



# JSPS SAN FRANCISCO NEWSLETTER

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 01 Trends Surrounding U.S. Academia in 2022
- 04 Recent Activities
- 07 JSPS Fellow in America
- 09 The Latest from Universities in Japan
- 11 University of California STRIKE



## Trends Surrounding U.S. Academia in 2022

The turbulent year 2022 is drawing to a close, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which began on February 24th, has not yet come to an end. The instability of energy sources and food supplies has disrupted economies around the world and caused major setbacks in the fight against climate change.

[Read More on Page. 2](#)



**P**olitical divisions are also becoming more pronounced once again, as the polarization of wealth and poverty accelerates around the world. The global spread of COVID-19, which became pronounced in early 2020, has been controlled by the development of mRNA vaccines. However, there is concern that this winter will see an explosion of infectious diseases such as influenza and RSV at the same time.

During the nine months since I arrived in the U.S. in April, the biggest impact on my life has been the sharp depreciation of the yen and the rising cost of living in the U.S. With the expansion of immunization and the control of the severity of COVID-19, people have resumed exchanges on a global scale, and the number of students and

researchers studying in the U.S. has gradually begun to increase. However, amidst the unprecedented depreciation of the yen and soaring prices, the reality is that we are having a hard time and unable to take any effective measures while hearing the desperate pleas of those young researchers who have just begun their research in the U.S. In addition, the conditions for issuing visas to enter the U.S. have become more stringent due to the international situation and economic trends, and the situation seems to have changed dramatically from before the pandemic.

The impact of the rising cost of living is also a matter of life and death for graduate students and postdocs in the U.S. Beginning on November 14th, 48,000 academic workers (postdoctoral researchers or postdocs, academic researchers, academic student

employees, and graduate student researchers) of four University of California unions staged the largest higher education strike at all 10 UC campuses. They are demanding a wage increase to compensate for the unsustainable rent burden brought on by California's high cost of living.

The bargaining committee proposes a \$54,000 minimum salary for graduate workers, \$70,000 minimum for postdoctoral workers and a 14% salary increase for academic researchers. It also proposes capping rent for on-campus housing, providing \$2,000 monthly for child care, and subsidies and incentives for public transportation and biking. It also asks for longer appointments for its workers to ensure job security. The union also wants the university to reimburse visa fees and nonresidential tuition for its international workers.

In the U.S., November 8th was the day of the midterm elections. Before the vote, a “red wave” of Republican victory was predicted, but the Senate remained mostly unchanged and the House of Representatives was narrowly won by the Republicans, leaving both Democrats and Republicans looking like “losers.” The political situation in the U.S. seems to have become chaotic in preparation for the next presidential election in two years. Under these circumstances, there is great concern about when the unprecedented inflation issue will be resolved.

One of the major Bay Area university events of 2022 is Stanford University's historic decision to create its first new

undergraduate department in 70 years to confront the scale and urgency of the threats facing our planet. John Doerr, a prominent investor in companies such as Google, donated \$1.1 billion to establish the new department, which will be called the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability.

President Biden has made climate change countermeasures the signature policy of his administration, and on January 20th, 2021, his first day in office, he announced that he would rejoin the Paris Agreement and that his entire administration would work toward carbon neutrality by 2050, a 180-degree turnaround from the previous administration and a global shift toward decarbonization. California is one of the most advanced states in the U.S. to take action on climate change, because wildfires have become a regular occurrence in the state due to the effects of climate change. On March 21st of this year, Ambassador to the United States Koji Tomita and California Governor Gavin Newsom signed a Memorandum of Understanding on climate change countermeasures, which will further strengthen cooperation between the Japanese government and the State of California in efforts to combat climate change. We hope that Japanese students and young researchers will study at the new Stanford University department and confront the scale and urgency of the threats facing our planet.

# Recent Activities

## The 1st JUNBA Seminar 2022



**T**he Japanese University Network in the Bay Area (JUNBA), held its first online seminar on September 27th themed around “Diverse and Unique Academic Operations of U.S. Universities.” The objective of the seminar was to learn about successful examples of extension programs at U.S. universities and overseas campuses. The seminar was also designed to provide participants with an understanding of the diverse education businesses and profit structures of U.S. higher education institutions. A total of 71 people participated, many of whom were staff and faculty at universities throughout Japan.

