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sustainable japan

NUCB International College principal aims for lifelong ‘frontier spirit’

Educator Robert Chaytor on learning and leading

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Leaders & Readers

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Developing responsible leaders through rigorous education is how Robert Chaytor believes we can create a more ethical and sustainable society. Having spent nearly two decades in international education over a 40-year teaching career, he has developed a strong ideology around preparing the students in his care to think critically as both members of their local communities and as global citizens.

His journey leading to Japan has taken him to educational institutions in Australia, Hong Kong, South Korea and mainland China. Chaytor's life changed when COVID-19 struck while he was living in Shenzhen, China. Faced with a tough situation, Chaytor decided to temporarily move to Japan. It was a logical choice considering his children were enrolled in university here. A couple of weeks became 10 months, and after briefly returning to China he had the incredible opportunity to move to Japan as the principal of NUCB International College (NIC).

About NIC
Located on the stunning campus of Nagoya University of Commerce and Business (NUCB), NIC caters to high school students

seeking a thriving boarding environment and rigorous academic path leading to dual degrees: the prestigious International Baccalaureate Programme Diploma and the Japanese high school diploma. Successful completion of the IB Programme in particular is recognized internationally as an elite qualification that gives students a notable advantage when applying to universities due to its intensive academic standards. NIC's dual-degree program supports a diverse range of student goals and offers unique opportunities for global excellence and local engagement.

When describing what else sets NIC's academic philosophy apart from other institutions, Chaytor said: "When students go into a history lesson, they go in as a historian. They go into their science classes as a biologist, as a chemist, as a physicist — not as a student studying these subjects."

Chaytor wants to produce global citizens and leaders who are able to understand a wide range of perspectives through what NIC refers to as the "frontier spirit." Embracing the frontier spirit means being ethically motivated, caring toward others and the environment, and innovative at solving problems. This mentality encourages students to take proactive roles in studies and campus lives. Beyond the rigorous academic standards, NIC's beautiful campus connects students to the natural splendor of the Japanese countryside. And because it is a boarding school, the campus atmosphere plays a huge role in students' experiences, well-being and daily lives.

Also setting NIC apart from other institutions is its usage of case methodology. Students are taught to think of themselves

as protagonists navigating different adventures in education. This framing encourages them to be actively involved in navigating complex and realistic situations. Chaytor describes case methodology as "one of the most transformative parts of NIC," as it cultivates an environment of proactive critical thinking and embodies the frontier spirit. "We have no idea how the world is going, and we want our students to be positive forces of change — leaders," remarked Chaytor. While Chaytor is the principal of the school, he continues to teach students directly as well, believing that it is important for academic leaders to stay connected with what is happening in the classroom.

Global citizens, sustainably
A key aspect of NIC's mission is the development of young people who are prepared to meet the ethical challenges of an increasingly interconnected and unpredictable world. An emphasis on sustainability is not limited to environmental efforts, but also includes the sustainable development of character, critical thinking and a deep-rooted sense of responsibility. This is reflected not only in the curriculum but in the culture of the school itself.

NIC students are nurtured to become participants in shaping the future. Chaytor pointed out that while academic results are important, the true measure of success is whether students leave with a sense of agency and purpose. "We're not just preparing students for university, we're preparing them for life," he said. This vision of education as a long-term, ethical investment is core to NIC's identity. Chaytor explained that he wants students to view life as a marathon and not a sprint. That means encourag-



NUCB

40 years leading in six countries

Originally from Australia, Robert Chaytor's expansive career in international education has spanned six countries in various leadership positions, including director of music, an area he has a keen passion for.

He also greatly enjoys skiing and had enjoyed many ski seasons in Japan before moving here to pursue the position of principal at NIC and be closer to his children, who at the time were enrolled in university here. His career has taken him to mainland China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Switzerland, Greece and Canada as well as Australia.

Over the course of his 40-year teaching career — including nearly two decades internationally — he has undoubtedly left a positive impact in the many places he has called home.

ing students to pace themselves, to reflect deeply and to build habits of perseverance and empathy. The purpose is not chasing quick success, but laying a foundation for life-long learning and contributions.

