



**S**ocial  
**E**ntrepreneurship  
**E**mpowerment  
**D**evelopment

# MISSION REPORT 2025



# INDEX

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Messages shared by the GOROM Association staff.   | 1  |
| Messages from Professors of Partner Universities.   | 6  |
| Team Presentation with Messages shared by the leaders of each team (Wine, Wine Tourism, Jewelry Valley, Sake, Souvenir Business and Sustainable Tourism). | 15 |
| Day 1: December 1 <sup>st</sup>   | 27 |
| Day 2: December 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 31 |
| Day 3: December 3 <sup>rd</sup>   | 39 |
| Day 4: December 4 <sup>th</sup>   | 48 |
| Day 5: December 5 <sup>th</sup> : Public Pitching Event   | 49 |
| Day 6: December 6 <sup>th</sup>   | 51 |
| Day 7: December 7 <sup>th</sup>   | 53 |
| Day 8: December 8 <sup>th</sup>   | 54 |
| Day 9: December 9 <sup>th</sup>   | 56 |
| Day 10: December 10 <sup>th</sup>   | 58 |
| Day 11: December 11 <sup>th</sup>   | 61 |
| Day 12: December 12 <sup>th</sup>   | 65 |
| Certificate Ceremony (Message from GOROM to SEED 2025 participants).  | 66 |

# MESSAGES SHARED BY THE GOROM ASSOCIATION STAFF



Goro Mitsuura

Representative Director  
GOROM Association

I am pleased to inform that SEED 2025 has successfully completed and achieved meaningful outcomes, thanks to the tremendous cooperation of all involved and the hard work of the participating students. These accomplishments would not have been possible without the dedication and warm support of all those involved, for which I am deeply grateful.

Over the past three years, the SEED has built a strong record of achievement, which has led to a significant increase in its recognition and reputation. As a result of this growing evaluation, the program expanded further in 2025 with the addition of two new partner universities including the one from the United States that is the first time from North America.

Each year, the program attracts highly capable students; however, this year in particular, an exceptionally talented and strongly committed group of students participated. They approached regional revitalization with great sincerity, actively engaged in dialogue with local leaders in Japan, and collaboratively developed proposals for the future development of the communities. Their earnest attitude and dedication left a deep impression on community and local business leaders, earning them high praise and strong admiration. This level of engagement and collaboration was truly remarkable and represents a significant achievement of the program.

In addition, through interactions with public institutions, private companies, and Japanese universities, participants actively engaged in discussions on a wide range of social issues. Through this exchange, each student was able to gain a deep understanding of different cultures, foster mutual respect beyond national and cultural boundaries, and contribute to the revitalization of the local community.

I am truly proud of the growth and achievements demonstrated by our students through this program. This outcome stands as one of the program's most significant accomplishments.

# MESSAGES SHARED BY THE GOROM ASSOCIATION STAFF

I also would like to highlight the exceptional dedication and continuous support provided by the professors and faculty members of the participating universities. Their guidance, encouragement, and close mentorship played a vital role in enabling students to fully engage in the program and maximize their learning experiences.

Finally, through the activities of the program's alumni association (OG/OB network), outstanding individuals continue to be nurtured who actively contribute to strengthening the ties between Japan and the regions of North and South America.

This ongoing impact is one of the program's most significant achievements. I hope to continue building on the connections established through this program and to further promote international exchange and community engagement in the future.



**Marin Shin**

**Academic Coordinator  
GOROM Association**

As a senior intern and program coordinator, SEED 2025 has become one of the most unforgettable experiences of my life. Being with you every day—sharing long bus rides, late-night work sessions, laughter, and even moments of stress—has made me realize how special this community is. I watched each of you grow not only as leaders, but also as human beings, and it genuinely moved me. Your passion, kindness, and courage to step into a completely new environment reminded me why I chose to support this program in the first place.

Throughout the study tour, there were so many moments when I quietly felt proud: seeing your confidence rise during presentations, watching you connect deeply with producers, and witnessing friendships form across cultures and languages. Even on difficult days, you encouraged one another and kept moving forward—and as someone supporting behind the scenes, those moments gave me strength too. You inspired me far more than you know.

Thank you for trusting me, for including me in your journey, and for showing me what true teamwork looks like. I feel incredibly lucky to have met you, and I hope SEED 2025 becomes a memory that stays with you as much as it will stay with me. Wherever you go next, I will always be cheering for you.

# MESSAGES SHARED BY THE GOROM ASSOCIATION STAFF



**Alonso Hernandez**

**IT Coordinator  
GOROM Association**

SEED 2025 marks my third consecutive year as a participant in the program and my second year as the Information Technology (IT) Coordinator. I must acknowledge that, together with my team from the GOROM Association, we made a significant effort to provide participants with a memorable experience. After the program concluded, I am pleased to report that it was a complete success.

This year marked the first time that eight universities from four different countries across the American continent brought together four participants each, resulting in a total of 32 participants, in addition to Japanese students, supervising professors, and staff members, for an overall total of 51 participants. From a logistical perspective, this represented a major challenge. My team and I were aware of this from the beginning, which is why we focused strongly on communication, role distribution, and task coordination.

On my part, through continuous improvements implemented in the SEED Intranet, it was possible to simplify tasks that in previous editions had always been handled manually and lacked a standardized format, such as the creation of entries for this Mission Report.

I am proud of the final results achieved by the professors, participants, and staff alike. All proposed objectives were successfully met, strong friendships were formed among participants from different countries, and the spirit of the SEED Program was clearly reflected in each participant who successfully completed their involvement.

One of my favorite days was undoubtedly the certificate award ceremony, during which each person was able to express their thoughts and feelings. Emotions surfaced, and we were even able to learn more about the personal stories of some participants, many of whom had to make a greater effort to participate and cover their expenses.

I am very happy with the results achieved this year and with the impact that we, as a program and organization, are having on our SEED participants. I wish everyone success in their careers and hope to see them again soon somewhere in the world.

# MESSAGES SHARED BY THE GOROM ASSOCIATION STAFF



**Hinano Matsui**

**Academic Coordinator**  
GOROM Association

My experience as a coordinator for SEED 2025 provided a valuable foundation for my future career. Following my participation last year, this program once again offered a meaningful opportunity to deepen my understanding of the concept of social entrepreneurship and to apply it in practice.

It was a privilege to support such talented and highly motivated participants. Throughout the six-month program, including online sessions and a study tour, I gained a great deal of inspiration from their ideas. Each team and its members demonstrated full commitment to their tasks, which made supporting them both challenging and rewarding.

The consistent support and insightful lectures from the professors greatly enhanced the quality of the program. The study tour, in particular, allowed me to build closer relationships with participants and gain a deeper understanding of the business ideas they developed.

I am sincerely grateful to have been part of this team and would like to extend my appreciation to Goro-san and all those who contributed to the success of this exceptional program.



**Yoya Katori**

**Intern**  
GOROM Association

I participated in SEED 2025 for the first time as a member of the GOROM staff. Unlike the participants, my role involved managing participants, acting as a bridge between companies and teams, and supporting team members. Although I was not always in the spotlight, being able to observe both participants and companies allowed me to strongly feel the passion of both sides.

# MESSAGES SHARED BY THE GOROM ASSOCIATION STAFF

The study tours in Yamanashi and Tokyo were truly outstanding and provided invaluable experiences. As part of the wine team, I visited wineries and was able to learn firsthand about wine production methods and gain extensive knowledge by seeing the process with my own eyes. As an intern, I was especially pleased to see how the wine team's business ideas were refined through these visits. Every team's final presentation was impressive, and I am proud to have been able to support them in delivering their work.

Through my internship with SEED 2025, I believe I developed adaptability in responding to various situations, skills in participant management, and negotiation abilities. I am particularly grateful that I was able to cultivate these skills together with students. In the end, I am truly proud to have participated in SEED 2025 as an intern.



**Bunta Shinmori**

Intern  
GOROM Association

I believe the SEED program is a good starting point for thinking about the world.

A lot of people say things like, "It's 2025 now. Everyone thinks about globalization, so you should, too." For me, it felt so distant from my daily life.

But through this program, I developed a practical business idea connecting Japan to LATAM, working alongside friends from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, the United States, and South Korea.

Now, the world is no longer far away from me. If you are considering joining this program, I highly recommend it!

# MESSAGES FROM PROFESSORS OF PARTNER UNIVERSITIES



**Juan Carlos Díaz Vásquez**

Universidad EAFIT, Colombia

This year, we celebrate not only the achievements of the SEED Program 2025, but also the vision that has guided us for four consecutive years. What began as an initiative to connect Colombian students from EAFIT University with Japan has grown into a bridge of knowledge, culture, and opportunity. By bringing these young minds to Yamanashi Prefecture, we have opened doors for them to learn directly from local producers, understand their traditions, and explore innovative ways to expand their reach. This program is more than an academic exchange—it is a living example of how collaboration can transform communities and create global impact.

Our students have gone beyond observation; they have engaged deeply with the challenges and aspirations of Yamanashi's producers. Through research and creativity, they have presented ideas that aim to connect these businesses with Latin American markets, introducing new pathways for growth and sustainability. In doing so, they have embraced the spirit of social entrepreneurship—proving that business can be a force for good, fostering cultural exchange and economic development across continents. Their work reflects the courage to innovate and the commitment to build a future where collaboration knows no borders.

As a guest scholar at Meiji University's Global Japanese Studies School, I have had the privilege to share the story of Colombia—and particularly Medellín—its radical transformations over the last five decades. This narrative of resilience and reinvention resonates deeply with the goals of the SEED Program and strengthens the Memorandum of Understanding between EAFIT and Meiji University. Together, we are not only shaping academic excellence but also cultivating leaders who will redefine global partnerships. Let us continue to dream boldly, work tirelessly, and believe in the power of education to change the world.

# MESSAGES FROM PROFESSORS OF PARTNER UNIVERSITIES



**Alexandre Uehara**

ESPM, Brazil

The 2025 edition of the SEED Program was, once again, a resounding success. We witnessed the palpable engagement and enthusiasm of students from diverse universities, representing five nations this year: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, the United States, and Japan.

The preparatory months—characterized by data research, survey implementation, and bi-weekly meetings under faculty guidance to draft business plan proposals for the designated sectors—proved to be a pivotal collaborative experience. This process significantly contributed to the professional development of the participants, improving both their hard and soft skills.

The intrinsic value of this unique learning experience was articulated by the students themselves during the program's closing ceremony. The event was imbued with joy and satisfaction regarding the results achieved, as well as deep emotion stemming from the relationships forged and the knowledge acquired.