One of the speakers, Dr. Mary L. Walshok, Former Dean of the University of California San Diego Extended Studies, provided a presentation entitled “An Introduction to University Extension: A Unique Higher Education Asset in the United States” and explained how extension programs had started and evolved in the U.S., especially in California. Moreover, she mentioned the governance and financing model underpinning the programs and numbers related to their current situation, such as the number of annual learners at

University Extension at UC San Diego. She concluded that she believes that this kind of lifelong learning is going to be core to all societies and economies moving forward.

The other speaker, Dr. Nancy Hellerud, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Webster University, presented fundamental information about Webster University, such as what kind of education it provides. Next, she introduced each international campus, such as those in Geneva, Ghana, Tashkent, etc. In addition, she explained the university’s focus on student and faculty global mobility and online integrity in the institution.

There were lots of questions and insightful commentary. Surveys showed that the participants found the event useful and a majority of respondents commented that they were able to learn about the situation of higher education in the U.S., information which is normally not available in Japan.

The first JUNBA Seminar ended with a lively discussion aided by the expertise of each speaker. The second seminar is going to be held on January 26th, 2023.



*Presentation by Dr. Nancy Hellerud*

## The Workshop for Japanese University Staff in the U.S.

**T**he Workshop for Japanese University Administrative Staff in the U.S. 2022 is a staff development event conducted by JSPS San Francisco. The purpose of the workshop was to raise the motivation of Japanese university staff who are currently in the U.S. and to deepen their understanding of U.S. universities.

The program was conducted in person on November 7th, 2022 and the number of participants was 14 including 4 staff members of JSPS SF. Since this was the first face-to-face event for this year, we took all necessary precautions against infection and included a lot of activities that could only be done in-person. In the first half of the event, we had presentations by two of the facilitators for this workshop, Koichiro Aoshima, Assistant Director of the International Student Services & Outreach, Office of International Programs at San Francisco State University and Chikako Walker, Acting Director of International Education in the San Mateo County Community College District. They talked about how they started their career in the U.S., their current work and what they think is important as they work in the

U.S. They received and answered many questions from the participants, such as the difference between equality and equity, how they feel regarding the decrease in the number of Japanese students who study abroad in the U.S., and so on. The second main program in the first half of the workshop was the panel discussion. The facilitators led the discussion by presenting topics that addressed various troubles the participants have had or currently have in the U.S. and the participants shared their experiences. Some of the answers from participants indicated that they had some difficulty in finding and settling in the local community, as well as having difficulty in keeping up with meetings because of a lack of knowledge about the different programs in the university and inefficiency in English.

The second half of the event began with a presentation by the former liaison officer at JSPS SF, Christopher Reed, who is now the Global Engagement Coordinator in the Global Engagement Office at the University of California, Berkeley. He spoke on “generalists and specialists” and his current work in UC Berkeley. His presentation provided participants with new insight on the topic. We allotted the



*Presentation by Koichiro Aoshima*



*Group Discussion*

rest of the time to discussion. Participants discussed the difference between work environments in the universities in the U.S. and Japan, how to deal with problems they have in the U.S., and whether they could actualize what they had wanted to do in the U.S, and so on. Finally, participants wrote down their resolution for the rest of their stay in the U.S. (most of them are going back to Japan this upcoming March,) on a piece of colored paper and shared

with others.

All of the participants responded that the workshop was good or very good in the follow-up questionnaire. Some of the participants commented, saying that the workshop was a good opportunity to share what they were thinking about their lives or work in the U.S. and to listen to other participants' experiences and opinions. Others expressed that they had gotten motivated for the rest of their stay in the U.S. In addition, as meeting online has got very common and there are less opportunities for in-person meetings than before the Covid-19 pandemic, it seems that this workshop provided participants with a good occasion to visit another state and for in-person networking.

JSPS SF is going to continue to hold this workshop on an annual basis and hopes the participants stay connected.



## Fellowship Information Sessions

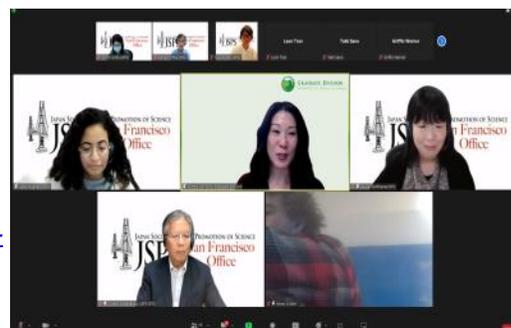
- University of Nevada, Reno (October 11th, 2022)
- University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (October 25th, 2022)
- University of Washington (November 15th, 2022)
- University of California, Los Angeles (November 15th, 2022)



For more information about upcoming info sessions, please visit our website or contact us directly (<https://www.jspsusa-sf.org/>).

