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‘Quality international experience’ remains as ‘magical’ school grows

Dean Wilson sets new course at Temple University

Name: Matthew Wilson
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Hometown: Salt Lake City
Years in Japan: 15

Leaders & Readers

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A little after 3 in the afternoon, the lobby of Temple University Japan’s campus in Sengenjaya was buzzing with activity. Minutes earlier, a class period had ended, and now chatter and footsteps filled the previously empty air. The lobby was at that moment also the location of the photo shoot of TUJ’s dean and president, Matthew J. Wilson, for this article. Students crossed in front and behind. It was not happening.

Instead of asking students to wait a minute or change routes, Wilson, with variations of “Keep going guys, you’re good,” ushered them through. He fist-pumped some and advised others, “Just ignore me.” But at least one student could not. He walked through the shot a second time — just to be in it: “I



“Work days are long, but it’s really the students that keep me going” COSUFI

came back, I wanna take a picture with you.” And his dean, of course, posed for a picture with him.

Wilson, who took over as the head of TUJ in midpandemic in 2020, is the first to point out that his style of guiding the more than 1,800-strong student body is not usual.

“Yesterday, I ordered 1,100 sandwiches from Subway. And so from 11:30 to about 1:45, I was downstairs with my team and we were wrapping Subway sandwiches and handing them out to students and telling them how much we appreciate them being here,” Wilson said.

That was a Dean’s De-Stress Day, which happens once a month while school is in session. He plays basketball with students and employees, and along with his wife recently took a group of 40 students on a trip to the hot spring resort town of Hakone.

A lawyer-turned-professor before becoming an administrator, Wilson is driven in his unusual leadership style by one thing: “a service mindset, always.” It was service that first brought him to Japan in 1989, and service to his alma mater that brought him back to Temple after a 10-year break.

He came to Japan for the first time as an 18-year-old. “I volunteered to do a service mission for my church, for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” he said. “And you don’t get to choose where you go. You just volunteer to do missionary work. The church doesn’t pay you. So I submitted my application, and the church wrote back and they said, “We want you to go to Hokkaido, Japan.”

On deciding to return to Temple after COVID hit, he said: “I was like, where can I make the biggest difference right now in the

middle of COVID? It’s going to be a really difficult time for my alma mater in a place that I love so much, with the border being closed, so much uncertainty, who knows what’s going to happen to international education. And so really, it was kind of the heartstrings more than anything, wanting to help out.”

Wilson’s path to his unusual leadership style is itself not typical — he knew from the age of 3 that he wanted to be a lawyer and a teacher. The search in his 3-year-old mind for a profession started after he proudly declared to his mother that he wanted to be a fire hydrant. Firefighter, she corrected, and pointed out that it was a dangerous job. It was during a conversation with a neighbor on one of his typical Sunday afternoon strolls to houses in his neighborhood that Wilson hit upon the career he would pursue.

“Alice was a widow, and she loved me coming [to her house]. And I distinctly remember having a conversation with Alice of ‘Hey, Alice, I’m trying to figure out what I should be when I grow up.’ And I’m like, ‘What do you think that I should do?’ And Alice, she thought about it and she’s like, ‘Let’s think, what are you good at?’ And I’m like, ‘I don’t know, what am I good at?’ And she said, “You’re really good at talking.”

She narrowed down the talking jobs to three: politician, teacher and lawyer. And so began his lifelong quest to become a lawyer because he could help people. In motivational speeches today, Wilson tells the Alice story.

“I kind of use that as a springboard of, you know, finding your strengths. If you don’t know what they are, ask people about it, trying to find guidance and direction. I grew up with the mission to become a lawyer,



COSUFI

and I did.”

Wilson’s unexpected trip to Japan made him decide on becoming an international lawyer. That also led him to studying Japanese, which became an important tool. In addition to working for law firms and corporations on cases involving Japanese interests, Wilson has been a legal consultant in Japan. One of his cases, he recalled, involved U.S. and Japanese beverage companies that had a dispute over, “I gotta be really careful when I say this, a frozen ship-load of orange juice.”

While he looks back at his legal career

with fondness, he doesn’t practice any more. In the last few years, he has led a string of turnarounds at universities in the U.S., and before that headed up law schools at several institutions.

As with many other universities, travel restrictions during COVID hit Temple hard. The school aims to pull students from all over the world to get an American degree in English in Japan, or simply to study abroad. Now, with borders reopened, Wilson is looking forward to a rebound.

