



## NEWS RELEASE

*Bringing the World to Montana and Montana to the World*

For Immediate Release  
April 12, 2019

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### **25 Students and Teachers from Sentinel and Gardiner High Schools Awarded an All-Expenses Paid Trip to Japan as Guests of the Japanese Government. The Montana World Affairs Council Announces Award by the Japanese Consul General in Seattle**

Missoula, Montana --- The top two winning high schools in the Montana World Affairs Council's annual Academic WorldQuest competition have been selected to participate in a Japanese exchange program this summer. Twelve students from Gardiner High and 11 students from Sentinel High as well as their advisors will travel to Japan as guests of the Japanese government to participate in an initiative called the **KAKEHASHI Project**.

The Montana World Affairs Council held its 2019 Academic WorldQuest competition on March 4-5, drawing 279 students from 30 schools across Montana. Academic WorldQuest™ is a flagship education program of the World Affairs Councils of America. At the start of the school year, WACA provides member Councils including Montana WAC with an Academic WorldQuest™ Study Guide and Topics for their city and state-wide local competitions. The program is a fun, friendly, and powerful way for high school students to learn about international affairs.

The 25 students and their advisors from Montana who were chosen for the KAKEHASHI Project will spend a week in Japan. The Consul General of Japan in Seattle nominated the Gardiner and Sentinel students. Japan's 16 Consulates in the U.S. competed for 11 spots and Montana won one of the coveted spots. "This past March," according to Montana WAC executive director Janet Rose, "the Council welcomed a large Japanese delegation to Missoula, and they had an opportunity to see our global education programs in action. This collaboration really helped to solidify our relationship, between the Council and Japan. The Mansfield Center at the University also played a key role, helping the Council to arrange our "Student to Student Global Conversations," which this year, enabled our Montana students to speak live and in real time with students in Japan."

The Japan Foundation presents the "KAKEHASHI Project – The Bridge for Tomorrow" as part of its Youth Exchange Program with North America promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA). The KAKEHASHI Project mission is to raise interest in Japan and increase the number of overseas visitors to the country, as well as enhance international understanding of the "Japan brand" and the nation's values. The objective of this youth exchange project is to promote a deeper mutual understanding among the people of Japan and the United States, enable future leaders of Japan-U.S. exchanges to form networks and to help young people develop wider perspectives about the world around them and about Japanese culture.

"As someone who lived and worked in Japan as both an English teacher and a professional journalist for more than a decade, this opportunity for Montana students is priceless," said Bill Clifford, President and CEO of the World Affairs Councils of America. "WACA was delighted to include Japan-U.S. Relations as a topic of study for students across the country participating in our 2018-2019 Academic WorldQuest™ program."

Montana WAC will be represented by Gardiner High School at WACA's Carlos and Malú Alvarez Academic WorldQuest National Competition this April 26-27 in Washington, DC. Nearly 50 winning teams from schools in more than 25 states, including Alaska and Hawaii, will participate in the national championship.

The Montana World Affairs Council is proud that its 15<sup>th</sup> annual Academic WorldQuest program - underwritten in large part by The Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation - continues to be one of the largest in the WACA nationwide network.

The Council's mission is to bring the world to Montana and Montana to the world. Founded in the year 2000 by former Ambassador Mark Johnson, a Great Falls native who served in the diplomatic corps for many years, the Council is a not for profit, non-partisan organization. Global education initiatives for Montana students is one of its core goals and it provides global affairs programming to communities and schools statewide across Montana.



The Government of Japan previously sponsored two KAKEHASHI Project exchanges for Montana, one in 2017 and one in 2018, coordinated by the Mansfield Center for University of Montana students. This year's sponsored trip marks the first time involving high school students, Academic WorldQuest, and the Montana World Affairs Council.

#### Mission Statement

The Montana World Affairs Council is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering global awareness and understanding in Montana's classrooms and communities.

#### Our Purpose

Bringing the world to Montana and Montana to the world

To learn more about MWAC, please visit [www.montanaworldaffairs.org](http://www.montanaworldaffairs.org)  
406.728.3328

To learn more about the World Affairs Councils of America (WACA) and Academic WorldQuest™,  
please visit [www.worldaffairsCouncils.org](http://www.worldaffairsCouncils.org)  
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