### Helpful Links

- JSPS International Fellowships for Research in Japan (<https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-fellow/index.html>)
- JSPS Fellows Plaza (<https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-plaza/index.html>)
- US and Canada JSPS Alumni Association (<http://www.jspsusa-alumni.org/>)
- FAQ (<https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-fellow/faq.html>)



# JSPS Fellow in America



## RYO EGUCHI

September 2021 – present: Postdoctoral scholar, Stanford University/JSPS Overseas Postdoctoral Research Fellow

April 2021 – September 2021: Postdoctoral Scholar, Keio University

May 2019 – September 2019: Visiting Research Student, King's College London

April 2019 – March 2021: JSPS Graduate Research Fellow (DC2)

April 2012 – March 2021: B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. in System Design Engineering, Keio University

**I** am a postdoc of Collaborative Haptics and Robotics in Medicine (CHARM) Lab (Pic. 1) and am currently working on wearable intelligence and systems for designing human motions, which includes wearable/ambient sensor systems for motion sensing using multi-sensor fusion and machine learning, and wearable/portable haptic devices for motion guidance, navigation, and control.

### Q1: Why did you decide to research in the U.S.?

The primary reason was that I wanted to do research at one of the finest universities in the world. I also wanted to learn commercialization of research outcomes in the industry such as university-launched startups specifically here as Stanford is in Silicon Valley, which the world's center of innovation. My friends and colleagues who had already gone abroad as a Ph.D. student or a postdoc highly motivated me to come here. In terms of career development, a postdoc right after

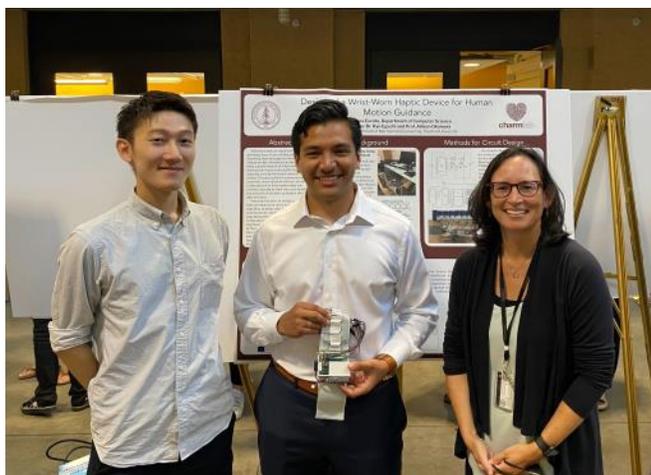
getting my Ph.D. was the best timing for me to go abroad for long-term research. When I thought about how to broaden my research and expertise after receiving a Ph.D., I contacted my current advisor because her lab had published fascinating papers in the research field I wanted to go into. We had a meeting in person at an international conference and my advisor gladly accepted my research plan, so I applied for the JSPS overseas postdoc fellowship to do research here.



Pic. 1 CHARM Lab in summer 2022

**Q2: What is your impression of the research environment in the U.S.?**

Every lab at Stanford is conducting fine research projects under a direction of a sophisticated PI and achieving high impact results. Students and postdocs are highly motivated to promote their research and always aiming to publish papers in high-level journals with confidence in their projects. All departments (e.g., engineering and medicine) are located on the same campus, and there are frequent symposiums and seminars to exchange the latest research outcomes enhancing cross-disciplinary cross-department networking and collaboration. Stanford has over 2,400 postdocs and provides generous support to us because they recognize a postdoc as a unique opportunity to develop academic independence, for example, providing opportunities for teaching training, preparing for faculty positions, and developing postdoc networks. Ph.D. students can rotate multiple labs during their early years (e.g., first and second years) so they can find a suitable one in terms of affinity of research interests and personality with a PI. Ph.D. students in my lab are recommended to intern during the summer (and other) quarters, at least once or twice to build a network within the industry and have more choices after graduation. My department (mechanical engineering) has research opportunities for undergraduate students to



*Pic. 2 Presentation of mentored undergraduate student in a summer research internship*

experience research projects in labs during the summer quarter and Ph.D. students and postdocs are assigned as mentors. (Pic. 2) This mobility of students help them find careers better suited to them in their future.