Nevertheless, the pandemic provided the gifts of telework and online classes. Office

Missionary, lawyer, college president

Born in 1970 in Salt Lake City, Utah, Matthew Wilson lived on the same street as “Grandpa and Grandma Osmond,” the grandparents of brother-sister entertainers Donny and Marie Osmond. He grew up in the Mormon church, and after returning from a service mission to Hokkaido attended Sunday services held in Japanese. He met his wife, a Japanese, through a mutual friend from church. He has degrees in political science and Asian studies (Japanese minor) from the University of Utah. He also holds a law degree from Temple University, where he took a rare one-year leave of absence to participate in an international jury trial in Salpain.

From 2013 to 2018, he was president of the University of Akron in Ohio, and led Missouri Western State University from 2019 to 2020. His roles at TUJ from 2003 to 2009 included general counsel, director of the law program and senior associate dean. He returned to TUJ in 2020 to oversee and lead the Japan campus.

spaces have been converted to classrooms, and students now have the flexibility of mixing online and in-person classes. Going forward, Wilson aims to continue with a reinforcement of TUJ’s core commitments.

“More than anything, a quality international experience,” he said. “One of the magical things about here is we’ve got students from 67 different countries. So priority No. 1 is putting students first and providing them with that quality international experience. We’ve got an interesting balance. It’s about 40% Japanese, 40% American and 20% from those 65 different countries. Part two is giving more people the opportunity to study right, and so we’re at 1,850 undergraduate students... an all-time high. Before COVID, it was probably around 1,200 students. I anticipate that we’ll go over 2,000 probably in the fall. And then making sure that our classes stay small.”



Times Gallery



A delegation of Brazilian legislators with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Takeji Shunsuke in Tokyo Bay on March 22. They traveled to Japan as part of the exchange program Juntos!, and also visited Saitama, Fukushima and Hamamatsu. EMBASSY OF BRAZIL



Panama’s Ambassador Carlos Pere meets with Shingo Torii, chairperson of the Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, on March 3. They exchanged views on the possibility of future cooperation between Panama and Japan. EMBASSY OF PANAMA



A certificate of gratitude is presented to Nobuo Kishi, former minister of defense and chairman of the Parliamentary Friendship Association Japan-Tunisia. From left: State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kenji Yamada; Hiroaki Tabata of the friendship association; Tunisian Ambassador Mohamed Elloumi; and Rep. Shintaro Ito. EMBASSY OF TUNISIA/ ©MIKI OSHITA



Serbian Ambassador Aleksandra Kovac (center, in black) with Serbian mezzo-soprano Jelena Koncar and accompanying Japanese artists during a concert at Akasaka Kumin Hall on April 12. EMBASSY OF SERBIA



The Embassy of Bangladesh held a reception to celebrate the 52nd Anniversary of Independence and National Day of Bangladesh on March 27. Ambassador Shahabuddin Ahmed hoped for further strengthening of the friendly relations with Japan. EMBASSY OF BANGLADESH



Hiroyuki Hosoda, speaker of the House of Representatives, joins Irish Minister of State Jack Chambers (left) and Ambassador Damien Cole at the Embassy of Ireland’s St. Patrick’s Day reception in Tokyo. EMBASSY OF IRELAND



Cuban Ambassador Miguel Ramirez (in the back) joins his wife and colleagues in the Latin American diplomatic corps to enjoy a presentation by Cuban cigar roller Ronald Rubio Morales, together with the secretary-general for the LDP in the House of Councilors, Hiroshige Seko (center). EMBASSY OF CUBA



Anita Nagy, director of the Liszt Institute Hungarian Cultural Center, and guests at the new exhibition introducing the Veszprem-Bakony-Balaton region, the European Capital of Culture in 2023. EMBASSY OF HUNGARY

Time to raise renewable targets, create meaningful carbon pricing

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KAE TAKASE
RENEWABLE ENERGY INSTITUTE

“We might have to move factories in Japan to where renewable electricity is available, if this situation of less renewables continues,” a major Japanese company recently commented. Many major financial institutions have promised financing and investment toward realizing net-zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050. Companies need to be in line with global standards for achieving net-zero emissions from their entire value chain if they want to attract financing and investment. As of April 2023, the Net-Zero Banking Alliance, which includes Japan’s three megabanks, represents 41% of World Bank assets. If companies do not aim for net-zero emissions, the day is coming when they will no longer be chosen for financing and investment.

