CAREER STORIES FROM ASIAN LANGUAGE GRADUATES
With every passing year, the world becomes increasingly interconnected. Eighty percent of the goods Americans buy at Walmart are made in China. A large percentage of us drive Japanese cars, albeit made in our country. The Amway Corporation, whose headquarters are a short drive from our college, did sales of more than $3.5 billion in China this past year. And Johnson Controls in Holland, Michigan, designs car interiors for all the Japanese automakers. The U.S. also increasingly depends on partnering with other nations to fight international terrorism and global climate change. Just within our own country, 14 percent of our citizens were born in another country and grew up speaking a language other than English.

And yet in recent years, only around 20 percent of all students in U.S. colleges and universities study any foreign language. A mere 1.6 percent ever take an advanced course in that language in order to get to a level where they can actually use that language in any significant way.

It is disheartening to realize that our country, the dominant economic, political, military and cultural force in the world, shows such little regard for learning about the languages and cultures of other nations. It is also not a very good strategy
from a pragmatic standpoint. Knowing at least one other language can be a tremendous help in getting a lucrative and meaningful job. That is particularly true for the languages of China and Japan, which are now the number two and three economies in the world after the United States.

**PURSUING A HIGHER CALLING**

From the Christian standpoint, there is the higher calling to be an ambassador of Christ in the world. We at Calvin take the call to be Kingdom builders to mean showing compassion and understanding for all of the world’s people, all made in the image of God. That requires that we learn to speak the language of people different from ourselves, both literally and figuratively.

In recognizing the many reasons for learning a foreign language and realizing the need to better understand the more than 20 percent of the world’s people who live in China and Japan, Calvin College began to offer Asian languages 33 years ago. As such it was a pioneer among Christian colleges in North America. Since then the program has grown to include five Asian language teachers, with an average of 150 students learning one of the three major East Asian languages. There are
currently around 70 students majoring in either Chinese, Japanese, Asian Studies, or Chinese education. The Asian Languages Program includes courses in various aspects of Asian history and culture as well, and offers semester programs in China, Japan and Korea.

EXERTING INFLUENCE IN MULTIPLE FIELDS

As a result, this program has already produced a large number of graduates who have gone out in the world to serve in a wide variety of ways, using the knowledge of Chinese or Japanese language and culture they began to acquire at Calvin College. Some, like Elizabeth Holcombe and Eric Bratt, work as Foreign Service Officers for the U.S. government in embassies in China. Others, like Jared English, serve as managers of U.S. factories in China, where they oversee hundreds of Chinese employees. Still others, like Ruth Lemmen and Jon Cady, work for World Missions in China as a long-term commitment to serve the growing Christian Church in that country.

A great many graduates of our program have taught English in China or Japan on multi-year contracts. In the past few decades, as many as 55 of the graduates of our Japanese Program have
been hired by the Japanese government to teach English in the middle schools and high schools of Japan. James and Cara McDonough are completing their fifth year as English teachers in Hiroshima, before they return to the States to enter graduate school. A great many of the graduates of our Chinese program have taught English at universities across China. Don Weck is currently serving as an administrator for a staff of English teachers at a university in Zhengzhou, China. Evert Van Steenbergen, who began his study of Chinese at Calvin and then received an MBA, has served for many years as National Development Director for a network of English training centers across China, which he has helped grow from two to 70 over the past 15 years.

CONTINUING THEIR STUDIES

An increasing number of our graduates are pursuing a master’s or PhD in Chinese or Japanese Studies. David Bratt and Jonathan Henshaw are both about to complete a PhD in Chinese History from U.C.-Berkeley and the University of British Columbia, respectively. Both are currently doing research in China, fully funded by grants they received. Tom Mazanec is completing his PhD from Princeton University in Chinese Literature, and
also received a grant to do a year of research in China. Aaron Delgaty is currently in Okinawa on a one-year research grant for his PhD work in Japanese Studies at the University of North Carolina. Melissa Van Wyk is a PhD student in Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan and recently returned from a year of research in Japan. Most likely, all of these PhD students will become university professors in the future. A larger number of our graduates have done or are currently enrolled in Master’s programs in Chinese or Japanese Studies at universities ranging from Georgetown and George Washington University to the University of Michigan.