I extend my congratulations to the students, faculty, and the Gorom team, as this successful outcome was a product of our collective effort. Furthermore, I offer my sincere gratitude to Professor Goro Mitsuura for his leadership of the SEED Program.



**Ricardo Peña Silva**

Universidad de los Andes, Colombia

The contemporary world is experiencing an intensification of social and global challenges that affect the development of our communities. We observe firsthand the impact of population aging, threats to the sustainability of social security systems, gaps in education and development between countries, resistance to migration, declining trust in institutions, community polarization, disinformation, and social isolation.

# MESSAGES FROM PROFESSORS OF PARTNER UNIVERSITIES

These complex issues require collaboration among people from diverse cultures, professions, and backgrounds to develop effective, team-based strategies that lead to productive systems. These novel systems would foster respect for individuals while prioritizing the sustainable and shared growth of communities and nations.

The SEED Program stands as a source of hope, demonstrating that countries, cultures, and institutions can be brought closer together to promote community revitalization. Through collaborative work among university students from six countries, speaking five languages and representing more than ten professional fields, the SEED Program introduces fresh and forward-looking ideas aimed at strengthening commerce and tourism in the Yamanashi region of Japan. Students from the Americas and Asia propose strategies to enhance visibility, e-commerce, brand positioning, and the value proposition of small businesses in Japan. In return, Japan offers these students the opportunity to explore its millennia-old culture, learn from its approach to communication and fair, honest business practices, engage in socially driven strategic consulting to improve infrastructure and industry, and engage in dialogue with local university students. This experience enables all participants to recognize that language is an increasingly minor barrier and no longer limits the opportunity to learn or to extend a helping hand.

For us at Universidad de los Andes, it is deeply rewarding to witness the personal and professional transformation of the students who participate in the SEED Program. Their well-being and happiness throughout the program, and the growth they demonstrate by its conclusion, clearly show that it is possible to connect and positively impact cultures, businesses, and institutions through experiential education. We are confident that SEED Program students will play a leading role in shaping social diplomacy in the twenty-first century.



**Staci Bernhard**

Florida International University, USA

This year marked Florida International University's (FIU) first participation in the SEED program, and we are deeply grateful for the opportunity to be included as the first U.S. university. Being part of this experience has been both an honor and an enriching journey, allowing FIU students to collaborate with passionate peers from around the world, dedicated mentors, and global partners committed to driving meaningful social impact.

# MESSAGES FROM PROFESSORS OF PARTNER UNIVERSITIES

The exposure to diverse perspectives, combined with the immersive experience in Japan, created a powerful learning environment that extended far beyond any classroom.

As Kenny Ausubel, the social entrepreneur and journalist, once said, “seeds carry life from generation to generation,” and the projects each team worked on this year truly embodied that idea. For five months, students worked diligently on their research, strengthening cross-cultural collaboration, learning to navigate different perspectives and personalities, and developing critical soft skills that will serve them throughout their professional journeys. Through hands-on engagement with producers in Yamanashi, students gained invaluable insight into real-world challenges while offering thoughtful recommendations to help bring new life to local businesses. Visiting with the producers provided a tangible understanding of sustainability, innovation, and community resilience.

The program’s success was further enriched through meaningful engagements with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Embassy visits, Nippon Koei, and JICA, where students gained a deeper understanding of international cooperation, development, and the role of public-private partnerships in addressing global challenges. These experiences, alongside the excitement and inspiration of visiting Mount Fuji, left a lasting impression. The growth, confidence, and creativity of the students were evident—from engaging with social innovation ecosystems to publicly pitching their proposals. During my welcome and closing remarks, I emphasized the importance of trying something new, stepping outside one’s comfort zone, and embracing unfamiliar experiences. I hope the students carry that feeling with them as they move forward, continuing to lead with curiosity, courage, and purpose.

As the program concludes, we celebrate the collective effort that made this experience both impactful and memorable. FIU extends our sincere appreciation to the Gorom Association, the producers in Yamanashi, business partners in Tokyo and Yamanashi for graciously welcoming us, and the university supporters whose commitment made this program a success. I look forward to continuing to support the SEED program and empowering the next generation of global changemakers.

# MESSAGES FROM PROFESSORS OF PARTNER UNIVERSITIES



**Anna Pietraszek**

**Director and Professor**  
Pino Global Entrepreneurship Center, Florida  
International University, USA

Social entrepreneurship is a strategic priority for Florida International University and a defining pillar of the Pino Global Entrepreneurship Center, reflecting our commitment to educating purpose-driven leaders who create measurable economic and social impact.

Through the SEED (Social Entrepreneurship Experiential Development) Program, our students engage in immersive, hands-on learning that combines academic rigor with real-world problem solving, cross-cultural collaboration, and on-the-ground engagement with communities and social enterprises. Participating in SEED was a truly unique and transformative experience for our students, allowing them to apply entrepreneurial frameworks in meaningful contexts while developing global awareness, empathy, and leadership skills.

It is a great pleasure to welcome SEED and the Goro Association to the Pino Global Entrepreneurship Center and to continue building a partnership that advances experiential learning and socially impactful entrepreneurship on a global scale.



**Maria Alejandra Correa**

Universidad del Rosario, Colombia

Participating in the SEED program has been one of the most meaningful international experiences we have had at Universidad del Rosario. From the very first day, it was clear that this was not simply an academic exercise—it was a truly transformative journey for everyone involved.

# MESSAGES FROM PROFESSORS OF PARTNER UNIVERSITIES

I witnessed our students connect deeply with their peers and with entrepreneurs in Yamanashi, developing intercultural skills, building genuine relationships and gaining a broader understanding of the world. They went beyond case analysis (for which they had prepared for months through detailed research): they listened carefully, asked thoughtful questions, empathized with real-life challenges and engaged with the human stories behind each venture. It was incredibly powerful to see them share their knowledge while remaining open to learning from the entrepreneurs themselves—understanding their realities and co-creating ideas that genuinely responded to real needs.

The SEED program fosters innovation born from empathy. It offers the kind of learning that leaves a lasting mark—shaping not only professional skills, but also values, purpose and perspective. This is precisely the kind of meaningful, hands-on learning we seek at Universidad del Rosario: learning that goes beyond knowledge transfer to inspire responsibility, curiosity and a commitment to positive change.

I strongly believe that universities and the academic sector have a responsibility to actively foster and sustain initiatives that promote human-centered innovation. We are responsible for empowering the next generation with the skills, ethical grounding and global awareness needed to address shared challenges. We live in a world where local actions have global resonance—where we must think beyond borders while acting with deep respect for local contexts. We must truly become a glocal community!

My deepest gratitude goes to the Gorom Association, our partner universities, the entrepreneurs who generously opened their doors and shared their journeys, and all the organizations, embassies and agencies that made this experience possible. Here's to the continued growth of this program—fostering youth empowerment, human-centered pedagogies, stronger global partnerships and deeper collaboration.



**Viviane Oliveira**

FAAP, Brazil

My first participation as a professor in the SEED 2025 program could not have been more positive or meaningful. From the very beginning, I had the privilege of working with an exceptionally cohesive group of students, whose commitment, collaboration, and intellectual curiosity were evident throughout the entire journey.

# MESSAGES FROM PROFESSORS OF PARTNER UNIVERSITIES

The projects developed by the group were consistently of a high academic and professional standard, demonstrating not only technical competence, but also critical thinking, creativity, and a strong sense of social responsibility.

What made this experience particularly rewarding was the opportunity to closely follow the students throughout their learning process. Beyond the delivery of content, the program allowed for continuous interaction, feedback, and reflection, enabling me to witness their growth over time. It was inspiring to observe how theoretical concepts gradually transformed into practical insights, and how students evolved both academically and professionally as they engaged with producers challenges.

The SEED program goes far beyond a traditional educational experience. As its name suggests, it is about planting seeds - seeds of knowledge, ethics, innovation, and global awareness. Throughout the program, these seeds were carefully cultivated through dialogue, teamwork, and problem-solving, encouraging participants to think critically about their role in society and their potential impact on the world around them. I firmly believe that the results of this process can already be observed in the short term and will become even more evident over time. The ideas developed, the values reinforced, and the skills acquired during SEED 2025 have the potential to generate long-lasting positive change. Programs like SEED are essential in shaping professionals who are not only technically prepared, but also conscious, responsible, and committed to building a better and more sustainable world.



**Ignacio Trossero**

Universidad Austral, Argentina

Participating in the SEED Program 2025 meant accompanying students from Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, the United States, Japan, and Korea in a market research project focused on Japanese souvenirs. This work represented a concrete opportunity to build bridges between Latin America and Japan, with the aim of helping local Japanese producers better understand the expectations and preferences of international markets. Over the course of several months, students developed skills such as active listening, empathy, resilience, and open-mindedness while collaborating across cultural, linguistic, and disciplinary barriers.

# MESSAGES FROM PROFESSORS OF PARTNER UNIVERSITIES

In Yamanashi, the students presented their findings and improvement proposals to local producers. The diversity of the group—with Japanese and Korean students contributing local perspectives alongside Latin American and American viewpoints—enriched each analysis and recommendation. Although the program included lectures by professors from different universities, the true value lay in the depth of research achieved by the students and the quality of their proposals. My role as a professor was to be available for their questions and to support them when needed, but the protagonism belonged entirely to the students.

The SEED Program creates spaces where students not only learn about the world, but also learn how to inhabit it with empathy and an open mind. This experience demonstrated that when young people from different cultures and disciplines work together on real projects with tangible impact on local communities, they develop competencies that go far beyond those acquired in any traditional classroom.



**Santiago Morgantini**

Universidad de Belgrano, Argentina

The SEED Program 2025 marked the first participation of the University of Belgrano in this prestigious international initiative. Together with students and professors from Colombia, the United States, Brazil, Argentina, and Japan, an extensive and in-depth project was carried out to provide solutions to various challenges faced by companies and economic sectors in Yamanashi Prefecture.

After several months of virtual work, including joint classes and collaborative activities, the time came to meet in person in Kofu for the start of the on-site research activities, which complemented and strengthened the studies previously conducted. Following visits to producers and business leaders, students gained a new perspective on the issues addressed, culminating in the preparation of an even more accurate and detailed report, which was presented in a pitch to authorities and the region's business owners. The proposals were very well received by the producers, who expressed their gratitude for the professionalism and seriousness of the strategies suggested by the students.

# MESSAGES FROM PROFESSORS OF PARTNER UNIVERSITIES

Afterwards, the group traveled to Tokyo to complement the experience with visits to institutions such as MOFA, JICA, Nippon Koei, and the embassies of the participating countries. In addition, relevant academic activities were shared at the University of Tsukuba and Meiji University.