**Q3: How do you take advantage of your experiences in the U.S. and apply them to your research or career?**

Stanford has been providing me precious opportunities to build networks with not only Stanford researchers in various fields but also collaborators in the industry and speakers invited from other universities at seminars and symposiums. Especially in my research, I have given a talk about my research in a symposium, (Pic. 3) led a class on campus, and mentored undergraduate and graduate students in English.



*Pic. 3 Presentation at Stanford eWear symposium*

These will be great experiences for my future academic activity. My position and title as a Stanford postdoc also have brought me social contribution opportunities beyond my own research activities. For example, I have been a speaker at career path seminars, a panelist at government science and technology councils, and a technical advisor to startups. I am also proud to be a co-founder and organizer of "Japanese Academic Seminars at Stanford (JASS)" on campus for research exchange and networking for Japanese scholars, students, and professionals in the academia and industry in the Bay Area including Stanford.

# The Latest From Universities in Japan



## HIROSHIMA UNIVERSITY

### ***New international interdisciplinary research institute opens at Hiroshima University***

*Researchers from around the world will study “knotted chiral meta matter” to understand the laws of nature and to develop new materials that help with sustainability.*

**A** world-class institute for interdisciplinary science dedicated to a new research field called “knotted chiral meta matter” opened at Hiroshima University (HU) this November. The new “International Institute for Sustainability with Knotted Chiral Meta Matter” (SKCM<sup>2</sup>) was selected to be funded through the World Premier International Research Center Initiative (WPI) of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). The WPI, which began in 2007, supports the development of “globally

visible” research centers in Japan that generate highly impactful research and recruit outstanding international researchers.

SKCM<sup>2</sup> will be led by Dr. Ivan Smalyukh, Professor of Physics at the University of Colorado, Boulder and a world leader in material research who has received numerous scientific awards, including a presidential career award from the U.S. White House. The institute will allow for collaborations among researchers at HU and other Japanese and international institutions, including the University of Tokyo, Cambridge University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology,

and the Max Planck Institute for Theoretical Physics.

The international institute interlinks an impressive list of researchers with expertise in a broad range of fields such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, and engineering. Using a highly interdisciplinary approach, these researchers will deepen our understanding of the laws of nature by studying knotted chiral meta matter, which are artificial versions of the building blocks that make up everything. Although there is a multitude of scientific directions for this research, the center will focus on avenues that have direct applications for sustainability and human flourishing.

For example, Dr. Hiroshi Sato of RIKEN in Japan and Director Smalyukh will collaborate to use knotted chiral meta matter made from knotted organic molecules to create super-insulating materials to save energy used for heating and cooling buildings, which comprises approximately 40% of global energy use. SKCM<sup>2</sup> research may also help solve problems in fields such as medicine or

electronics. In addition to greatly expanding scientific knowledge and potential technological innovation to solve the world's most pressing problems, the institute will be highly internationalized, including a progressive graduate training program with active international research exchanges. The program will also place an emphasis on recruiting and fostering women, who have been historically underrepresented in STEM fields.

The institute's vision aligns directly with that of the host institution, HU, the leading research university in Western Japan and the first in the Chugoku and Shikoku regions to be selected for the highly competitive WPI program.

HU also has strong programs for early career researchers and the advancement of women in science. Aside from its commitment to interdisciplinary research, HU is also highly internationalized and prioritizes peace and sustainability. SKCM<sup>2</sup> will help to further all these missions and will soon be actively recruiting students from Japan and abroad.



*A drone shot of Hiroshima University*

# University of California STRIKE

## Commentary on the largest higher education strike in 2022

**ABIGAIL HUGHES**

**Liaison Officer,**

**JSPS San Francisco Office**

**S**tarting on November 14th, as many as 48,000 academic employees went on strike, protesting unfair labor practices by the University of California system. United Auto Workers (UAW) is the head union for these academic workers. The bargaining in which the unfair labor practices allegedly occurred began in the spring of 2021. The union has mainly been focused on getting livable wages for academic employees.

Academic workers which include: postdoctoral scholars, academic researchers, student employees (teaching assistants, tutors, etc.), and graduate student researchers in the 10 Campus University of California system have been on strike for weeks at this point, looking to negotiate a living wage amongst other gains. A living wage is the amount of money needed to live near where you work. They are also protesting for COLA, which is

“cost of living adjustments” which means they want their wages and benefits to change as it gets more expensive to live. According to different testimonies, some of these academic workers commute from hours away to live in an affordable home based on their salary.