Even a few of our students who are seeking a career in medicine or engineering have found their knowledge of Chinese to be a huge asset in their work. A medical student for the past three years at Wayne State University, Cory Toomasian, has helped lead a research team to China. Current Calvin student, Evan Heetderks, who is pursuing a double major in Chinese and engineering, spent this past summer as the only foreigner working with Chinese engineers in remote Qinghai Province in China on a project bringing solar power to the province.
IN CONCLUSION

Calvin graduates are using their knowledge of Chinese and Japanese language and culture in fields as diverse as education, business, government work, missions, engineering and medicine. Their background in Asian languages and cultures has not only made them successful in their fields, however. The Christian values which Calvin College helped instill in them have allowed them to reach out in love and understanding to the people of Asia in a way that helps build bridges between cultures. What they already achieved in their young lives makes the value of our Asian Studies Program at Calvin College seem all the more important.
CHINESE LANGUAGE GRADUATES

**IN EDUCATION**
Suzanna Brown
Lauren Clark
Justin Crull
Josh Gilliand
Michael De Ladesmo
Bethany Van Kooten
Don Weck
Madi Goodman

**ATTENDING GRADUATE SCHOOL**
Luke Adams
David Bratt
Jonathan Henshaw
Derek Kramer
Tom Mazanec
Cory Toomasion

**IN BUSINESS**
Jared English
Evert Van Steenbergen

**IN ENGINEERING/COMPUTER SCIENCE**
Michael Brasser
Evan Heetderks
Don Cottingham

**IN GOVERNMENT WORK**
Eric Bratt
Beth Holcombe

**IN MISSION WORK**
Jon Cady
Ruth Lemmen
Heather Vrieland

**IN JOURNALISM**
Ryan De Vries
In 2012 I graduated from Calvin College with majors in Chinese and French. This fall I will be attending Georgetown’s Walsh School of Foreign Service for a Masters in Asian Studies. I just finished my third year of teaching English in China. Oddly enough, you don’t need to speak Chinese to teach English in China. But knowing 你好 got me compliments from students, coworkers, lunch ladies and strangers—knowing how to converse in Chinese brought me to a whole different level. I was more comfortable. They were more comfortable. I became less of a strange and unknown foreigner and more of a person who could talk with them, albeit with my smaller vocabulary and foreign accent. I learned about them, and they could learn about me. Knowing the language can get you there. Whether you are teaching or doing business in China, that goes a long way.
Calvin provided numerous opportunities for me to pursue my passion for China—not only through language instruction, but also through study abroad opportunities and student organizations. Even in my computer science minor this interest was encouraged with an independent study of Chinese input methods. This eventually led to a trip to Hong Kong to present the results of this work.

After graduating from Calvin, I earned a Master’s degree in computational linguistics from the University of Southern California. My wife and I then moved to Beijing, where I worked for a small Chinese startup doing language-related software development. While there, I was able to participate in development of Chinese input methods and other language processing systems. I also worked with company leadership in strategic planning and international business development.

Calvin taught me to enjoy learning about other cultures and to be curious about what was happening around me; to look deeper into the issues facing China and see them in a broader context. It also grew the language skills that allowed me to communicate with my Chinese colleagues.
I started studying Chinese when I participated in the Calvin semester in Beijing during my sophomore year. That semester was life-changing for me in many ways. I knew I wanted to learn more about East Asia, so I added a second major in Asian studies to my philosophy major.

I’m amazed when I think about the large number of courses related to East Asia that Calvin offers, given its relatively small size. The faculty has an impressive breadth and depth of expertise. Add to that the fact that professors at Calvin are accessible, generous with their time and skilled teachers, and you have the perfect environment in which to begin your own exploration of East Asia.

