

## **Barriers Facing Female Candidates Running for National Office in Japan (\$5000.00)**

Dates of Project: February 15, 2009-May 30, 2010

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### **Goals and objectives**

My research investigates the institutional and cultural obstacles female candidates face when running for national office in Japan. It seeks to understand how female candidates and organizations that support female candidates challenge these barriers. I received an ACS Mellon grant to support research assistance for interview preparation, interview transcription and translation and the acquisition of materials in Japan from mid-February 2009 to the end of December 2009. I was granted an extension to May 30, 2010 due to some initial delays regarding the payment logistics and legalities for the Japanese national I hired. This research was to culminate in a published journal article in the *Journal of Japanese Studies*.

My research strategy of hiring research assistance abroad serves as a model for other institutions as an efficient and inexpensive way to secure materials from foreign libraries and receive assistance from native speakers. As such, a goal of the project was to share this strategy with faculty at Southwestern and other ACS institutions.

### **Assessment of Goals and Objectives**

I hired two research assistants to help with this project. Both research assistants were Japanese nationals and native speakers. Mr. Shunsuke Fujita was based in Tokyo, Japan and Ms. Midori Tanaka was based in Austin, Texas. Mr. Fujita, a Masters student at Sophia University, helped me compose interview approach letters prior to my two week research trip to Tokyo in March 2009. Due to this assistance, several of the interviews I conducted were already scheduled before I left for Japan. This strategy improved my productivity during my short, targeted trip to Tokyo. While in Japan, Mr. Fujita helped me compose interview questions which were both grammatically correct and written with the correct level of politeness. He also accompanied me on the interviews and provided translation assistance when needed. During this trip, I conducted 15 interviews with members of the Japanese parliament, party officials and scholars. The interviews I conducted in Japan built on prior research and allowed me to assess strategies adopted by female candidates and women's organizations that allow women to challenge electoral barriers.

Mr. Fujita collected and delivered primary language sources from Japan once I returned to the United States and summarized relevant primary language source material. This assistance allowed me to compile data more quickly. As a result, I was able to submit an article for review in June 2009, just three months after returning from Tokyo. "The Converging Electoral Strategies of Women's Organizations in Japan and the United States" argues that women's organizations in both countries have converged on a similar set of fundraising and education strategies to provide additional resources to women running for office at both the national and local levels. This convergence is partially explained by transnational learning. It also represents a similar response to incentives and constraints presented by the main electoral obstacles facing women in both countries--building a constituency, publicity, money, experience, and self selection. I originally planned to submit this article to the *Journal of Japanese Studies*. As the article evolved, however, I determined the *Japanese Journal of Political Science* would be a better fit.

I have received a revise and resubmit from the *Japanese Journal of Political Science* and plan to resubmit the revised article by August 2010. Mr. Fujita helped me compose and distribute a questionnaire to women's organizations after my return to the U.S. The data from this questionnaire helped me address some of the concerns expressed in the reviews of my journal article. Normally, such field research requires the researcher to be in country. I was able to do this from the U.S. thanks to research assistance funded by the ACS Mellon grant.

I hired a second translation assistant for two reasons. First, it became clear that it would be difficult to use all the research funds with just one assistant. Second, the initial payment logistics and legalities were avoided by using a native speaker locally. Ms. Tanaka translated key articles, chapters and newspaper articles I collected in Japan. She skimmed the articles for relevance to my topic and then translated relevant sections. She worked about 200 hours on these translation tasks. Many of the articles she translated contributed to a second, related project which explores the cultural constraints female candidates face. I presented a paper related to this topic at the 2009 Southwest Conference on Asian Studies meeting in Austin, TX. I plan to revise this article and submit it to the *Journal of Japanese Studies* in fall 2010.

I learned several lessons from this project. First, while I have used research assistance in the past, it had been smaller in scope. I realized the difficulties in finding and preparing materials for assistance. I had to constantly remain several steps ahead of my assistants to be sure they had work to do. This was much easier to accomplish while on sabbatical; it became much more difficult once I returned to teaching. Second, my original budget distinguished between administrative assistance and research assistance. Most assistance required fell into the category of research assistance. The tasks imagined for administrative assistance, such as phone calls, simply did not require much time. This distinction did not prove necessary and I received permission from ACS to combine these budget lines into one category—research assistance.

## **Impact and Dissemination**

The largest impact on my institution centers on a new course I will teach related to the research funded by the ACS Mellon Grant. The political science department has added a course titled *Women and Politics* to the 2010-2011 catalog. I am scheduled to teach this course in spring 2011. It will draw on specific findings as well as general insights from the research for this project. This course will explore women and politics in the United States, Germany and Japan. Part of this course will compare the electoral obstacles to female candidacy in each country. This portion of the course will draw heavily on the research conducted in this project. This course will be cross-listed with feminist studies increasing its reach to students beyond political science majors. I, too, hope to get more involved with the feminist studies program at Southwestern, something that will allow me to interact with more faculty in an interdisciplinary manner.

Currently, I have shared my research results at two conferences—the Southern Political Science Association (SPSA) meeting and the Southwest Conference on Asian Studies (SWCAS). At the SPSA meeting I gave a paper titled “Female Candidacy in Japan and the U.S.: The Role Women’s Organizations Play in Confronting Electoral Obstacles.” I revised this paper and submitted it to the *Japanese Journal of Political Science*. At the SWCAS meeting I gave a paper titled “From Madonnas to Assassins: The Changing Image of Japanese Politicians.” I plan to revise this paper and submit it to the *Journal of Japanese Studies* by fall 2010. In addition, I have been asked to participate in the Japanese American Women Symposium (JAWS) in August 2010. I will give a paper titled “The Converging Electoral Strategies of Women’s Organizations in Japan and the U.S.” This group brings together female scholars from Japan and the U.S. who specialize in women and politics. Attending this conference will allow me to network with Japanese scholar but also provide a venue to disseminate my research to U.S. scholars who research women more broadly.

I plan to disseminate my research to ACS colleagues at the Ninth Biennial ACS Gender Studies conference in 2010/2011. At this conference I will share my research strategy as well as some of the findings from the research sponsored by this grant.

### **Summary (for ACS Faculty Renewal website)**

Alisa Gaunder’s research explores barriers female candidates face when running for national office in Japan. The ACS Mellon grant she received funded research assistance to aid in interview preparation, interview transcription and translation and the acquisition of materials in Japan. With this assistance, Gaunder was able to submit an article titled “The Converging Electoral Strategies of Women’s Organizations in Japan and the United States” to the *Japanese Journal of Political Science*. Gaunder’s research strategy of hiring research assistance abroad serves as a model for other institutions as an efficient and inexpensive way to secure materials from foreign libraries and receive assistance from native speakers.