The experience proved to be extremely enriching for all program participants. Beyond the academic aspects, students and professors were able to engage directly with real situations faced by Japanese companies, proposing solutions and ideas that may help open new markets and support the reformulation of commercial and internationalization strategies. For the students, it also represented an opportunity to develop key skills such as leadership, communication, teamwork, and negotiation.

Participating in the SEED Program 2025 was a fantastic experience of personal, professional, and cultural growth for all those involved. It required intense work prior to the trip to Japan and an even more demanding schedule once in the country. For all of us who took part, it will remain an indelible mark, bearing witness to the profound impact this project has had on each of us.



**Camilo Perez**

Universidad EAFIT, Colombia

Being here with my students in the SEED Program in Japan has been one of those experiences that reminds me why I do what I do as a professor. Seeing the students step out of their comfort zones, work with real companies in Yamanashi, engage with social entrepreneurs, and navigate a completely different cultural and institutional context was incredibly rewarding and a full time experiential learning experience. Learning happened everywhere, during the meetings, the visits, over meals, and especially through the conversations and friendships we have built with our Japanese, American, Latin American peers.

We are deeply thankful to the Gorom Association for making this experience possible. Your commitment to education, international exchange, and social impact creates opportunities that truly go beyond the classroom. On behalf of Universidad EAFIT. Thank you! This has been a privilege and I am certain that SEED's impact will stay with us long after we leave Japan.

# WINE TEAM



**(Team Leader)**

**Logan Morris**

Florida International  
University, United States



**Victoria Helena  
Doval Castilho**

ESPM, Brazil



**Solana  
Gonzalez**

Austral University,  
Argentina



**Bunta Shinmori**

Kyoto University of  
Foreign Studies, Japan



**Valeria Caro  
Curiel**

Universidad del Rosario,  
Colombia



**Victoria Ordoñez  
Ardila**

Los Andes University,  
Colombia

# MESSAGES SHARED BY THE LEADERS OF EACH TEAM



## Wine Team Leader

Logan Morris  
Florida International University,  
United States

As a participant in the GOROM Association's SEED Program, I had the privilege of leading a diverse, multicultural team dedicated to supporting local communities across Japan. In 2025, we had the distinct opportunity to collaborate with Shirayuri Winery, a family-owned vineyard located in the Yamanashi Prefecture's Koshu Valley.

During our partnership with Shirayuri, we were tasked with several key objectives. These included identifying potential restaurant partners, distributors, and wine clubs across various markets, proposing events to showcase the winery's rich heritage, conducting interviews to explore the image of Japanese wine, and delivering a range of strategic recommendations to assist in their international expansion efforts.

Although we encountered a number of challenges throughout the process, our collective efforts culminated in a rewarding outcome. When we presented our findings, Shirayuri Winery expressed their deep satisfaction with our work. For many of us, this moment represented the highlight of our SEED Program experience.

Through this initiative, I gained invaluable insights into leadership, intercultural communication, and the principles of social entrepreneurship. I am proud to have contributed to such a meaningful program, which aims to enhance the lives of local communities in Japan.

# WINE TOURISM TEAM



**(Team Leader)**

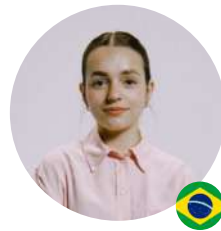
**Kataria Caze**

Florida International  
University, United States



**David Suárez**

Rosario University,  
Colombia



**Ana Júlia Hess  
Artioli**

FAAP, Brazil



**Kang Hansoo**

Meiji University, Japan



**Sara Lucia  
Tarquino**

Los Andes University,  
Colombia



**Emilio Cacik**

Belgrano University,  
Argentina

# MESSAGES SHARED BY THE LEADERS OF EACH TEAM



## Wine Tourism Team Leader

Kataria Caze  
Florida International University,  
United States

Leading the wine tourism team during the SEED program was a truly transformative experience for me. From the outset, I felt a deep sense of responsibility to guide my team and honor the rich heritage of Yamanashi's wine culture. As we delved into research and then stepped into Japan, the journey became so much more than just academic.

Walking through Yamanashi's vineyards, meeting local winemakers, and witnessing Mount Fuji's majestic presence in the background brought our research to life. I realized that Japanese wine is not just about tasting, it's about tradition, patience, and a profound respect for the land. This realization deeply influenced our strategies and emphasized the importance of authentic storytelling and immersive experiences.

As a leader, I was constantly challenged to adapt and communicate effectively across cultures. The bond we formed as a team, and the friendships we made with our Japanese counterparts, made the experience even more meaningful. It wasn't just about the research, it was about connecting on a human level and sharing perspectives that would last well beyond the program.

Ultimately, this mission has left a profound impact on me. It reinforced my passion for international tourism and the power of cultural exchange. The lessons and connections I've gained will continue to shape my journey, both academically and professionally, for years to come.

# JEWELRY TEAM



**(Team Leader)**  
**Miguel Angel**  
**Hoyos Cadavid**  
EAFIT University, Colombia



**Natasha Abreu**  
**Nones**  
ESPM, Brazil



**Paulina Ríos**  
**Acosta**  
Universidad del Rosario,  
Colombia



**Rosita Sofía**  
**Quintero Llorente**  
Los Andes University,  
Colombia



**Taiyo Shomura**  
Meiji University, Japan



**Suemi Matienzo**  
**Hiraoka**  
Florida International University,  
United States

# MESSAGES SHARED BY THE LEADERS OF EACH TEAM



## Jewelry Team Leader

Miguel Angel Hoyos Cadavid  
EAFIT University,  
Colombia

For the 2025 edition, I had the honor of being part of the Jewelry team, a team I carried with both care and responsibility throughout the entire program while serving as its leader. Together, we developed our project for Jewelry Valley, an innovative company recognized for the way it connects fine jewelry from the outstanding prefecture of Yamanashi with Japanese audiences through creative and forward-looking market approaches.

It is no surprise that working within a multicultural team involves challenges, especially when collaboration begins in virtual environments, where recognizing each member's strengths and building trust requires time and intention. Throughout this process, we learned to value our differences and transform them into collective strengths. The hard work, constant communication, and shared responsibility behind every deliverable gradually brought us together, shaping us into a unified team.

By connecting experiences, cultures, and knowledge from different parts of the world, we built a strong foundation that was further reinforced once we arrived in Japan. During our visit to Jewelry Valley, we realized that the research we had conducted effectively addressed several aspects aligned with the company's interests and expectations. However, meeting with them in person allowed us to adapt our approach and place greater emphasis on elements of the final deliverable that added even more value for them as producers. This experience led us to move beyond market analysis and focus more strongly on strategic recommendations that responded directly to their needs and long-term vision.

Overall, this experience not only strengthened our professional and analytical skills but also deepened our understanding of cross-cultural collaboration. The bonds we built throughout the program extend far beyond the project itself, leaving us with meaningful connections and insights that will continue to inspire us in the years to come.

# SAKE TEAM



**(Team Leader)**  
**Bruna Almeida**  
**Scolastrici**  
ESPM, Brazil



**Martina Rebuffi**  
Belgrano University,  
Argentina



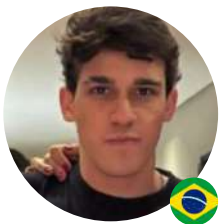
**Julia Yumi**  
**Nishihiro**  
Shiga University, Japan



**Marcos**  
**Lambertini**  
Austral University, Argentina



**Ana Sofía**  
**Rivera Osorio**  
EAFIT University,  
Colombia



**Dante Fonseca**  
**Muniz Conte**  
FAAP, Brazil

# MESSAGES SHARED BY THE LEADERS OF EACH TEAM



## Sake Team Leader

Bruna Almeida Scolastrici  
ESPM,  
Brazil

The SEED Program 2025 was an experience marked by continuous learning and collaboration across different cultural and professional contexts. From the early stages of the program, the project evolved through close teamwork, critical analysis, and a shared commitment to delivering a strategic contribution grounded in real-world dynamics. Throughout this journey, I participated as a member and team leader of the Sake Team, guiding the group while also learning from the diverse perspectives within it.

Our work focused on the development of a strategic project for Taikan Brewery, with an emphasis on international positioning, brand narrative, and long-term market orientation. The project sought to balance respect for the brewery's heritage with the pursuit of innovation, combining analytical research with creative and strategic thinking. Each stage reinforced the importance of aligning market insights with cultural context and the company's broader objectives.

Team collaboration became most tangible through our direct engagement with Taikan Brewery in Yamanashi. Working closely as the Sake Team in this setting allowed us to experience the project beyond research and strategy, transforming it into a shared, hands-on journey. Time spent visiting the brewery, observing production processes, and exchanging ideas in context strengthened our collective understanding and alignment. These moments reinforced not only the quality of our deliverables, but also the sense of unity and shared purpose within the team.

This foundation became especially meaningful once we arrived in Japan. Experiencing the local environment and meeting Taikan Brewery in person allowed us to reassess priorities and refine our strategic direction. While our initial research addressed key aspects of the company's expectations, direct interaction revealed insights that could only be fully understood on site, leading us to adjust our recommendations accordingly.

# SOUVENIR TEAM



**(Team Leader)**  
**Betina Maria Pereira de Moraes Leal**  
FAAP, Brazil



**Angela Beraza**

Belgrano University,  
Argentina



**Santiago Alejandro Jaimes Puerto**

Los Andes University,  
Colombia



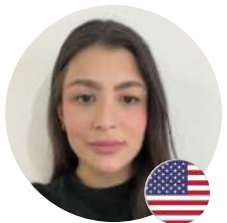
**Juan Bautista Fabani**

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**An Gunjin**

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Florida International  
University, United States



**Dany Catalina Franco Ibañez**

EAFIT University,  
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# MESSAGES SHARED BY THE LEADERS OF EACH TEAM



## Souvenir Business Team Leader

Betina Maria Pereira de Moraes Leal  
FAAP,  
Brazil

Being the leader of the Souvenirs team in the SEED Program 2025 was an extremely meaningful and rewarding experience for me. Throughout the program, I was deeply involved in all stages of the process, from the initial planning and brainstorming to execution and final delivery. Taking on a leadership role challenged me to think strategically, organize workflows, set priorities, and ensure that deadlines were met, while also maintaining a collaborative and motivating environment for the team.

During the development of the project, I was responsible for coordinating meetings, aligning ideas, distributing tasks according to each member's strengths, and mediating discussions to reach collective decisions. The process required constant communication, adaptability, and problem-solving, especially when facing unexpected challenges or time constraints. These moments were essential for my growth, as they taught me how to lead with empathy, flexibility, and responsibility.