After graduating from Calvin, I spent a year in Beijing studying Chinese and applying to MA programs. I ended up at Stanford University, where I took courses in Chinese history, religion and classical Chinese. After a year in California, I got a scholarship from Stanford to study and research in Taiwan for a year. I later returned to California to begin a PhD in East Asian Languages and Cultures at UC Berkeley.

I am currently on a full year grant doing research in China.
Since 2013, I have been working for the U.S. Department of State as a Consular Adjudicator. I began working in the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, China in March 2014 and served there for two years. In April 2016, I moved to Guangzhou, China to work at the U.S. Consulate. My time working for the State Department has proved extremely rewarding, and I look forward to an exciting career in the Foreign Service.

I began studying Chinese in my first year at Calvin, and this decision has shaped my life in many ways. My coursework with Professors Larry Herzberg and Dan Bays stimulated my interest in China and sent me to Beijing for a semester through Calvin’s study abroad program. I then studied Chinese in Harbin, China during the summer between my junior and senior years, and returned there on a Fulbright scholarship after graduating from Calvin. I completed a Master’s degree in political science from National Taiwan University in Taipei before joining the State Department and am amazed by the number of doors that majoring in Chinese has opened.
I recently finished up my second year of teaching English at Northeastern University at Qinhuangdao in China. Through these two years, I have had the privilege of teaching English majors in a variety of classes, including Oral English, Movie English, English Speaking Countries and Cultures, and Introduction to European Culture. Along with my fellow foreign teachers, I have helped co-teach a weekly English Corner here at the university, which is open to all students and even people from the community.

I graduated from Calvin in 2011 with a B.A. in Chinese. Immediately following Calvin, I attended the University of Michigan and received my M.A. in Chinese Studies in 2013. Through my UM program, I was able to study at Middlebury College’s Summer Intensive Chinese School, as well as study a semester in Beijing through the Inter-University Program for Chinese Language Studies at Tsinghua University.

Through my experiences studying and working abroad, I have become interested in international education. Once I return to the U.S., I hope to work with Chinese international students at high schools or colleges in the Grand Rapids area. It is my desire to use what I have learned to be a cross-cultural ambassador for my community.
I first went to China in 2000 on the Calvin semester abroad program in Beijing. That semester ignited a strong interest in me for both the language and country of China.

I came back to China in 2011 to work with local Christians. I learn from them about ministry in a Chinese context and help equip them for ministry. Because of my Chinese language and culture study at Calvin, I am better equipped to appreciate the unique ways in which God lives and moves among Christians here. My studies also allow me to better serve local Christians with culturally appropriate trainings that assist them in their ministries.

Since 2013, I have served as the Calvin College Representative in China. I assist Calvin in China with its recruiting and admissions efforts, as well as with Calvin’s semester abroad program in China. There has been a large increase in the number of Chinese students studying in the United States in recent years, including at Calvin. The college has been greatly blessed to have more Chinese students in recent years, and our goal is that Calvin will continue to find ways in which it can be a blessing to China.
I graduated from Calvin in 2013 with a major in Chinese. Currently, I teach at the international campus of the Second High School Attached to Beijing Normal University (the school Michelle Obama visited). Mostly, I teach academic English (reading, writing, listening and speaking) to our grade 10 students, though I also occasionally teach a class or two of study skills, communication skills or an elective course of my own design. Even though I teach completely in English, being able to communicate in Chinese has been enormously helpful in anticipating and understanding many of the mistakes and difficulties my students deal with. It also helps me with life in China outside my bilingual working environment, enabling me to rent an apartment from a Chinese landlord, shop at Chinese markets, and navigate websites like Taobao and Youku (the Chinese version of eBay and YouTube, respectively).
I took Mandarin at Calvin for fun, hoping to travel to China and get around without getting myself too lost. I travelled several times to different places in China, so I figured the studying paid off. But I never once thought I would use Mandarin in my everyday life in America. My major was computer science. I started as a software developer immediately after I graduated.

