

Formal Response to the Student Proposal from the University

2024.3.27

■ Foreword

The Student Voices Project's Proposal to the University contains many wide-ranging and profound suggestions for improvements to academics and student life at APU. We extend our sincere appreciation to all project members for the serious thought and action they put into this project to enhance students' experiences both in their studies and in their daily lives.

The recommendations put forth in the proposal have been examined by the relevant divisions within the University. Recommendations related to facilities have been addressed by the Administration Office while concerning classes and academics have been discussed by the Division of Academic Affairs. Student life-related recommendations were examined by the Division of Student Affairs, and matters concerning the cafeteria have been handled by the APU Co-op. Furthermore, recommendations involving multiple divisions have been deliberated upon individually within each administrative office and subsequently consolidated. We hope that each member of the APU community will carefully review this document and contribute towards laying the groundwork for an enhanced university environment.

■ Outline of initiatives in AY 2023

(1) Collection of Student Opinions

- I. Collection Period: June 8th, 2023 (Thursday) - September 20th, 2023 (Wednesday)
- II. Target: All students (Undergraduate and Graduate students)
- III. Collection Method: Posting on Moodle's "Open Forum"
- IV. Submission Categories: Student life, regular classes, extracurricular activities, facilities and equipment, administrative affairs (office-related), future plans and employment, domestic and international exchange, learning support, seminars and research, entrance examinations
- V. Advertising Method: Campus Terminal, posters displayed around campus, announcement on Moodle
- VI. Number of Posts: 147 posts
- VII. Breakdown of Post Content (details attached): Facilities and equipment 51 posts, student life 42 posts, regular classes 26 posts, extracurricular activities 10 posts, entrance examinations 9 posts, domestic and international exchange 3 posts, future plans and employment 3 posts, learning support 2 posts, administrative affairs (office-related) 1 post, seminars and research 0 posts

(2) Recruitment and Activities of Project Students

- I. Recruitment Period: October 17th (Tuesday) - October 22th (Sunday)
- II. Recruitment Guidance: October 18th (Wednesday)
- III. Document Screening: October 23rd (Monday) - October 25th (Wednesday)
- IV. Interview Evaluation: October 30th (Monday) ~ November 1st (Wednesday)
- V. Announcement of Results: November 6th (Monday)
- VI. Number of Recruits: 5 individuals (APM 3rd year student from Uzbekistan, APS 3rd year student from Vietnam, APM 4th year student from Indonesia, APM 3rd year student from Bangladesh, APM 2nd year student from Japan)

■ Subject Headings from the Student Proposal to the University with Relevant Divisions

1. Increasing transparency in the scholarship criteria on APU website	Division of Student Affairs: Student Office
2. Allowing APU Zoom Account to be accessed for non-APU attendees	Division of Academic Affairs: Academic Office
3. Addressing Cafeteria Food Quality and Price	Administration Office
4. Enhancing Oita Kotsu Bus Services for APU	Administration Office
5. Increasing the financial support for Off-campus Study Programs	Division of Student Affairs: Student Office
6. Enhancing study experience in opposite language-based classes	Division of Academic Affairs: Academic Office
7. Increasing the number of water dispensers around APU campus	Administration Office

■ Response from the University to the Proposals

The university's response to each proposal is recorded here.

Proposal 1 Increasing Transparency in the Scholarship Criteria on APU Website

【Problem Statement from Students】

Concerns regarding transparency surround the awarding of tuition reduction scholarships at APU. Many students find themselves baffled about the criteria used to select recipients, sparking confusion and frustration. This opacity can be particularly disheartening for high-achieving students who may perceive that peers with seemingly lesser accomplishments receive more significant financial aid.

【Solution Proposal from Students】

To address this issue, we propose implementing a comprehensive and readily accessible explanation on the dedicated tuition reduction scholarship webpage. This document should clearly outline the factors considered in the selection process, such as financial need, academic merit, extracurricular involvement and achievements, and diversity considerations (e.g., ethnic/cultural backgrounds). By demystifying the scholarship selection process, APU can foster a sense of fairness and trust among its student body, encouraging high-achieving students to continue striving for excellence while providing much-needed assistance to those most in need.