One of the most gratifying aspects of this experience was witnessing the team's evolution throughout the program. Seeing ideas take shape, observing individual growth, and knowing that my guidance contributed to the team's organization and performance was incredibly fulfilling. Leading the Souvenirs team allowed me to strengthen my confidence, refine my leadership style, and better understand the importance of teamwork, trust, and shared goals.

Overall, the SEED Program 2025 played a significant role in my personal and professional development. This leadership experience not only enhanced my practical skills but also reinforced my motivation to take on responsibilities and contribute positively to group dynamics in future academic and professional projects.

# TOURISM TEAM



**(Team Leader)**

**Lola Rosas**

Austral University,  
Argentina



**Arthur  
Benjamin**

ESPM, Brazil



**Serena Abril  
Villegas**

Belgrano University,  
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**João Vitor  
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Rosario University,  
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**Nataly Restrepo  
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# MESSAGES SHARED BY THE LEADERS OF EACH TEAM



## Sustainable Tourism Team Leader

**Lola Rosas**  
Austral University,  
Argentina

Being part of the Seed Program is one of those experiences you know, from the very beginning, will only happen once in your life. It's something that truly changes you. Japan itself is incredible, the culture, the landscapes, the talks with producers and industry professionals, all of it brings deep learning and unforgettable moments.

But if I had to highlight one thing above everything else, it would be the connections. And not just professional networking, but real human bonds. The kind that are built through sharing long conversations, doubts, laughter, and moments you never planned. You leave with friendships that feel lifelong, and with that bittersweet feeling of not wanting it to end, of not wanting to leave, because you know what was created is truly unique.

Coming from a context like Argentina, with economic uncertainty and the many questions that come with this stage of life, what to do next, which path to take, what choices to make, this experience shifts your perspective. It makes the world feel bigger. It opens your mind to new possibilities and reminds you that there are many different paths you can take.

If someone asked me whether I would recommend this program, my answer would be a clear and absolute yes, because beyond everything tangible, there's something about this experience that simply can't be fully put into words, but you know it will stay with you forever, it can be summarized in the concept of "Kizuna", the Japanese word for the bonds between people, purpose and place.

Seed Program means growth, memories, connections, empathy and love. I'm honored to have represented my country and to have lived this experience.

# DAY 1: DECEMBER 1ST

## Opening Event - Orientation Session

*Written by: Victoria Ordoñez Ardila, Taiyo Shomura*

Today, we had the first main event of the program, a moment that truly set the tone for the days ahead. We all introduced ourselves and shared messages with the group. The professors opened the session by encouraging us to follow the rules, connect deeply with others, take pride in being here, and above all, learn and enjoy as much as possible.

Then it was our turn. Each of us presented ourselves in our own way, some briefly, others with full motivational speeches, and through that variety, our personalities began to shine. One moment that really stood out was Paulina's message. She said it shouldn't be called international relations, but international relationships, because what we are actually doing is building better societies by connecting with people. That thought stayed with many of us.

The day went by so quickly. It was fascinating to discover new aspects of everyone, things we could never have understood through the previous meetings on Zoom alone. Goro-san told us, "You will be inspired a lot, and the friends you make here, will help you for the rest of your life." Hearing that, we truly began to understand how, such a diverse group can create an incredible range of ideas and perspectives.



# DAY 1: DECEMBER 1ST

## Wine Team: Visit To Producers

*Written by: Victoria Helena Doval Castilho, Logan T. Morris*

After the opening ceremony and lunch in Kofu, the Wine Team boarded the train to Yamanashi. Our first day began with a visit to Daizenji Temple and the wine museum. After admiring the beauty of the temple and learning about its history, we enjoyed matcha and grape juice at the museum while taking in the serene views of the Japanese garden. We then made a stop at Grape Hill, where sweeping views of the city awaited us.

To end the day, we were treated to a wine tasting featuring Shirayuri's L'Orient Muscat Bailey A and Katsunuma Koshu wines. Having studied these wines for months, we were thrilled to finally taste them and surprised by how light and refreshing they were. The tasting was followed by a BBQ hosted by the producers, giving us the chance to get to know one another more closely and explore additional selections from Shirayuri's portfolio. We spent the night in traditional Japanese housing, adding to the authenticity of the experience.

On the second day, we had the privilege of spending the entire day at Shirayuri Winery, where we gained an in-depth understanding of the winemaking process. We sampled a variety of grapes (some of the finest we have ever tasted) and toured the vineyard. During the tour, we learned how to identify the age of vines, observed the tiny handmade "umbrellas" used to protect grapes from the rain, and discovered how Japanese grape-growing techniques differ from European ones due to the unique climate. We were amazed to learn that every grape is harvested by hand over just a few weeks. After exploring the vineyard, we learned about each stage of production from pressing and fermentation to bottling and even how the remnants are distilled into brandy.



# DAY 1: DECEMBER 1ST

Following the tour, we spoke with the producers to gain deeper insight into their experiences and future aspirations. We enjoyed udon for lunch before presenting our proposal and deliverables to the Shirayuri team. They were exceptionally pleased with our work, and we were grateful for the constructive feedback that will help us refine our pitch.

To conclude the day, we visited Katsunuma Winery, where we had the opportunity to taste a variety of their exceptional wines.

This experience left a lasting impact on all of us. It has been insightful, humbling, and deeply enriching. We came away with a greater appreciation for the Yamanashi region's unique heritage and felt more connected to the local culture through these meaningful encounters. We left feeling that all of our hard work had truly been worthwhile.

## Wine Tourism Team: Visit To Producers

*Written by: Ana Júlia Hess Artioli, Emilio Cacik*

On Monday, December 1st, the team visited Shirayuri Winery (L'ORIENT), and this experience became the highlight of the entire day. The winery stands out as a family-run business now in its second generation, which gives the project a unique depth and continuity. This structure reflects a strong commitment to tradition, to the land, and to maintaining a clear identity while evolving with time. The visit reshaped the group's perception not only of the winery itself, but also of the cultural weight behind local production.

Before arriving at L'ORIENT, the group visited Daizenji Temple, a peaceful site with a beautiful view of Katsunuma. The temple is historically significant for its statue of Yakushi Nyorai holding a cluster of grapes, a symbol representing the ancient connection between spirituality and grape cultivation in the region. Following this, the students stopped at Gongguangyuan & the Wine Museum, where they observed historical winemaking tools, old documents, and tasted a local grape juice that expressed the region's identity in a simple and genuine way.

## DAY 1: DECEMBER 1ST

The group also visited Grape Hill, an important reference point for understanding the commercial side of Katsunuma's wine culture. The space brings together wines from various local producers, offering a clear overview of product diversity, presentation strategies and how visitors engage with the region's offerings. This stop provided valuable context for understanding the landscape of local sales and the role of wine tourism in promoting Yamanashi's identity.

Throughout the day, the students gained important insights that shifted their understanding of the guest experience, the narrative behind the wines, and opportunities for future improvements. They also identified clear areas that could be strengthened to enhance international visibility and create an even more memorable connection for visitors. The visits as a whole highlighted how tradition, culture and authenticity remain central to the region's wine story.



### Sustainable Tourism Team: Visit To Producers

*Written by: Lola Rosas*

On Monday, after the warm welcoming session from the Gorom Association team, we met Julio, a key member of Treasure Tourism, the company for which our Sustainable Tourism Team is developing a systemic solution in marketing, communication, and service design.

We presented all our deliverables as a group and engaged in a rich, insightful dialogue that allowed us to understand more deeply the company's vision and expansion goals.

## DAY 2: DECEMBER 2ND

During this exchange, we confirmed that our direction is fully aligned with their expectations. We also shared our pitch, and Julio's thoughtful feedback will guide us as we continue improving the oral presentation.

The following day, we experienced an unforgettable visit filled with shared emotions. We took a short trip to Minobu, a town within Yamanashi Prefecture known for its centuries-old temples and cultural heritage. As a team, we are deeply grateful for this experience.

We met early at the train station, for some, it was the first time using public transportation in Japan.

After a 50-minute ride, we transferred to a bus that brought us closer to the heart of the town. What we found there is almost indescribable. The kindness, respect, and pride of the people we met were truly moving. Our first activity was visiting the temples: a beautiful but demanding route with endless staircases. Yet reaching the top was worth every step.

In many ways, it became a powerful metaphor for the SEED Program itself: it required effort, commitment, and resilience from everyone involved, like climbing a long staircase, but once you arrive, the view is extraordinary, and every step makes sense. This program feels exactly like that.

Walking through the temples with Julio helped us understand tourism beyond merely "seeing" a place. It invited deeper questions: Who walked here before? Why was this built this way? How did they manage to construct something so monumental in the middle of a mountain? Tourism becomes less about visiting and more about uncovering relationships, history, and meaning.

As someone with a design background, witnessing such majestic architecture and landscapes was especially inspiring, discovering new materials, forms, and ways of building that differ from our own but share universal values. Regardless of religion, behind everything lies a desire to honor, represent, and give meaning.

This spirit was also present in a nearby restaurant, which felt like a home away from home. We were welcomed with unmatched kindness, attention to detail, and genuine care. Beyond the delicious food, what stayed with us most was the warmth with which everything was done.

## DAY 2: DECEMBER 2ND

Before cooking, the chef honored his family with a small bowl of freshly cooked rice, a gesture that may seem simple, but for us, it reflected deep love for his craft, his customers, and his heritage.

On the bus afterward, many of us felt emotional, some even distressed, because despite the exceptional service and the generational knowledge behind these businesses, the restaurants and shops were nearly empty. This made our team's challenge painfully clear, these experiences, as impactful as they are, remain overshadowed by the Golden Route. These are places, stories, and encounters that deserve visibility, not only because of their excellence, but because they nurture more human relationships grounded in respect and care.

The experience Julio shared with us was essential. It helped us understand Treasure Tourism's value physically and tangibly. We did not only visit places that preserve Japanese heritage and traditional practices; we also grasped the urgency of our mission, to bring these hidden stories to light, these "living treasures" that deserve to be seen by the world.

As we discussed as a group, this was not just a visit. We felt it as tourists ourselves. People need to know this place. They should stay here. These people matter. Others deserve to meet them. Through this, we realized something crucial, when travelers truly experience, empathize, and connect with a place, they naturally want to share it.

The stories exist, they move, inspire, and remind us of our humanity. What is missing, in an increasingly saturated and globalized world, is the ability to tell them.



## DAY 2: DECEMBER 2ND

### Jewelry Museum Visit

*Written by: Miguel Angel Hoyos Cadavid, Natasha Abreu Nones*

The Yamanashi Jewelry Museum showed the region's rich history relating to gemstones and making of jewelry pieces through a wide collection of artifacts.