In these contracts, these workers cannot work more than 20 hours a week and cannot get another job. Tanzil Chowdhury, a graduate student research assistant at UC Berkeley, says that his work is more along the lines of 40 hours a week to get everything done, and he only makes about \$40,000 a year<sup>1</sup>, which is not a sustainable living situation given the high prices of rent in California. To put this into perspective, a one-bedroom apartment in Berkeley can run upwards of \$2,000 a month, which would place him in the severely rent-burdened category. California is seen to be one of the most expensive states to live in in the United States. Graduate student instructors

<sup>1</sup>Gurley, L. K. (2022, November 14). In largest strike of 2022, California Academic Workers Walk Off Job. The Washington Post. Retrieved December 6, 2022, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/11/14/university-california-strike-academic-workers-union/>

lead smaller discussions for the undergraduates, and are also the reason that the work gets graded. A lot of the research that occurs at these top universities is done by postdoctoral researchers. Reading testimonies of many different strikers demonstrates that oftentimes due to their low wages and the increasing prices of living in California, some of these hardworking scholars are living in precarious situations; out of cars, on friends' couches, etc.

John Logan, Professor of Labor and Employment Studies from San Francisco University, explains that TAs, postdocs, and other academic workers do most of the teaching of undergraduate students. As of right now, as the final exams are approaching, the union has the most leverage it could possibly have. The academic workers who do the grading of hundreds of undergraduate works in support of the professors are still on strike, putting the university system in a problematic situation.<sup>2</sup>

One of the most difficult aspects of this strike for the university system is that it is occurring right at the end of the semester when grades are due and finals are in full swing. Trevor Griffey, a lecturer and historian at UCLA and UC Irvine, had this to say regarding financial aid concerns via Twitter.

No @UofCalifornia campus has to cut off student financial aid because of the @uaw2865 @sruuaw strike. @UCIrvine is "taking steps to protect student financial

aid" before Jan. 20 according to an email from the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning. Other campuses can too.<sup>3</sup>

On November 29th, a tentative agreement was reached for roughly 12,000 postdoctoral scholars and academic researchers. Five-year contracts were proposed with wage increases, percentage increases each year, childcare, 8 weeks of paid parental leave, and more. These benefits are only some of what they have been bargaining for, however, as of December 9th, it was ratified. As a result, the postdoctoral scholars and academic scholars are returning to work on Monday, December 12th.

$\frac{3}{4}$  of the strikers, student employees and student researchers, are still without a new contract. Graduate students are being paid by the university system as well as paying to attend school; this may lead to a harder-fought contract negotiation process. According to an article by the Guardian, it is much more comfortable for the university to make a contract with postdoctoral scholars.

Because the federal government pays the salaries of most postdocs and academic researchers – through grants from the National Science Foundation and other funding entities – UC can more easily accede to a wage enhancement, in the case of the postdoctoral students, for more than 20% in the first year, although only 3.5% in subsequent years. But since the teaching assistants, whose current pay is the lowest

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<sup>2</sup>Gurley, L. K. (2022, November 14)

<sup>3</sup>Griffey, T. (2022, December 2). No @UofCalifornia campus has to cut off student financial aid because of the @uaw2865 @sruuaw strike. @ucirvine is "taking steps to protect student financial aid" before Jan. 20 according to an email from the vice provost for teaching and learning. other campuses can too. Twitter. Retrieved December 9, 2022, from <https://twitter.com/TrevorGriffey/status/1598771417633689600>

of all those on strike, are funded directly out of the University budget, school negotiators have taken a hard line.<sup>4</sup>

Certain UC professors are joining the picket line by refusing to teach their undergraduate classes and postponing grading. Other professors are undermining the strike by paying other staff to do the struck work that the strikers would normally be doing, which is known as scabbing. Marisol LeBrón, a professor of feminist studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz, expressed this on Twitter, “Not my employer threatening to doc the pay of faculty withholding grades when there’s literally no TAs to do the grading. The UC manufactured this crisis and now wants everyone else to pay. #fairucnow #ucstrike”<sup>5</sup> It is not her or anyone’s job to do the work that is being struck currently. It is in the hands of the university to provide proper living situations via wages and benefits. However, professors like LeBrón who are actively supporting the strike may have a hard time. UCLA posted this statement online: “If Senate faculty choose to withhold their labor during the strike, then they should be advised that doing so means that they are choosing to withhold all of their labor and that the

University, in turn, may withhold their compensation.”<sup>6</sup> By supporting the strikers, the tenured professors are in danger of losing their wages for a time as well.