Response

Efforts are underway, in collaboration with the Admissions Office, to enhance the clarity of explanations on the website. APU offers a tuition reduction system targeting outstanding international student that concurrently evaluates

applicants for financial support alongside admission decisions. Details regarding this system are outlined on the Admissions Office's website, indicating a comprehensive assessment based on (1) submitted documents, (2) performance in interviews, and (3) online assessments. Among the submitted documents are evidence of language proficiency, high school grades, scores from standardized tests in respective countries, essays, evidence of extracurricular activities, as well as the income and asset status of financial supporters, therefore considering not only academic and personal qualities but also financial circumstances. Consequently, the reduction rate of scholarships may not necessarily align with high academic achievements or extensive extracurricular activities. However, applicants with high evaluations in areas other than financial standing generally obtain scholarships with high reduction rates. Additionally, regarding the JASSO Scholarship (Monbukagakusho Honors Scholarship for Privately-Financed International Students), universities are notified by JASSO of the number of recipients per university based on the number of entrants, and APU recommends candidates to JASSO in order of their evaluation scores at the time of admission.

Proposal 2 Allowing APU Zoom Account to Be Accessed for Non-APU Attendees

【Problem Statement from Students】

Currently, the APU Zoom account restricts access to university-affiliated individuals, preventing non-APU attendees from joining meetings hosted under this account. This limitation poses a significant obstacle for student organizations that rely on Zoom for various activities, including but not limited to:

- Hosting guest lectures and workshops from outside APU
- Organizing collaborative projects and events internationally
- Connecting with alumni and international communities

【Solution Proposal from Students】

Opening APU Zoom to non-APU attendees would remove technical hurdles and financial burdens for student organizations, enabling them to host inclusive events with global reach and diverse perspectives. This would significantly enrich the educational experience for all participants and showcase APU's commitment to internationalization.

Response

At the beginning of the 2020 spring semester when online classes commenced, measures were implemented to restrict access to university-related personnel only to prevent potential disruptions caused by unauthorized access from external sources. Subsequently, as classes involving non-APU students commenced, access for external parties has been permitted since November 2023. Therefore, as of February 2024, operations are being conducted as proposed. While enabling access for external parties may enhance convenience, heightened awareness regarding ethics, privacy protection, and security measures is imperative. We urge all students to have a deep understanding of IT literacy and to seek assistance from the Information Systems Office located on the 3rd floor of Building D if they have any concerns.

Proposal 3 Addressing Cafeteria Food Quality and Price

【Problem Statement from Students】

The current cafeteria menu offerings demonstrate a concerning lack of inclusivity, evidenced by insufficient vegetarian and vegan options. This is further compounded by a recent price increase that stands in stark contrast to the declining quality and quantity of food provided. For instance, Thai curry has been stated to have a decrease in taste quality, the unavailability of Nasu (Eggplant), and the increase in the price of the fried chicken.

Surveys conducted both through Moodle and on social media platforms indicate widespread dissatisfaction with the current state of the cafeteria, highlighting this situation as a critical issue demanding immediate and effective solutions.

Notably, similar concerns were raised in the 2021 Student Voices Project, underscoring the persistent nature of this challenge.

【Solution Proposal from Students】

- Introducing teishoku (set meals): These pre-assembled meal combinations offer convenience and value, catering to student preferences for varied and balanced lunches.
- Expanding vegan and vegetarian options: By incorporating plant-based dishes into the menu, APU can cater to dietary restrictions and ethical preferences, fostering a more inclusive dining environment.
- Enhancing the variety of food items: Offering a wider selection of dishes can further satisfy student desires and encourage them to explore diverse culinary options.

Response

As a university, we are committed to advocating for improvements in the dining environment to meet the diverse needs of students. We recognize the significant role played by the Co-op in providing meals to students, faculty, and staff, and the high expectations for diverse menu offerings catering to vegetarians, vegans, and others.