The museum showed not only how pieces were made throughout the years and how techniques have evolved in the jewelry making business, which reflects directly on the uniqueness and technology of jewelry made in the region.

The exposition also explained how jewelry business in the region have survived and adapted, starting due to the region's precious stones and evolving with fashion. During the World War II this business had to change, stopping the production of jewelry and having to take part in the production of specific gun parts, such as lenses, for exemple. After this time period, the jewelry business was back in Yamanashi, but due to Japan's recession, the pieces had to be made with cheaper materials to fit into Japanese lifestyle. Eventually with the country's economic boom, jewelry was finally able to come back to its original materials, which lead eventually the importation of more precious stones from different countries, such as Brazil for example, as a way to continue the region's jewelry making tradition. Nowadays, the jewelry business in Yamanashi are not only still strong, but are looking to expand to the global market.



## DAY 2: DECEMBER 2ND

### Souvenir Business Team: Visit To Producers

*Written by: Betina Maria Pereira De Moraes Leal, Juan Bautista Fabani*

Our team arrived at Fujisan Plaza at 3:00 PM, finally meeting the producers and seeing the shop in person. We were welcomed and guided to a private area on the second floor, a space typically used for the Kimono rental experience and photography.

To start the meeting properly, we relied on our teammate Gungjin, who did an excellent job acting as our translator throughout the entire visit. We participated in the traditional Japanese exchange of business cards (meishi) and presented our gifts to the producers as a sign of gratitude. These gifts included a traditional Argentine Mate kit, alfajores, and brazilian candies, sharing a piece of our culture with them.

Then, the producers gave us a guided tour of the shop. This was a crucial moment to identify the exclusive and unique products that differentiate Fujisan Plaza from other souvenir shops. We used this opportunity to ask specific questions and gather final insights to refine our final presentation. Afterward, we had free time to explore the shop's wide variety of items as customers, and many of us bought souvenirs to experience the purchasing journey firsthand.

A key moment was when Santiago presented the prototype of the new website. With Gungjin translating, we demonstrated the new features of the first version, and we asked the producers for feedback. The producer specifically appreciated the user-friendly search option, validating our strategy to improve the digital customer experience.

To conclude the visit, we returned to the private room for a closing session. Our team leader, Betina, gave a speech thanking the producers for their time and openness, accompanied by Professors Ricardo and Ignacio. We documented the entire visit with photos and finished the day with a large group photo including the whole team and the producers, marking a successful start to our fieldwork in Yamanashi.

#### Tourist Interviews (Survey Data)

Our team arrived at Kawaguchiko Bus Station at 11:00 AM and dedicated the session until 12:20 PM to conducting street interviews. To maximize our reach, we divided our seven members into three pairs, while our team leader, Betina, worked individually. We scouted the area surrounding Fujikawaguchiko, specifically targeting tourists from North and South America to validate our Buyer Personas.

## DAY 2: DECEMBER 2ND

The goal was to gather qualitative data based on key behavioral questions. We focused on understanding:

**Preferences:** Whether they lean towards traditional, modern, or practical souvenirs.

**Motivation:** The balance between buying gifts for family versus personal treats.

**Value Perception:** Their willingness to pay a premium for handmade, artisanal goods.

**Friction Points:** Identifying barriers to purchase, such as high prices or difficulty carrying items (luggage constraints).

**Emotional Drivers:** Asking about their "most memorable souvenir" to understand what makes a souvenir special to them.

The process was challenging. To overcome busy travelers, we adapted our strategy by offering chocolates as incentives and distributing the promotional cards we designed for Fujisan Plaza. Explaining the academic nature of the SEED program also helped build trust and willingness to answer. Thanks to these efforts, we successfully collected 82 responses by the deadline.

After concluding the interviews, we spent the rest of the day walking extensively through the town to visit other local souvenir shops. This allowed us to benchmark competitors, gather visual inspiration, and identify best practices that we can share with the producers to further improve Fujisan Plaza.

Overall, the experience from these two days was very educational and mood-lifting. Since all of the group members are different, we have all learnt differently. Personally, we have gained valuable information on how to conduct interviews more properly and attract subjects, along with how to keep them engaged in the interview. We were really tired at the end of the day, but also proud of our work and more committed to the program than before.



## DAY 2: DECEMBER 2ND

### Sake Team: Visit To Producers

*Written by: Marcos Lambertini, Bruna Almeida Scolastici*

On December 2nd, the Sake team visited Taikan's brewery in Kofu and met Mr. Osawa, gaining firsthand experience of the artisanal sake-brewing process they had previously studied in theory.

The team toured the production area, observing rice steaming, cooling, and transfer to fermentation tanks, with methods varying according to rice quality. Fermentation lasts at least three weeks before the sake is pressed and stored for bottling.

The visit ended with a tasting of Taikan's sake, a commemorative photo with Mr. Osawa, a Brewery's souvenir, and a scenic view of Mt. Fuji on the way back to the hotel.

#### Arriving to Taikan's brewery

Taikan was not far away. It was a thirty minute taxi drive to the brewery. So, for departure, the sake team met in the hotel at eight o'clock in the morning.

When the team arrived at the brewery, they were received by Mr. Osawa and his workers at the hall. The sake team also gave Taikan's producer souvenirs from their country and exchanged their presentation cards.

#### Sake brewing process

Entering the main production area, the sake team was introduced to the first machine: the steaming machine that cooks the rice. It was operating and releasing a warm, fragrant rice aroma. Personally, I have to say it felt like being inside a typical restaurant in Kofu.

When the steaming process finished, a Taikan worker transferred the steamed rice with a large paddle to the next machine—a mechanical belt that cools the rice so it reaches the perfect temperature before being placed into the large tanks. The belt moves at a precise speed that allows the rice to release excess heat.

## DAY 2: DECEMBER 2ND

After the cooling stage, the rice is moved into the large tanks where fermentation begins. The method used to transfer the rice depends on its quality, which is determined by its polishing grade. Lower-quality rice is transferred using compressed air through a tube, while higher-quality rice is moved by hand using a special cloth that prevents the grains from sticking.

Filling a tank takes two full days. During this time, new batches of rice are constantly being steamed, cooled, and added to the tank. As these layers build up, the mixture of rice and water settles naturally, creating the conditions needed for proper fermentation.

Once the tank is completely filled, the fermentation stage begins. From this point, the rice mixture ferments for at least three weeks, allowing the sake to slowly develop its flavor and alcohol content.

After fermentation is complete, the mixture goes through the pressing stage, where an iron press separates the liquid sake from the remaining rice solids. The filtered sake is then transferred into a final storage tank, where it rests until it is ready to be bottled and labeled.

### Sake tasting

We started the sake tasting with their Koshu Riemon (Junmai Daiginjo), a liquor with a rich aroma and soft taste, made by hand using the finest ingredients. It was very aromatic and slightly dry, with a clean finish that reflects the elegance of Yamanashi's water and craftsmanship.

Next, we tried the Sparkling Sake brewed with wine yeast. This pure-rice sparkling sake undergoes secondary fermentation in the bottle, giving it a delicate effervescence. It opens with a refreshing banana aroma and a white-wine-like mouthfeel, while a gentle note of sake emerges toward the end. Overall, it is a light, sweet, and refreshing style.

## DAY 2: DECEMBER 2ND

After that, we tried two options of Fruit-infused Junmai Liqueurs. The first one was the Shine Muscat, made by blending Yamanashi's green-grape juice with Junmai sake. It is bright, fruity, and slightly acidic, with the Muscat's fresh sweetness balancing the sake's crispness.

The second one was the White Peach Liqueur, crafted using pure rice sake and Yamanashi white peach. This one is softer and rounder, with a luxurious peach aroma and a smooth sweetness that makes it very easy to drink.

Together, these tastings showed the versatility of Taikan's portfolio—from refined premium sake, to innovative sparkling styles, to approachable fruit-based liqueurs—highlighting how the brewery can appeal to both traditional sake drinkers and new, curious consumers.

### Back to the hotel

At the end of the visit, the team gathered with Mr. Osawa at the entrance of the Taikan brewery for a commemorative photo. Before saying goodbye, he kindly offered the team a premium limited-edition sample as a souvenir of the experience.

Around midday, the team took a taxi back to the hotel. During the ride, they were able to catch a clear view of Mt. Fuji from the car window, a perfect ending to the visit.



## DAY 3: DECEMBER 3RD

### December 3: Group Discussion With Consultants From Yamanashi Chuo Bank

*Written by: Angela Beraza*

On Wednesday, our group visited Yamanashi Bank, where we were welcomed with an informative presentation outlining the bank's history, organizational structure, and the challenges currently facing regional financial institutions in Japan. Following the presentation, we participated in a structured discussion covering two key topics.

The first topic addressed potential measures to slow or even reverse the population decline in Japan's rural areas, such as Yamanashi, as well as the related issue of business succession. Many small and medium-sized enterprises are struggling to find successors as their owners age, creating risks for local economies. When asked to contribute, I proposed offering tax reductions as an incentive for individuals and families to relocate to rural regions. I suggested that easing the tax burden could help attract younger populations and support the revitalization of these communities.

The second topic focused on the future role of Japanese banks and the strategies they might adopt to increase profit margins in an environment characterized by persistently low interest rates.

Overall, the visit provided a valuable perspective on the economic and demographic issues facing regional Japan, as well as the strategic challenges confronting local banks. It was an engaging and thought-provoking experience.



## DAY 3: DECEMBER 3RD

### Visit To The Financial Museum Of Yamanashi Chuo Bank

*Written by: Sofia Lopes Rodrigues, Martina Rebuffi*

The visit to the Financial Museum of Yamanashi Chuo Bank began with a meeting with the bank's authorities and specialists, who welcomed us to discuss one of the most pressing challenges facing small and medium-sized enterprises in Japan: business succession. They explained that in a country marked by an aging population and a strong presence of family-run businesses, many SMEs lack a clear plan for ensuring continuity. The shortage of heirs willing to take over, combined with the complexity of the succession process, ranging from financing to leadership development, creates a significant risk of business closures and job losses, directly affecting regional economies.

In this context, regional financial institutions play a fundamental role. The bank's representatives emphasized that, thanks to their proximity and deep understanding of the local business landscape, they are well positioned to accompany companies through every stage of the succession process. Their support includes financial advisory services, credits for the SMEs and guidance for third-party successions when no family heir is available. They highlighted that sustaining SMEs is crucial not only for economic stability but also for preserving the identity and social fabric of the region.