Even as NIC continues to grow and welcome students from around the globe, it remains committed to its founding principles: fostering academic excellence, promoting ethical leadership, and instilling a sustainable, global mindset in the next generation. Under Chaytor's guidance, and with the tireless work of dedicated faculty and staff, NIC stands as a testament to what can happen when education is aligned with purpose.

Looking ahead
As NIC continues to grow, its vision for the next five to 10 years is ambitious. It aspires not only to solidify its place as a leader in education within Japan, but to become a model for schools across the Asia-Pacific region. The goal is to develop alumni who have meaningful, purpose-driven lives and make lasting impacts in their fields.

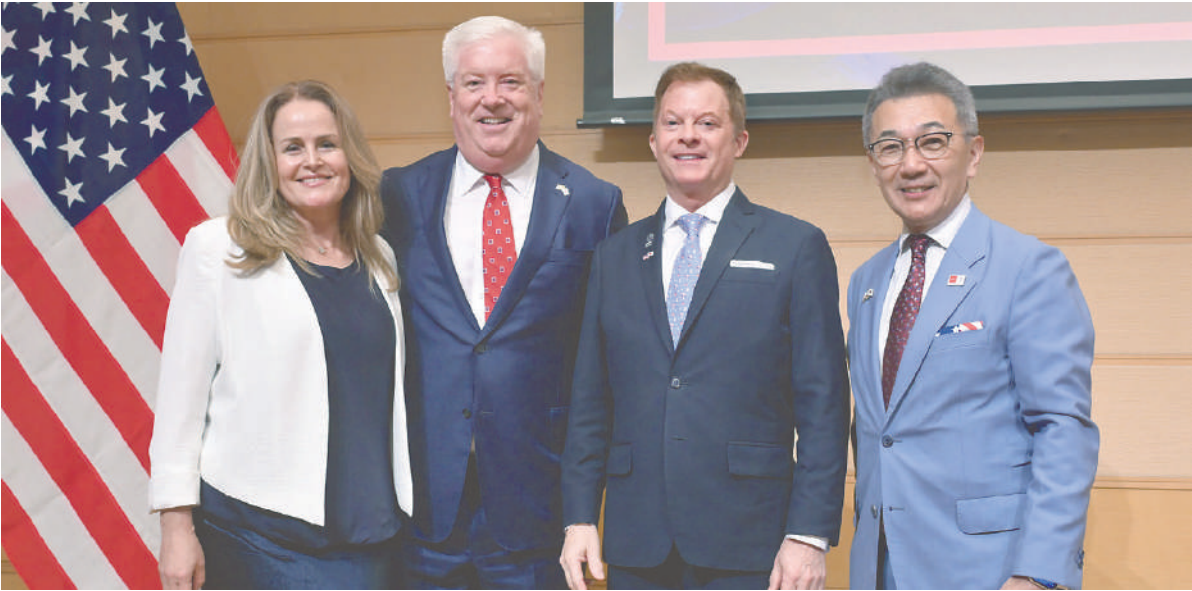
In describing this outlook, Chaytor often reflects on the distinction between land and culture. He mentions a concept from an interview with the musician and environmentalist Xavier Rudd. While the physical land will always find a way to take care of itself, culture and humanity need

nurturing. If we don't take the time and patience to impart strong ethics and the tools to practice them to the next generation, they may warp or disappear forever. In the same way, institutions may continue to operate, but the school's culture must be actively cultivated by shaping future leaders to adopt and continually innovate NIC's core values. NIC aims to continually refine its dual pathway program and deepen its commitment to global citizenship.

Above all, the school strives to be a happy, caring place. Kindness is a recurring theme in conversations across campus, and the community takes pride in maintaining open, supportive dialogues with both students and their families. NIC regularly hosts open campus events, inviting families to share lunch with students and get a first-hand sense of daily life at the school. The point is not just showcasing the curriculum, it is about creating connections, listening to stories and building trust with current and future families alike.