On the university’s side, they consider all of their employees valuable and respect their work. The university system argued that it had been fair in all its negotiations and had not violated any labor practices. President of the University of California System, Michael T. Brown, expressed that he understands the desire to strike and respects it, and was also understanding of the rising prices of living in California. Even though there has been a raise, the rise of inflation continues to grow, outpacing the wage increase each year that is tied into the contract. One of the wins that the UAW is looking to gain for the student employees is that the living wages are matched by housing costs. However, the system allows these employees to rent from them, and they lay claim that it is a cheaper situation to be in than local housing. They do not want to tie the wages to housing costs because it “could overwhelm UC finances by creating an unfunded obligation.” As of the current update of this article, the academic student employees have entered private mediation with the university system and a third party to break the stagnation in negotiations.<sup>7</sup> The third party

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<sup>4</sup>Lichtenstein, N. (2022, December 5). The California Academic Strike is the most important in US higher education history | Nelson Lichtenstein. The Guardian. Retrieved December 6, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/dec/05/california-academic-strike-most-important-us-higher-education-history>

<sup>5</sup>LeBrón, M. (2022, December 1). Not my employer threatening to doc the pay of faculty withholding grades when there's literally no tas to do the grading. <https://t.co/o436wq7xx7>. Twitter. Retrieved December 6, 2022, from <https://mobile.twitter.com/marisollebron/status/1598415793808896000>

<sup>6</sup>Brown, M. T. (2022, November 30). Regarding faculty rights and responsibilities 2022-11-30.PDF: Powered by box. Box. Retrieved December 6, 2022, from <https://ucla.app.box.com/s/358z8zv8ofb4tzbrq2vm81tr0xpzj9i>

<sup>7</sup>Burke, M. (2022, December 9). Update: UC to enter mediation with striking academic workers. EdSource. Retrieved December 12, 2022, from <https://edsources.org/updates/uc-to-enter-mediation-with-striking-academic-workers>

is the mayor of Sacramento, Darrell Steinberg.<sup>8</sup>

I believe that the University system has been rightfully exposed for underpaying its non-tenured workers. If the university wants to maintain its high-class status, it needs to provide for its valuable researchers. As it stands, students will choose to get their graduate degrees elsewhere, where their salary and benefits can provide for a living situation. I understand the difficult situation that both sides are in. The University of California is an

amazing institution, rated very highly nationally. It can be this way due to the work that their graduate student workers and postdocs do. Please take a look at the cited websites to get a fuller understanding of the strike and its implications, however, my personal opinion is this: it is within the university system's best interest to be fair and supportive so that the workers can be the same in return.

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<sup>8</sup>Truong, K. (2022, December 12). Sacramento mayor Darrell Steinberg brought in to Mediate University of California Strike. The San Francisco Standard. Retrieved December 13, 2022, from [https://sfstandard.com/education/sacramento-mayor-darrell-steinberg-brought-in-to-mediate-university-of-california-strike/?campaign\\_id=49&emc=edit\\_ca\\_20221213&instance\\_id=80068&nl=california-today@i\\_id=188870804&segment\\_id=116819&te=1&user\\_id=452d72729ffba11d51023eaf21a38f27](https://sfstandard.com/education/sacramento-mayor-darrell-steinberg-brought-in-to-mediate-university-of-california-strike/?campaign_id=49&emc=edit_ca_20221213&instance_id=80068&nl=california-today@i_id=188870804&segment_id=116819&te=1&user_id=452d72729ffba11d51023eaf21a38f27)

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## Upcoming Events Information (\*Details to be announced)

January 26th(PST,EST), 27th(JST), 2023

The 2nd JUNBA Seminar FY2022

<https://www.junba.org/news/?p=2905>

February 4th, 2023

Winter Gathering of Japanese Researchers in the U.S.

(日本人研究者交流会・冬) / Bridge Award Ceremony

<https://www.jspsusa-sf.org/news/?p=2424>

March, 2023

CJS-JSPS Symposium

### Fellowships Information Sessions

January 25th, University of British Columbia

February 1st, Stanford University

February 7th, University of Calgary

February 16th, University of Alberta

February 28th, University of Colorado Boulder

March 16th, University of California , Davis



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