

Your Name: Enrique Carrasco Perez

Host Lab in Japan: Omasa Takeshi, Osaka University, Graduate School of Engineering,
Biotechnology Department

Meaning of Nakatani RIES Fellowship: How would you describe the meaning/impact of the Nakatani RIES Fellowship

The Nakatani RIES Fellowship served as an enriching experience that allowed me to explore both my intellectual and cultural curiosities. By placing me in an unfamiliar environment and culture, I had to adapt to the new situation, which then enable me to learn more about both cell culture as well as Japan and its culture. Overall, the program was honestly one of my favorite's experiences in my life so far. This experience helped me broaden my perspective and goals and influenced the path I will take, and I am sure it is a better one after this program.

Research Internship Overview: Provide a description of your research project and experience during your research internship. How did your project relate to your current or future academic interests? What was the experience of working in international research setting like? What will you take away from your research experience this summer and what impact do you think this has had or will have on your future academic career or research interests?

My research consisted of identifying intracellular transport pathways from the endoplasmic reticulum to the Golgi apparatus to optimize antibody productivity in Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cells. This experience dealing with cells helped me learned valuable techniques that will be useful when I begin working with stem cells to promote tissue regeneration. Working in a different research environment helped me understand the different priorities that the two countries place on their scientific innovation, hopefully broadening my perspective and helping me be a more effective researcher in the future.

Lab Environment Overview: Provide an overview of what the personal environment of the lab was like. Describe the personality and working style of your research group? What was it like working with your research mentor/s and the overall group dynamic in the lab?

I loved my time in lab. In the US, my time in lab is usually limited to performing analytical techniques or learning new ones from my mentor, despite not knowing most people in my lab. However, in the Omasa Lab, I felt that the other lab members were very studious and dedicated but also much friendlier and approachable when compared to their American counterparts. I was able to engage in conversations where we shared life experiences, language, and hilarious stories while also feeling comfortable enough to ask them to clarify any questions I have. As for my mentor, I believe I have made a lifelong friend that I will be able to talk to whether it be about research and life.

Daily Life in Japan: Provide an overview of what your daily life was like in Japan. This could include the people you interacted with outside the lab on a day-to-day basis, food, your housing/living experience, your travels around Japan and the challenges you faced and the rewarding experiences you encountered over the course of the summer.

My day in Japan was very routine. I would wake up in the morning and go on a jog before having a quick breakfast. I would then shower and leave to lab at around 9:30 to 10 when most

fellow lab members came in. Here I would work until around 12, where I would then join my fellow lab members for lunch. After eating and conversing, we would go back to lab, where I would continue my work until at least 5 before clocking out and heading into the city to find dinner, getting back home at around 11-12 in the evening. This was likely the most difficult as getting to the train station was a 10-minute bike ride from my house, thus I had to purchase a bike to travel into the city. However, this also facilitated my weekend expeditions as I could simply bike to the station and travel all over Japan, going as far south as Kyushu but also getting to see historic cities such as Takayama and Shirakawa-go. These experiences not only allowed me to appreciate the beautiful landscapes Japan has to offer, but also to continue immersing myself within the Japanese culture.

Experiences with Japanese Culture: Provide an overview of your most meaningful experiences with Japanese culture. This could be program activities or interactions you had with your lab or within your daily life in Japan that you think best exemplify aspects of Japanese culture or values. What did the experience/s teach you about Japan? What did they teach you about yourself?

The best example I think would be Gion Matsuri. While everything I had done on my own had been on my own itinerary, I was invited to Gion Matsuri by Haruki, a fellow member of my lab. After he offered to drive me over, we arrived at the festival, which was crowded and beautifully decorated with floats and yatai. As we walked up and down the streets, I asked Haruki countless questions, most to which he did not know the answer. However, I found this very comforting, as it made me feel like in the daily life of a Japanese person. Despite not knowing its origin, I was around other people, celebrating and eating the holiday. The cheerfulness in the atmosphere as well as the emphasis on keeping the city clean helped me understand the difference in values between my culture and Japan's, where mine is a very consumeristic society whereas in Japan it felt very collaborative. Through my time at the festival, I got to know Haruki better and make a true friend that would continue to help me learn about the cultural differences between the USA and Japan and helping me realize that Japanese values were perhaps more aligned with my beliefs, therefore I should strive to incorporate them into my own life in the USA.