During the visit, we also had the opportunity to discuss these topics in smaller groups together with the bank authorities. This interactive exchange allowed us to share perspectives, ask questions about the specific challenges faced by local SMEs, and better understand how regional financial institutions design solutions tailored to each community. The group discussions added a collaborative dimension to the visit, helping us connect the theoretical issues of succession with real experiences from the region.

After the discussion, we toured the financial museum located within the bank. The exhibition offered a historical perspective on the evolution of finance in Yamanashi, with a particular focus on the development of currency. A large collection of coins and bills was on display, ranging from early forms of money to more modern notes, illustrating how Japan's monetary system has transformed over time. These artifacts helped us understand the practical and cultural significance of currency in regional economic life, and how financial institutions have adapted to support these changes.

## DAY 3: DECEMBER 3RD

Overall, the experience was highly enriching and provided a comprehensive view of both the current challenges surrounding business succession and the historical and contemporary importance of regional financial institutions in sustaining local economies.



### Group Works And Rehearsal (Jewelry Valley Team)

*Written by: Rosita Sofía Quintero Llorente, Suemi Matienzo*

In the past two days of our study tour, we had the chance to work together in person and prepare our final presentation. It was a special moment because, after several months of working online, we finally had time to discuss our ideas face-to-face, listen to each other, and make changes together. Our work happened in two main stages: first, the teamwork sessions where we shaped the proposal, and then the rehearsals, where we practiced what each of us would say.

Everything started with the visit to our producer, Jewelry Valley. Meeting the team helped us understand the company much better. We asked questions about how they produce the jewelry, how the business works, and how they are trying to grow. He explained that the company is beginning to enter new Asian markets, that they sell only through Live Commerce, and that they are investing in Instagram advertising. He also told us about the meaning behind the name “Jewelry Valley” which made us feel more connected with the brand.

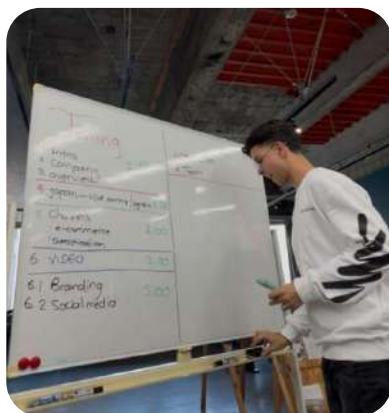
## DAY 3: DECEMBER 3RD

After that meeting, we realized that **our original presentation could be improved**. We wanted it to reflect our proposal rather than our research (that at the end is the most important piece of information to our producer), so we decided to reorganize all our ideas. During our group meeting, we started brainstorming, choosing together the most important themes. **We finally decided to structure it into four parts: logistics, live commerce, branding, and social media**. For each section, we wrote down the key message and what we wanted the producer to implement. We also assigned the speaking time and who would cover each part.

During these discussions, we also **\*\*changed some of our original proposals.\*\*** Before traveling, we thought it would be best for the company to combine Live Commerce with e-commerce to grow in countries like Brazil and the United States. However, after the visit and reviewing all the information again, we changed our recommendation. We now believe that it is more helpful if they first focus on building a strong brand, creating a community, and having a clear identity. Later, when they have that base, they can start doing Live Commerce with an audience that is already engaged and interested in the product.

Working together in person made the process different. We could speak openly, give feedback, and improve our ideas. It felt like a very collaborative space where everyone tried to add value.

Once all the slides were ready, we continued with rehearsals. Each of us prepared how to explain our part, including the important words and examples. The first rehearsal was difficult because it lasted around thirty minutes, so we had to shorten it again and again. We practiced many times, improved the design of the slides, and worked with Taiyo to make sure our English ideas were aligned with what he would say in Japanese. Even though it was intense, **\*\*it was meaningful because we could see how the presentation became clearer every time.\*\*** In the end, these sessions helped us feel confident, and it was fulfilling to see everything come together after so much effort.



# DAY 3: DECEMBER 3RD

## Group Works And Rehearsal (Souvenir Business Team)

*Written by: Catalina Franco Ibáñez, Santiago Alejandro Jaimes Puerto*

We met at the coworking space at 9am and started to discuss how we wanted to improve our presentation.

During our previous visit to the producers we realized we had to make some changes to the recommendations, so we focused on that. Also, We worked analyzing the answers of the interviews we made at Fujikawaguchiko lake and started adding the final touches to the Website.

In the mean time, we shared snacks from our home countries and talked about what we wanted to prioritize for the pitching. Our main challenge has been organizing our findings so that they fit in the time we have. In the end we had to remove some sections from the presentation and started preparing the scripts according to the slide distribution.

Afterwards we had lunch together.



## DAY 3: DECEMBER 3RD

### Group Works And Rehearsal (Sustainable Tourism Team)

*Written by: João Vitor Pastoriza, Serena Abril Villegas*

Today was a very important day for our Sustainable Tourism Team because we focused on group work and rehearsal for the big day on Friday. We spent most of the day practicing our presentation, going over every detail, and making sure everyone clearly understood their role. It wasn't just about memorizing what to say, but also about learning how to communicate better as a team, support each other, and stay confident when presenting in front of others.

During the rehearsal, we helped each other by giving feedback, correcting small mistakes, and encouraging one another when someone felt nervous. I realized how important teamwork really is, especially in a project that involves sustainability, where cooperation and responsibility are key values. Working together made the whole process feel easier and more motivating.

We also shared time as a group beyond just practicing. Talking, laughing, and spending time together helped strengthen our bond and made the environment much more comfortable. This made me feel more confident and connected with my team, which I believe will reflect in our final presentation.

From today, I learned that preparation is not only about studying or practicing, but also about trusting your team and learning to work with others. This experience helped me grow personally and professionally, and it showed me how meaningful teamwork can be.



# DAY 3: DECEMBER 3RD

## Group Works And Rehearsal (Sake Team)

*Written by: Ana Sofía Rivera Osorio, Dante Fonseca Muniz Conte*

Today, we focused on finalizing the details of our pitch and final presentation. We met at 8:00 a.m. to revise our script, as we realized during a previous rehearsal that we were running over the allotted time. Therefore, we made several adjustments and corrections to stay within the time limit and allow ourselves some extra room to present calmly and at a steady pace.

At midday, the entire sake team went out for lunch and then reconvened at 1:00 p.m. to carry out the final rehearsal before presenting to the professors in the afternoon.

At 3:00 p.m., we arrived at the coworking space for our final rehearsal, which was successful. During this session, we had the opportunity to present in front of Professors Ricardo, Juan Carlos, Staci, Nacho, Vivianne, and Santiago. We were also accompanied by the staff of the GOROM Association.

Rehearsing in front of the professors was the perfect opportunity for our team to face a live audience and assess our presentation skills, time management, and coordination. The feedback we received was extremely valuable, as it allowed us to broaden our perspective on areas where both our presentation and storytelling could be improved.

Finally, after the rehearsal, we returned to our workspace to implement the feedback and completed a couple of timed practice sessions. We look forward to delivering our best performance tomorrow. We'll keep reporting!



# DAY 3: DECEMBER 3RD

## Group Works And Rehearsal (Wine Team)

*Written by: Solana Gonzalez, Bunta Shinmori*

On Wednesday 3rd, we worked on improving our presentation according to the feedback we received from Shirayuri's producers on Tuesday.

On that day, we rehearsed the presentation in front of Takao and Keiya Uchida, owners of the winery.

They were very content and satisfied with our work, thanking us for our investigation and proposals. We were asked to emphasize the importance of Brazil in their expansion process into Latin America and to translate the research paper into Japanese, particularly focusing on the contacts with stakeholders abroad.

We also started working on the 2-minute video, in which we had to show our main findings and proposals.

Therefore, we worked together to accomplish all our tasks efficiently.



# DAY 3: DECEMBER 3RD

## Group Works And Rehearsal (Wine Tourism Team)

*Written by: Kang Hansoo, Sara Lucia Tarquino*

In this day, activities began at the coworking space, where our team dedicated the morning to advancing both the presentation and the pitch. We started by reorganizing the overall structure of the presentation to ensure a more logical flow and stronger storytelling. As part of this process, we refined the problem statements and clarified the key issues we aim to address. We also worked on translating the presentation into Japanese, making sure the terminology and expressions were accurate and culturally appropriate. In addition, we rewrote the script for the presentation to improve coherence, clarity, and timing. This allowed us to better align our message with the expectations of our audience.

After completing this work session, we took a break to have lunch.

During the afternoon, we visited Chuo Bank. There, we learned about how the bank functions within the local economy and explored different strategies that banks can use to support and protect local companies. Our discussion also covered the succession problem faced by many Japanese small and medium-sized enterprises, especially those in rural areas, where younger generations are not always willing to take over family businesses. This conversation helped us better understand the structural challenges affecting local economic sustainability.



# DAY 4: DECEMBER 4TH

## Final Rehearsal of the Pitch Presentation

*Written by: João Vitor Pastoriza, Serena Abril Villegas*

Today was a very important day for our Sustainable Tourism Team because we focused not only on group work but also on the careful and continuous rehearsal for the big day on Friday. We dedicated almost the entire day to practicing our presentation, reviewing every slide, every transition, and every part of the narrative we want to deliver. It was a moment to slow down and look closely at the structure of our pitch, making sure that the sequence of ideas was coherent and that everyone clearly understood their role within the group. It became very clear that this practice was not just about memorizing lines or repeating information, but about understanding how to communicate our message with intention, clarity, and confidence. It also pushed us to observe how each person brings something unique to the team and how important it is to align these strengths in order to form a solid and convincing presentation.

Throughout the rehearsal, we supported one another by offering feedback that was constructive and honest. When someone forgot a part or hesitated, the rest of us would step in with suggestions, corrections, or simply a few words of encouragement. This created a space where mistakes did not feel like failures, but like opportunities to improve. It reminded me of how essential collaboration is, especially within a project that deals with sustainability, where cooperation, mutual respect, and shared responsibility play such an important role. Practicing together made the entire process feel more achievable, and I could sense that the group was becoming more focused, more united, and more motivated with every round of practice.

Beyond the structured rehearsal, we also made time to interact as a group in a more relaxed way. We talked about our expectations for the final presentation, shared jokes, and took small breaks that helped release tension. These moments of simplicity and connection were just as important as the practice itself because they strengthened the bond within the team. Spending time together reminded us that we are not just individuals working on a task, but a group of people with shared goals and a shared journey. This atmosphere of trust and companionship made me feel more confident about facing the challenges ahead, and I believe it will have a positive impact on how we perform in the final pitch.