I moved to Chicago and began my career as a tech professional. To my surprise, the majority of the people on the team I’d joined were Chinese, spoke Mandarin sometimes and were happy to hear I knew a bit of Mandarin myself. We would speak Mandarin every once in a while, share moon cakes from Chinatown during Mid-Autumn Festival, play the traditional game of Mahjong and exchange experiences we’d had while in China. There was camaraderie on our team that was missing on other teams, and the experiences we shared together are among the most enriching I’ve had in my life. I don’t use Mandarin for my day-to-day work, but being able to converse casually in Mandarin opened the door to such incredible friendships that I consider myself fortunate to have studied it.
It’s amazing what a single choice can do. During my Chinese study at Calvin, I discovered a deepening curiosity for the language and culture. I dreamt of living in China for a year or two after graduating. I did exactly that—and I’ve never gone back.

I began as an English teacher at a university in Hebei province. I used my Calvin-gained familiarity of the language and culture to connect on a deeper level with my students in ways the other teachers with no Chinese experience couldn’t. I could chat with locals, make new friends and navigate this vast country. Instead of having the same conversations with my students again and again, I shared my life and faith in meaningful ways. It’s a familiarity I still use at the international school where I teach now.

Without my Calvin Chinese education, would I have stayed in China beyond a few years? Would I have studied at a Chinese university? Would I be married to Chinese woman, navigating the culture and traditions from her small hometown? My Calvin education has taken me places I had never imagined, from historic neighborhoods in Beijing, to the otherworldly scenes of Tibet and Mt. Everest, and even to North Korea to teach English for a month.
I am the editor and web developer of the Beijing office of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a foreign policy think tank. I feel very blessed that my job brings together three passions I discovered at Calvin: international affairs, Mandarin Chinese and well-crafted words. On a given day, I may spend the morning editing a book chapter on China’s nuclear doctrine, upload a new podcast episode on U.S.-China relations over lunch and while away the afternoon translating an op-ed on Chinese infrastructure investments overseas, before heading across town to help staff an evening event on China’s energy policies in Central Asia. The background in international relations and Chinese language training that I received at Calvin has been invaluable on the job. I use my Chinese language skills regularly, whether I am speaking with one of our scholars about their research, helping our print vendor adjust the formatting of an event brochure or chatting with an intern about Xi Jinping’s latest trip abroad. Through it all, I’m thankful to our Lord for the small glimpse he has given me into another corner of this great spinning globe that we call home.
I attended Calvin from 2010 to 2012 as a business communications major. Prior to Calvin, I had attended Westminster College, until one summer I took a short trip to China to teach English. This trip instilled in me a deep love of Chinese culture, and I wanted to pursue this area of study. I transferred to Calvin because of its excellent Chinese program. From there, I applied to the Peace Corps with aspirations of helping people, and on the slight chance that I would be sent to China. After a year of applying and waiting, in April 2012 I was given my Peace Corps assignment as a TEFL instructor in China. For the past two years, I’ve been living in Guiyang, Guizhou, China, teaching English and having a great time. I’ve travelled to over 20 Chinese cities, taught nearly 500 students, hiked three mountains and spent countless hours on the hard seats of trains.
In high school, I went to China on a three-week church trip. I picked up the language again at Calvin, and after a year, I realized I wanted to go back and see if it was something I wanted to do for the rest of my life. Sure enough, it worked out.

After graduating from Calvin, I got an MA from Grand Valley State University in business administration. I then took a seven-month unpaid internship in China with Pacific Resources International and have now been working in China for 13 years.

I appreciate the opportunities I participated in at Calvin that fueled my passion for China, especially my semester abroad. I was reading about history in the morning and going to visit those historic places in the afternoon. I had a wonderful class. It set the fire in my mind and heart that I wanted to be in China and working here.

I have reinvested in Calvin by co-creating the Bays-Herzberg Asian Studies Scholarship for the fall semester China program. I greatly appreciate the friendships I made at Calvin that I still maintain today, and I’m thankful for the on-campus resources that helped me grow in my faith.
After my senior year of high school, I decided to study Chinese for my foreign language requirement. In what was essentially a moment of “Why not?”, I made one of the most consequential and positive decisions of my life.

