FSM.

Waguk is following in the footsteps of her late father, Erick Waguk, a well-known forestry expert on Kosrae. He died shortly before his daughter began her studies in Japan, Tamae Waguk used many of her father's books, research papers and field notes to write her thesis.

The Micronesia Conservation Trust, headquartered in Pohnpei, supports biodiversity conservation and related sustainable development in the region comprised of the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, U.S. territory of Guam and U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The MCT's Bill Raynor Micronesia Challenge (BRMC) Scholarship Program also supports graduate students selected for this initiative. One of the first Micronesia graduates of the Sophia program, Ms. Bertha Reyuw, now serves as MCT's Capacity Building Program Manager and oversees this scholarship program for MCT.

Sophia University is considered one of the top research universities in Japan. It was founded in 1913 by the Roman Catholic order The Society of Jesus, better know as the Jesuits. About 14,000 students attend undergraduate and graduate programs at the university, which is located in central Tokyo.



Ms. Tamae Waguk

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