Despite recent inflationary pressures, the Co-op is actively striving to maintain low prices, including initiatives such as the 100-yen breakfast program. Additionally, in the AY2023, set meals have been offered as a trial after 4:00 PM, and starting from the AY2024, set meals will be officially introduced during this period. Furthermore, efforts are being made to introduce menu items such as soy meat, vegan pancakes, and Halal-compliant options.

Proposal 4 Enhancing Oita Kotsu Bus Services for APU

【Problem Statement from Students】

The current state of Oita Kotsu bus services, particularly bus numbers 50 and 51 (with a specific focus on route 50), has become a significant source of concern for the APU community. Our Student Voices Project gathered extensive data through surveys conducted on social media platforms and Moodle. The findings raise substantial concerns.

【Solution Proposal from Students】

To effectively address the transportation challenges experienced by the APU community, the following strategic

changes are proposed:

- **Increased Bus Frequency:** During peak hours, the number of buses operating on routes 50 and 51, particularly for Periods 1, 2, 5, and 6, should be doubled. For example, if there are currently two buses at 9 AM, increasing this to four would significantly reduce overcrowding and waiting times.
- **Upgraded Bus Capacity:** Consider replacing smaller buses with larger-capacity vehicles, especially during peak hours, to further alleviate overcrowding and improve passenger comfort.

Response

We understand the significant role that Oita Kotsu buses play in the daily commute of students. Therefore, the university regularly monitors boarding and alighting conditions and engages in discussions to address any issues, striving for improvements.

As students are surely aware, there is a nationwide shortage of bus drivers. We therefore ask for understanding as Oita Kotsu faces this issue.

Due to operational challenges such as securing drivers and arranging new vehicles to increase bus frequency or introduce larger buses, it may not be immediately feasible to meet all requests. Nonetheless, we are committed to ongoing discussions aimed at improvement.

Proposal 5 Increasing the Financial Support for Off-Campus Programs

【Problem Statement from Students】

Despite offering a rich selection of off-campus study programs, including diverse overseas exchange options (both short-term and long-term), APU faces a critical challenge: financial barriers impede student participation in these immersive cultural experiences. Survey data gathered through the Moodle forum and dedicated surveys paints a clear picture.

【Solution Proposal from Students】

To encourage student participation in off-campus programs and enrich their multicultural experiences, we propose the following solutions based on survey results addressing the budget constraints:

- **Merit-based Scholarships:** Establish scholarships specifically for off-campus programs, awarded based on academic merit (e.g., GPA) and relevant extracurricular involvement. The survey revealed that 100% of respondents perceive such scholarships as somewhat necessary, necessary, or even very necessary. By recognizing deserving students with financial support, APU can directly address a major barrier to participation.
- **Dedicated Off-Campus Program Fund:** Establish a dedicated fund to provide targeted financial support for students participating in off-campus programs. This fund could offer non-repayable grants or special interest-free loans to students with demonstrated financial need, such as those from low-income families. The survey result indicating that 93.4% of respondents support this concept underlines the strong demand for such a program.

Response

Since its establishment, APU has set a high goal of realizing a true global university by enrolling 50% of its students as international students, creating an unparalleled multicultural environment in Japanese universities. To foster a global

learning community on campus, we have enhanced scholarships for international students, particularly those selected for tuition reduction upon admission, and have welcomed students from 163 countries and regions. These scholarships, which provide crucial financial support for many international students, constitute a significant portion of the university's scholarship budget, and their importance has increased even more after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, scholarships to support participation in Off-campus Study Programs and similar initiatives are currently not available due to considerations such as overall budget constraints and priorities in university policies. As of now, students seeking financial assistance to participate in Off-campus Study Programs must individually apply for external scholarships. The university is committed to ensuring that more students can participate in Off-campus Study Programs by guaranteeing learning outcomes while minimizing unnecessary expenses, setting the cost as low as possible and providing guidance on available external scholarships as appropriate.