At Calvin, a subject that I meant to simply fulfill a requirement instead became my obsession. Chinese was my window into humanity—at times challenging my assumptions, at others showing me the similarity of the human condition across great cultural divides. These are not easy issues to navigate, but I know that I am a better person for having done so.

After getting a Master’s in Chinese Linguistics, I spent 3 years in Shanghai before moving with my wife to Austin, TX. In Austin, I advised the Department of Asian Studies at The University of Texas. From there, I moved to Texas Executive Education in UT’s McCombs School of Business, where I oversaw custom corporate education programs for Chinese clients. My language and cultural knowledge secured me both of these jobs, where I acquired further invaluable skills.

Chinese has enriched my life more than I ever dreamed. My wife, my daughter and I live a cultural and linguistic mix of Chinese and American that endlessly enriches our daily existence.
I attended Calvin for its combination of Christ-centered learning and a 4-year Chinese language program. I now live and work as an English teacher at Shandong University of Technology in China.

My language skills helped lessen the stress of living cross-culturally and opened up opportunities to connect with locals and their culture. The locals I meet are always excited to see me attempt to converse in Mandarin. Chinese families often invite me to meals or to go with them on local excursions, because they are delighted to have the chance to share their culture with a foreigner.

Within the classroom, my knowledge of the language helps me relate more deeply to my students. My basic understanding of Chinese grammar helps me target the common mistakes my students make when using Chinese grammar to speak in English. The students respect me more for learning their language, so they’re willing to make more of an effort to learn English in class. Outside of the classroom, my students are more than willing to share their culture with me through meals, soccer, campus performances, Karaoke, TV or movies. These events lead to us engaging in authentic conversations and help them build up their courage in using their second language.
I am studying electrical engineering, computer science, and Chinese at Calvin. The summer after my junior year, I worked as a research assistant for the engineering department of Qinghai University in Xining, China. I worked with five Chinese colleagues on a solar project. Solar panels lose their efficiency over time, and our job was to use data to create power models for certain types of solar panels based on variables such as weather patterns and sunlight strength. The models will make it easier to manage the power grid. As a native English speaker, my main task was to act as a liaison between the mostly English international research community and my team. My Chinese language skills proved invaluable in communicating effectively with my co-workers: I relayed valuable research information, ideas and opinions in their language, and facilitated an environment that allowed our team to work more efficiently. I was also able to make several life-lasting friendships outside of work that would have otherwise been impossible without Chinese language skills I gained both in high school and at Calvin. Upon graduation, I intend to work as an engineer at a U.S.-based company, and possibly transfer to a branch in Asia later on.
As a Chinese language student at Calvin, I gained a foundation in Chinese language and developed a sense of calling for cultural ambassadorship between China and North America. Since then, I have worked, studied and traveled in various cities in mainland China, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan, and lately have been traveling to Asia about once a year for research.

While at Calvin, I studied abroad in Asia, traveling to Beijing, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Yantai. These programs were not only incredibly helpful for me in terms of language and culture, but also gave me a chance to see Calvin professors engaged in their areas of research and working in cross-cultural contexts. Calvin professors provided me with scholarly mentorship and a model for reaching across cultural barriers in a respectful and productive manner.

I am currently completing my doctoral dissertation at the University of British Columbia on Chinese collaborators with Japan during the Second World War. Without doubt, my time at Calvin allowed me to develop my intellectual interests, equipped me with the tools necessary to navigate Chinese culture for work and for research, and has since deeply shaped my career path.
After Calvin, my degree in Asian Studies led me to pursue a career as a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Department of State. I served as a Vice Consul in the Consular Section of the U.S. Consulate in Shenyang, China. I spent my workday providing vital services to Americans living overseas, conducting visa interviews and participating in public outreach events. Every day I had the opportunity to use the Mandarin language skills that I acquired through my coursework at Calvin, my Beijing semester abroad and my summer internship teaching English in Yantai, Shandong.