## DAY 4: DECEMBER 4TH

What I learned from today goes far beyond the content of the presentation. I realized that preparation involves much more than studying or rehearsing. It also requires learning to trust your team, understanding when to lead and when to listen, and being open to growth through collaboration. This experience helped me mature both personally and professionally, showing me how meaningful teamwork truly is. It made clear that when people work together with respect, curiosity, and dedication, the result becomes stronger than anything that could have been achieved alone.



## Day 5 - December 5th: Public Pitching Event

*Written by: Paulina Ríos Acosta, Arthur Benjamin Freiria De Oliveira*

On Friday, December 5th, a key event took place where the various teams presented to the producers and consumers of Yamanashi the conclusions of the work and research they had carried out over the past six months. Each group had 20 minutes to explain their findings, recommendations, and proposals aimed at promoting the international expansion of local producers. This event marked the culmination of an ongoing process of analysis, meetings, field visits, and dialogue with different stakeholders in the region.

The event was held at the Kofu Chamber of Commerce, a venue that added a sense of formality and professionalism. Despite the typical nerves that come with such an important day, the teams' preparation allowed them to present with confidence.

## DAY 5: DECEMBER 5TH

The rehearsal held the day before helped fine-tune details, strengthen the clarity of their speeches, and ensure internal cohesion, which was reflected in the overall quality of each presentation.

The jewelry team stood out for having accurately identified and integrated all the challenges faced by the producer. The producer expressed being deeply impressed by how the group managed to represent the real complexity of the business, addressing everything from artisanal tradition to the modern challenges of internationalization. He said he felt seen in every point and that the analysis offered useful perspectives for continued growth.

The sustainable tourism team received praise especially for delivering tangible products resulting from their research. Producers appreciated that the group didn't limit themselves to conceptual recommendations but developed concrete materials and proposals that could be applied immediately. This was seen as a sign of commitment and a deep understanding of the sector's needs, which generated a very positive response.

The wine tourism team surprised the audience with their ambitious comparisons to internationally renowned wine tourism destinations. Producers commented that it was exciting to hear how the students envisioned Yamanashi's potential, imagining global growth scenarios based on aspirational yet well-grounded strategies. This vision helped them see new goals and feel part of a promising future for the region.

The event also included presentations from other groups focused on equally important sectors: wine, souvenirs, and sake. Although they are not detailed in this summary, their participation helped reinforce the diversity and breadth of the overall project.



## DAY 5: DECEMBER 5TH

One of the most meaningful moments was the collective reaction from the producers, who highlighted the high quality of all the work, the professionalism shown, and the level of detail achieved. Several mentioned they would like to continue collaborating with the students, as they found the exchange enriching and with real potential for the future development of their businesses. They also acknowledged the emotional effort of those who faced the challenge of public speaking, appreciating the commitment shown.

The December 5th event thus became a formative, memorable experience filled with positive prospects for the producers of Yamanashi.



## Day 6 - December 6: Mt. Fuji Excursion Trip

*Written by: Julia Yumi Nishihiro, Maria Camila Romero Castañeda*

On the Mount Fuji tour we went to 5 spots!

**First location: Fuji Sengen Shrine**

The shrine was absolutely stunning! The air was crisp, and the atmosphere was super peaceful. We made sure to pay our respects (and secretly prayed for clear skies so Fujisan would actually show up for our photos later). It was the perfect, calm start before the chaos of our photo shoots began.

## DAY 6: DECEMBER 6TH

### Second location: Oshino Hakkai

Next up, we headed to the famous spring water ponds! The water was insanely clear—like, you could see straight to the bottom! It was a bit crowded, but totally worth it to see the reflection of the sky. We definitely fueled up on some snacks here too, because exploring is hungry work.

### Third location: Iyashi no Sato Nemba

This was the main event. We arrived at the traditional village and immediately went into undercover mode—aka, we rented kimonos! We absolutely slayed. Maria Camila went for that gorgeous rusty-orange autumn vibe, and Julia rocked the elegant cream floral look. We also found this giant purple umbrella that honestly deserves its own photoshoot.

Standing there with the thatched-roof houses and Mt. Fuji in the background? Unbeatable. We felt like we time-traveled to the Edo period. (See attached photographic evidence of us looking way too happy).

### Fourth location: Appare Boat Cruise

After walking around in sandals, we needed to rest our feet, so we hopped on the Appare. It wasn't just a boring boat; it looked like a cool traditional warship! We cruised around Lake Kawaguchiko, letting the wind mess up our hair while we soaked in the panoramic views. It was super chill and the perfect way to see the mountain from a different angle.

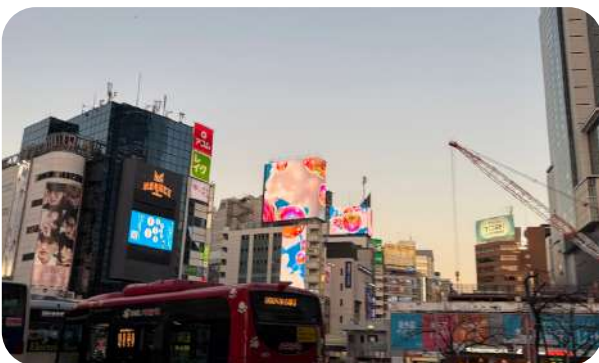


# DAY 7: DECEMBER 7TH

## Day off in Tokyo

*Written by: Alonso Hernandez*

The entire SEED 2025 team returned from Kofu to Tokyo in the morning. We took a bus trip and arrived at the Tokyo Olympic Center, where we would be staying until the end of the program. After lunch and check-in, everyone had free time to make plans in Tokyo or nearby areas. Some people visited Disney, others traveled to Kamakura, Odaiba, or simply went shopping.



## DAY 8: DECEMBER 8TH

### Visit To The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)

*Written by: David Suárez, Serena Abril Villegas*

On December 8th, SEED 2025 cohort had the opportunity to visit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. It was one of those experiences that you don't fully grasp until you're actually standing inside the building, surrounded by people who shape Japan's foreign policy every day. Once the group arrived, it was divided into smaller groups based on language: Portuguese, Spanish I, Spanish II, and English; which made the discussions much more dynamic and personal.

Throughout the visit, students were able to talk directly with several representatives and diplomats after a marvelous opening speech led both in English and Spanish. They were surprisingly open and willing to explain not only Japan's current priorities, but also the broader vision behind their foreign policy. A wide range of topics were covered, including Japan-LATAM relations, the Prime Minister's approach to both multilateral and bilateral cooperation, and the growing relevance of the private sector within international cooperation frameworks. It was also explored how agencies like JICA and the IDB work, and how regional integration bodies such as ASEAN, the Pacific Alliance, and MERCOSUR fit into Japan's strategic outlook.

What it was valued the most was how this visit helped the group to connect theory with practice. These concepts are always studied in class, but hearing diplomats explain the challenges and reasoning behind real decisions made everything feel much more tangible. It gave a clearer sense of how complex international affairs can be, and how many actors are involved in shaping policies. Overall, it was a genuinely enriching experience that strengthened interdisciplinary understanding and gave a closer look at how decision making actually happens inside a major governmental institution like MOFA.



# DAY 8: DECEMBER 8TH

## Nippon Koei Working Session

*Written by: Nataly Restrepo Giraldo, Kataria Caze*

The day began with a delightful breakfast at the hotel, providing a good start and an opportunity to connect with fellow participants.

We then visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where we spoke with officials about Japan's diplomatic initiatives and international collaboration efforts. The discussion provided valuable insights into government policies and strategies for sustainable development and global partnerships.

Afterwards, we visited Nippon Koei, a leading engineering and consulting firm. The CEO presented an overview of the company's mission, global projects, and approach to innovation. We also participated in breakout group sessions with employees, allowing us to discuss practical applications of social entrepreneurship and sustainable business practices. Lastly, the groups worked on a real case study from the Company.



## DAY 9: DECEMBER 9TH

### Joint Class At Tsukuba University

*Written by: Valeria Caro Curiel, Hiroki Kamiya*

The day began with a stop at the botanical garden of the University of Tsukuba, where the group was able to chat while walking through hallways filled with plants from all around the world—some with unique aromas, others with medicinal properties, but all undeniably beautiful. After spending some time taking photos, observing, and sharing thoughts about each plant species they came across, the group returned to the bus, with the University of Tsukuba campus as the next destination.

The group then had a lunch break and experienced international student life at the university cafeteria. Some participants had Japanese curry with rice and fried chicken, others chose pasta with different sauces, and some selected sandwiches or pastries. After grabbing coffee and exploring parts of the campus, they continued on to their Joint Class with Tsukuba students.

The joint class with University of Tsukuba students had two parts. The first part consisted of dividing into tables by each visiting university, with a couple of Tsukuba students joining each table. Together, they introduced themselves, learned some Japanese words, and shared a few words in Spanish and Portuguese. After getting to know one another, the visiting students gave presentations about each visiting country—Brazil, Argentina, and Colombia—offering the Japanese students a glimpse of Latin America through fun facts about geography, population, traditional foods, music, dances, iconic figures, and other hallmark aspects of their cultures. Traditional sweets were also shared.



## DAY 9: DECEMBER 9TH

The second part of the joint class allowed the visiting students to meet another group of students—also from the University of Tsukuba—generally with a more advanced level of studies, ranging from undergraduate to doctoral programs. During this session, the SEED program students shared a summary of their experience in Japan over the past weeks, as well as the work each group—this time divided according to the consulting teams they had been working with for the previous five months—had carried out for producers across different industries, including jewelry, souvenirs, tourism, wine, and sake. They listened to feedback, answered questions, and, most importantly, built connections intended to last well beyond the program.

The group also acknowledged the remarkable opening statements by Goro Mitsuura, the professors, Bunta's hosting skills, Argentina's dance presentation, Colombia's champeta classes, the U.S. "guess the song" activity, and the thoughtful feedback, participation, and intellectual contributions of all students.

Overall, it was an exceptional and unforgettable day, filled with laughter, learning, cultural exchange, networking, and lasting memories.



## DAY 10: DECEMBER 10TH

### Visit To The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

*Written by: Rosita Sofía Quintero Llorente, Arthur Benjamin Freiria De Oliveira*

Today we had the opportunity to visit JICA. This visit helped us understand how international cooperation works, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean, and also gave us the chance to reflect on our own journey during the past five months of the program. The day was divided into two parts: first, a conversation circle with JICA members and, later, a collaborative workshop.

At the beginning, JICA representatives shared more about the organization. We learned that JICA operates in almost every country in Latin America and the Caribbean, supporting projects mainly related to sustainability. They have offices in countries such as Brazil, Mexico, and Peru, and they provide financial, technical, and academic cooperation. They focus on areas like environmental protection, clean energy, disaster risk management, and sustainable development. They normally work through cooperation between governments, although they also collaborate with private companies, universities, and social organizations. For example, in Brazil they partner with Embrapa and BNDES. JICA also provides loans with low interest rates and long repayment times for large-scale infrastructure projects, especially in transportation, which made us understand how relevant their work is for economic growth in the region.