While the university understands that there is a certain demand for the establishment of scholarships for Off-campus Study Programs, it must be recognized that immediate budgetary accommodation for scholarships is challenging, and the creation of a standalone fund would require an initial capital of over 100 million yen as a guideline. Therefore, further deliberation on the source of scholarship funds and support details is deemed necessary for its realization. Furthermore, from the perspective of simplifying and streamlining scholarship administration, scholarships at the university are generally provided as non-repayable grants, and loan-based scholarships requiring repayment are not pursued as a policy.

Proposal 6 Enhancing Study Experience in Opposite Language-Based Classes

【Problem Statement from Student】

Registering for classes taught in opposite languages has occurred commonly on the APU campus due to the high demand for required credits, especially for Japanese-basis students. The prevalence of Japanese-basis students in English-basis classes, often before attaining sufficient English proficiency, hinders their academic performance in collaborative activities and assignments. The situation has led to an issue regarding the comprehensive learning and academic performance of students.

【Solution Proposal from Students】

To improve student learning in opposite-language-basis courses, we propose enhancements to course curriculum information: Include Language Level Recommendations: Alongside the existing "Language Basis" information (E, J, and E/Js), integrate a complementary "Language Level Recommendation" section in all semester timetables. This recommendation will guide students in selecting courses that match their actual language proficiency levels, based on APU's standardized language class levels. For instance, English-basis students who have completed Japanese Intermediate could be recommended for Japanese-basis courses requiring "Japanese Foundation 3" or higher, or even courses at the "Japanese Intermediate" level itself. To ensure accessibility, this information should be included in both the semester timetables and the course syllabus on Campus Terminal.

Response

Within the Division of Academic Affairs, there is ongoing examination and discussion regarding the merits and drawbacks

of Japanese-based students obtaining over 20 credits in a foreign language, assessing the educational outcomes. Regarding the overarching framework for organizing courses in foreign languages, we plan to reassess the direction after the AY 2027. As for the proposal to display a "language proficiency level" for each subject, careful consideration is required to align with the preferences of professors in charge of the classes and the overall curriculum of the faculty in order to determine how to implement it effectively. While this requires thorough consideration, it is seen as a possible solution and an idea worth exploring. While it may be challenging to implement this as of April 2024, we appreciate the suggestion and intend to engage in discussions with the Division of Academic Affairs, various departments, and centers starting from the academic year 2024 onwards.

Proposal 7 Increasing the Number of Water Dispensers Around APU Campus

【Problem Statement from Student】

Currently, water dispensers are installed in only three buildings - D, E, and F - at APU. In contrast, water dispensers are not installed in the other four buildings - B, FII, H, and J. In particular, since FII and J buildings where many lectures are held do not have water dispensers, long lines often form at the water dispenser in F building during class breaks. There are two water dispensers in F building, but only one of them can fill bottles. Therefore, the number is significantly insufficient compared to the student population.

【Solution Proposal from Students】

- Install additional dispensers in FII and J buildings: Meet high student demand by adding dispensers in FII and J buildings.
- Even distribution across all buildings: Install dispensers in currently unequipped buildings B, FII, H, and J to expand accessibility. Prioritize FII and J buildings.
- Increase bottle-refill dispensers: Add more bottle-refill dispensers considering around 80% of students carry personal bottles.
- Introduce hot water dispensers: Introduce dispensers that provide hot water, not just cold water, to meet demand.
- Consider installation in AP House: Consider installing dispensers in AP House, which many respondents selected under "other."

Response

At the APU campus, water dispensers are currently installed only in buildings D, E, and F. While we have conducted inspections regarding the installation and usage of these water dispensers in response to the recommendation, we were unable to confirm the existence of situations with a line at the water dispensers as suggested due to the winter season. However, considering that approximately 80% of students carry their own water bottles, we acknowledge the need to consider the installation of additional water dispensers. Furthermore, in order to install water dispensers, careful consideration is required regarding the location as it involves the installation of water and drainage pipes. Therefore, we will proactively proceed with investigations into the installation of water dispensers, prioritizing classroom buildings in the budget for the next fiscal year.