Offsetting is not a solution for achieving net zero. A high-level U.N. expert group on net-zero commitments by nonstate actors has stated that “real” emissions reductions — that limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and have no or only minor overshoots — are essential. Companies must capture and store any residual emissions that cannot be reduced by following a rigorous pathway toward the 1.5-degree goal. The Science Based Targets initiative has stated that for many companies, following the pathway means reducing over 90% emissions by 2050.

Companies have no choice but to focus on energy efficiency and renewable energy. In terms of energy efficiency, Japan has world-renowned heat pump technology. However, reducing emissions by 90% through energy efficiency alone is difficult. It is clear that increasing renewable energy is necessary.

Japan has around 22% of its electricity generated from renewable sources. It is at the same level as the U.S. but far behind Germany, the U.K. and Italy, which together had a 42% ratio in 2021. Most G7 countries either have committed to decarbonizing electricity generation by 2035 or have ambitious targets for 2030 or 2035. Japan’s 2030 target for renewable electricity remains at 36% to 38%. This needs to be increased to prevent factories from going out of Japan to seek affordable and abundant renewable energy.

Renewable electricity is a basis for produc-

ing “green” hydrogen and ammonia, which the Japanese government has placed an emphasis on in its Basic Plan for green transformation (GX). If we want to achieve a zero-carbon footprint, it is essential that low-cost renewable energy be widely available. Some may think that applying carbon capture and storage (CCS) to the process of producing ammonia or hydrogen is the answer, but the cost would be enormous. According to an estimate by BloombergNEF, CCS-equipped ammonia power generation will be twice as expensive as solar power generation that incorporates battery storage by 2030. We also need to remember that storage facilities need to monitor for a long time in order to ensure the effectiveness of CCS.

So, how much can Japan expand its current 20% renewable energy share by 2035? The latest estimate by the Renewable Energy Institute shows that it is possible to achieve 80% by then. However, this would require a threefold increase in renewable energy generation, and many other G7 countries are striving for even faster adoption rates. This has become a competition to see which country can supply renewable energy the least expensively and in the greatest quantity. It is time for Japan to take action and raise its renewable energy targets.

Carbon pricing is essential for faster decarbonization. When carbon emissions come at a cost, reducing them can generate economic benefits. With a sufficiently high carbon price, renewable energy becomes more economically viable and gains momentum. In Europe, some countries impose high levels of carbon tax in addition to emissions trading at prices exceeding €100 (\$110) per ton. A high carbon price means that reducing emissions becomes economically viable, and the maturation of decarbonization technology accelerates.

In Japan, 477 companies have joined the Science Based Targets initiative, which is well known as offering the world’s most credible criteria for assessing companies’ climate targets, and 407 companies, including Toyota, Nissan, Kyushu Electric Power, Hitachi, Sony, Sumitomo Chemical and Fujitsu, have been approved as having targets that are aligned with the Paris Agreement.

On April 12, before the G7 ministers’ meeting on energy and the environment in Sapporo, over 300 actors, including 225 companies, signed onto a message demanding



JCI co-chairs presenting the message, the number of endorsements and comments by the endorsers at a press conference. JCI

the faster introduction of meaningful carbon pricing in Japan, and of course increases in Japan’s renewable energy targets, facilitated by Japan Climate Initiative (JCI).

JCI is the largest alliance of non-state actors for climate action in Japan. As of April 6, 2023, 768 actors had participated in the JCI, which is jointly administered by the Renewable Energy Institute, WWF Japan and CDP Japan. The message gathered voices by JCI members prior to Japan’s hosting of the G7 summit. Among the 303 actors endorsing it were Sony, Hitachi, Panasonic, Fujitsu, AGC, Nikon and Softbank.

Muneaki Tokunari, the chief financial officer of Nikon, commented that “In order to accelerate the introduction of renewable energy, it is essential not only for companies to make efforts, but also for the national government to support them through effective policies.” Kazunori Maruyama, the president of DSM Japan, called on the Japanese government “to introduce a carbon pricing system that will see tangible outcomes earlier than currently planned.”

Renewable energy is domestically produced, and resources are dispersed throughout the regions. Carbon pricing is the basis for a faster transition. Without carbon pricing, the speed of investments and R&D will slow, and Japan will no longer be chosen for operation sites. To maximize the introduction of renewable energy and societal transition, simultaneously addressing climate and energy crises and revitalizing local areas, we need to turn the wheel now. After discussions at the G7, we hope that Japan will demonstrate to the world its goal of achieving 80% or more renewable energy by 2035, attract investments and remain at the forefront of decarbonization competition.