## DAY 10: DECEMBER 10TH

After this introduction, we divided into small groups and received a set of questions to discuss with the JICA members. The questions were: How have the past five months of the SEED Program been? What was difficult? What was fun? What have we enjoyed during our time in Japan? And what societal problems did we observe in Yamanashi and Tokyo? Discussing these topics helped us realize how much we had changed, not only academically but also as a group. Many barriers disappeared because we had worked intensely on our project, and meeting in person allowed us to build friendships and deeper trust. This made the process more enjoyable and also made our proposals much stronger.

In the afternoon, we took part in a very engaging sustainability workshop. Each group received nine principles: slow life style, community, economic growth, health and security, environment is sustainable, participation, education, diversity & gender, and strong government. We had to arrange them in a pyramid based on priority. After organizing them, one person stayed at the table while the rest rotated among the other groups to listen to different viewpoints. This was interesting because almost every team had a different order. It helped us understand that there were no right or wrong answers; instead, the value was in recognizing perspectives, identifying what matters to others, and learning how different priorities can still lead to the same goal: wanting a better world.

We closed the activity with a tour through rooms that represented each Sustainable Development Goal. It was interactive, visual, and educational. We thought it was a powerful way to communicate such important topics in a format that is friendly, dynamic, and easy to understand.

This day at JICA was special because it combined reflection, learning, and sharing. We understood how cooperation agencies work in real-life contexts and how sustainability is approached internationally. More importantly, it was a moment to think about our experience, celebrate everything we have achieved so far, and connect with each other in a deeper way. It was a space that reminded us that learning also comes from listening, sharing, and appreciating the diversity of ideas within our group.



# DAY 10: DECEMBER 10TH

## Visit To The Embassy of Argentina

*Written by: Emilio Cacik, Juan Bautista Fabani*

The session focused on a deep analysis of the bilateral relationship between Argentina and Japan. While structural and historical differences were initially acknowledged, the central axis of the presentation was the identification of elements that unite both cultures, overcoming barriers of distance and custom. One of the most significant findings of the day was the demystification of "cultural distance." Surprisingly parallel elements were identified that act as facilitators for dialogue:

**Shared Rituals:** A direct analogy was established between the Japanese Tea Ceremony and the Argentine Mate ritual. Both transcend the simple act of drinking to become social acts of hospitality, pause, and connection.

**Artistic Expression:** Similarities were highlighted regarding the emotionality and structure of certain traditional dances from both countries.

Despite having distinct cultures on the surface, deep, shared points of connection exist. These common denominators are fundamental, as they create a familiar ground that greatly facilitates communication, empathy, and mutual understanding between both nations.

After, during the Q&A segment, pragmatic topics regarding economic cooperation were addressed. For example the identification of some Argentinian sectors with the highest potential for creating agreements and attracting Japanese like the Energy Sector, gas and minerals.

This activity was helpful to understand how to build stronger relationships not only with Japan's people but also to become better global citizens.



# DAY 11: DECEMBER 11TH

## Visit To The Embassy of Colombia

*Written by: Ana Sofía Rivera Osorio, Sara Lucia Tarquino*

On December 11, the Colombian delegation of the SEED Program had the opportunity to visit the Embassy of Colombia in Tokyo. The group was welcomed by Minister Plenipotentiary José Francisco Díaz Ulloa. During the visit, we engaged in a wide-ranging conversation about the functions and daily work of the embassy, the main challenges the diplomatic mission faces, and the strategies that could strengthen bilateral relations between Colombia and Japan.

The session began with brief introductions from both the students and the embassy officials. Afterwards, Minister Díaz Ulloa shared insights from his diplomatic career and his extensive professional trajectory, offering a candid perspective on the demands and responsibilities of representing Colombia abroad. His reflections provided valuable context on Colombia's foreign policy priorities in Asia, the growing importance of Japan as a strategic partner, and the embassy's role in promoting political dialogue, economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and consular services.

It was an enriching discussion in which students actively participated, raising thoughtful questions that contributed meaningfully to the exchange. Some of the topics addressed included the potential for technical cooperation and capacity-building programs between the two countries, mechanisms for strengthening institutional collaboration, and the relevance of successful regional development models in Colombia—such as the case of Medellín—as references for international cooperation.

An especially memorable moment came when the embassy surprised the delegation with freshly baked Colombian pandebonos. This gesture created a warm and familiar atmosphere, allowing students and officials to share an informal space of conversation and cultural connection.



# DAY 11: DECEMBER 11TH

## Visit To The Embassy of Brazil

*Written by: Betina Maria Pereira De Moraes Leal, Bruna Almeida Scolastrici*

December 11 was marked by a deep immersion both in the diplomatic universe and in Japan's cultural expressions, providing a complete experience for the FAAP and ESPM groups within the SEED Program 2025.

Visit to the Embassy of Brazil in Tokyo

We began the morning at the Embassy of Brazil in Tokyo, where we were warmly welcomed by the diplomatic staff. The main activity was led by Lara, who delivered an engaging and didactic presentation on the current landscape of relations between Brazil and Japan.

Throughout her talk, she contextualized the historical importance of this bilateral relationship, mentioning the trajectory of the Japanese-Brazilian community, which today constitutes the largest population of Japanese descendants outside Japan. Lara also highlighted how this human connection strengthens diplomatic ties and opens doors for collaboration in various areas.

From an economic standpoint, she presented data on trade flows, explaining the main products that make up Brazilian exports to Japan and how the Japanese market perceives sectors such as agribusiness, energy, and innovation. She also discussed Japanese investment in Brazil, emphasizing how Japanese companies maintain a solid presence in the country, especially in the automotive, technology, and infrastructure sectors.

Lara also shared aspects of everyday work in diplomacy, revealing routine challenges, cooperation opportunities, and the role of young professionals in this international ecosystem. The presentation was dynamic and provided both strategic and inspiring insights, clearly demonstrating the relevance of international relations in practice.



# DAY 11: DECEMBER 11TH

## Visit To The Embassy of the United States

*Written by: Suemi Matienzo, Logan T. Morris*

Upon arriving at the U.S. Embassy, we were required to leave our phones and personal belongings with security before entering the building. We were then greeted by Ryan, an FIU alumnus, who escorted us to a small meeting room and delivered a presentation on his role within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He outlined how the United States promotes its agricultural products in Japan through trade shows, restaurant menu partnerships, and in-store marketing initiatives, as well as how various agencies oversee food safety, inspections, and import regulations. Ryan also discussed key economic indicators such as GDP and inflation and presented charts illustrating the primary goods traded between the United States and Japan. To make the information more engaging, he concluded by sharing photographs and videos from his own professional experiences.

From our experience, this visit provided valuable insight into the inner workings of the U.S. Embassy. Ryan emphasized that the agency offers several lesser-known career paths, including roles related to agriculture. He noted that these opportunities extend well beyond the more widely recognized fields of politics and defense causing surprise. The discussions we participated in were particularly engaging and inspired us to consider pursuing future roles within U.S. embassies ourselves. Overall, we had an excellent experience at the embassy and feel that our visit has meaningfully enriched our perspectives.



# DAY 11: DECEMBER 11TH

## Joint Class At Meiji University / Latin America Day Event

*Written by: Victoria Ordoñez Ardila, Catalina Franco Ibáñez*

Before coming to Japan we had the opportunity to collaborate with the projects of undergraduate students from Meiji University. They were interested in learning more about the Latin American region from the perspective of its own people. In order to do so, all participants of the program were split into new groups by topics, including food, alcohol, tourism and music culture. Next, each of the SEED students had to record a video answering Meiji Students' inquiries and were able to contribute to their research.

Finally, on the 11th day of this program we got to meet them. They welcomed us warmly and gave us high-quality presentations. By integrating the comprehensive market analysis and the insights given, they showed us how we can connect our cultures to Japan through business.

After the presentations, we continued the exchange through a hands-on cultural activity session. We shared time with the Meiji students and had the chance to learn directly from them. They taught us how to make traditional origami figures, guided us through Japanese calligraphy using ink and brushes, and introduced us to the etiquette and meaning behind a traditional tea ceremony. Throughout these activities we talked, compared our cultural experiences, and discovered unexpected similarities between our backgrounds. It was a relaxed and engaging moment that allowed us to build genuine connections beyond academics and to appreciate the importance of cultural exchange in international collaboration.



## DAY 12: DECEMBER 12TH

### Farewell Ceremony

*Written by: Solana Gonzalez, Gungjin An*

The closing ceremony began with an opening speech by Goro Mutsuura, who shared his personal journey and the motivations that led him to create the SEED Program. He spoke about the role Yamanashi has played in his life, framing the program not only as an educational initiative, but also as a reflection of values, place, and long-term vision.

This was followed by five-minute speeches from each of the professors. In their reflections, they shared what the program had meant to them, what they were taking away from the experience, and the personal motivations that brought them to Japan. These perspectives added depth to the program, highlighting the diversity of backgrounds united by a shared purpose.

The ceremony continued with the diploma presentation, during which each participant gave a short speech. These moments offered insight into how the experience had shaped each individual, capturing both personal growth and collective learning.

The day concluded with a small celebration with food, creating a more informal space for shared reflection. Although participants had known each other for several months and spent two very intense weeks together, it was during these speeches that deeper connections were formed. New layers of understanding emerged through words, emotions, and shared vulnerability.

The moment was marked by tears and expressions of “see you later,” as well as by joy and gratitude. It served as a closing that honored not only what was learned, but also the bonds that were formed and the meaning of the shared journey.

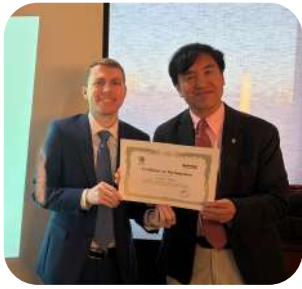


# CERTIFICATE CEREMONY



*Congratulations to all participants for successfully completing the 2025 SEED Program! Your dedication and hard work over the past six months have been instrumental in fostering collaboration between Latin America, the United States and Japan, contributing to the growth of local communities in Yamanashi.*

# CERTIFICATE CEREMONY



*The certificate you received is a symbol of your achievements and the positive impact you've made. The GOROM Association is honored to welcome you as proud members of the SEED Alumni family. We look forward to seeing how you continue to build bridges and create lasting change!*

**THANK YOU FOR SHARING THIS  
WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE  
WITH THE WORLD**



**SEED**