Osaka Expo Times Gallery



The American Chamber of Commerce in Japan celebrates Independence Day at Tokyo American Club with Executive Director Laura Younger, U.S. Ambassador George Glass, Expo 2025's U.S. Commissioner General William Grayson and ACCJ President Victor Osumi. LIFE14



Ambassador Sibi George hosts Toyama Gov. Hachiro Nitta at India's pavilion in Osaka. EMBASSY OF INDIA



Japanese visitors enjoy samples of Jamaica Blue Mountain coffee at the Jamaica Pavilion while listening to reggae music. EMBASSY OF JAMAICA



A Japanese tea ceremony event called "Tea for Peace" is held at the Jordan Pavilion with the attendance of the wife of the commissioner general of the 2025 World Exposition in Japan and commissioners general from five continents. JORDAN PAVILION

Top paper maker Oji works to conserve, quantify natural assets

Sustainable Japan Award: ESG Excellence Award

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Oji Holdings, Japan's leading paper maker, has set aside about 30% of the 640,000 hectares of forests it owns globally for conservation. Amid the shift from plastic to paper-based alternatives and increased interest in biofuels, the importance of sustainable forestry has never been clearer. Commercial forests provide various benefits to the public as well, and the company's efforts to nurture them have been ongoing for over a century.

In a recent interview with The Japan Times, the manager of Oji's Forest Value-Creation and Promotion Department, Yuya Toyoshima, said that one such initiative is a project in the Hokkaido village of Sarufutsu. Oji owns 17,000 hectares of forests in the area, where it carries out various activities to conserve the existing environment and quantify natural assets with a focus on five key values: carbon, biodiversity, soil, nutrients and water.

This area is home to rivers where the endangered Japanese huchen, Japan's largest freshwater fish, lives. The river originally meandered, but part of it was straightened by people and concrete culverts were installed. Fish find it hard to live in rivers that lack geographical complexity and biodiversity. "We have plans to restore the river to its natural state, and the impact of these efforts will be measured," Toyoshima said.

Wetlands in this area are not only valuable habitats for various species but also have stored an enormous amount of carbon dioxide underground over time, which Oji is working to quantify. The company is also restoring degraded parts of the wetlands.

In addition, scallops are cultivated in Sarufutsu. "These scallops are exceptionally tasty, and we are working with researchers to investigate the reason for this," Toyoshima said. "We are testing the hypothesis that iron, an essential nutrient for phytoplankton that the scallops feed on, is rich in this area because of the supply from the wetlands."

The company is also collaborating with a startup to gather data on the local flora and fauna using a range of technologies, including drones, audio sensors, camera traps and DNA analysis of river water. This data is then analyzed by AI to quantify the biodiversity of the area. Toyoshima believes that quantifying the value of forests is important in the context of natural capital accounting, a method of integrating natural and financial assets to evaluate and manage a company's business activities.

New initiatives on measuring and evaluating nature locally are also being carried out overseas. Toyoshima said the U.K.'s Biodiversity Net Gain law, for example, is "a drastic set of rules that require developers to increase biodiversity by at least 10% after construction compared to the preconstruction state. If this cannot be achieved on-site, they must increase biodiversity elsewhere. If that is still not feasible, they will be required to purchase biodiversity credits from the government."

However, he also noted that a globally standardized approach to measuring nature has not yet been established and that discussions over the methodology are ongoing, particularly in Europe.

The Nature Positive Initiative is one of the organizations that provide a platform for these discussions. The NPI has 27 member organizations from around the world. "We hope that we can provide feedback on the results of our attempt to visualize the value of nature through our participation in the



Oji CEO Hiroyuki Isono participates in an OECD forum in July. OJI

organization's pilot project, and contribute to the creation of an international standard," Toyoshima said.

He also emphasized, however, that a common methodology needs to be flexible enough to accommodate regional variations. "This is why it is crucial that diverse companies and organizations from around the world participate in the discussion," he said. "While European countries tend to take the lead in this rule-making, we, as a company with vast natural capital, are committed to sharing our insights to highlight aspects that may have been overlooked in Europe."

Oji is also a founding member of the International Sustainable Forestry Coalition of 19 forest-owning companies. The group aims to establish a common approach for identifying the value and functions of forests that deserve attention, converting them into monetary values and disclosing this information.

Oji CEO Hiroyuki Isono participated in discussions at the 2024 United Nations Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP16) in Colombia. This July, he was invited to the OECD Green Growth and Sustainable Development Forum, where he emphasized the urgency of establishing a mechanism to reflect natural capital on corporate balance sheets and create an economy where corporate activities can directly promote the sustainability of the natural environment.



Participants in a strategy session of the International Sustainable Forestry Coalition visit an Oji forest in Shizuoka Prefecture in August 2024. OJI

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