After serving as a Foreign Service Officer in the U.S. Consulate in Harbin, I spent several years serving in the same capacity in the U.S. Embassy in Istanbul.

I am currently back in China, serving as a Foreign Service Officer in the U.S. Embassy in Shanghai.

In August 2017 I will move to Washington, D.C. to take up my new position as a ConGen instructor at the Foreign Service Institute. I’ll be teaching the basic course for all U.S. consular officers who are going to adjudicate visa and passport applications at embassies around the world.
As an undergraduate, I studied history as broadly as the program would permit. In contrast, my study of Chinese was as focused as anything I had ever done before. Upon graduating, I used my savings from working as an on-campus janitor to pay for a flight to Beijing. There I continued to study Chinese alongside students from across the region. In Beijing, I first began to learn the Korean language, a process that would eventually lead me to Seoul, South Korea. There, I first specialized in the Korean language and enrolled in a graduate studies program in Korean history.

In 2013, my time spent studying in China and Korea gained me entry into a doctoral program at the University of Toronto. There I was able to join one of the most active Korean Studies programs in North America. As a graduate student, I continue to travel frequently to East Asia to conduct research and participate in the academic communities that I am a part of there. By far the most satisfying aspect of my current position is the many opportunities to teach about the places and pasts that I have spent so much time learning about.
I am an ordained reverend with the CRC church and serve in Beijing, China. After graduating from Calvin College with an English major and Chinese minor, I spent three years teaching English in China. I returned to the U.S. to attend Calvin Theological Seminary, and then was a resident pastor at Church of the Servant in Grand Rapids before moving back to China in 2014.

Being able to communicate in Chinese allows me to share God’s love with our brothers, sisters and siblings. I recently walked with a friend through the unexpected illness and death of her older sister. Using Chinese, I was able to respond to her questions, offer my prayers and encourage her. Being able to speak Chinese opens the door to communicate with many people and encourage the Body of Christ in China.
My choice to study Chinese at Calvin has blessed my life immensely. Since graduating, I’ve gone on to medical school and anticipate a career as an Emergency Room physician. In the healthcare setting, particularly in the Emergency Room, expectations of the health system are often shaped by the language and cultural background of the patients. I’ve travelled to China twice, most recently leading a group of American medical students to a hospital in Taizhou, China to learn about the Chinese health system. Knowledge of the Chinese language and culture I learned at Calvin has allowed me to communicate and connect with several patients in their own language, putting them at ease at some of their most desperate moments. Additionally, as the field of medicine grows globally, I’m able to connect with my Chinese colleagues across the world and build lasting relationships while advancing medical research and care.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus demands his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations.” Taking Chinese at Calvin prepared me to share his love with a group of people that now makes up nearly twenty percent of the world’s population. I would not trade the experiences I had at Calvin for anything, and I would highly encourage you to study Chinese!
Since graduation, I have taught English in China. As a foreign teacher, I provide students with authentic pronunciation, intonation, colloquialisms and usage, as well as American culture. My teaching happens in the classroom, but much of the students’ learning happens informally: we play games, bake, share meals, travel and explore our city. This relational part of language learning makes the job fulfilling. It’s exciting to engage students in authentic conversations, helping them unlock what they’re learning in class and seeing their confidence grow in their second language. It’s also an opportunity for me to learn more about them and about China.

The foundation of Chinese language I received at Calvin has been integral to leading a successful and adaptable life in China. Living cross-culturally can be stressful, but knowing some language gives me the tools I need to make it less stressful. Knowing some basics about Chinese grammar and vocabulary also helps in teaching English, because I can identify some mistakes students make using Chinese grammar when speaking English. Furthermore, once students know that I’ve made an effort to learn Chinese, they respect me more. I’m not just here to teach them about English and American culture, but also to learn about them, their language and their culture.
Chinese 101 during the 1987 interim changed my life. I took it out of curiosity, but by the time I graduated in 1988, the Lord made it clear to me that China was my destination.

I arrived in Nanchang with little knowledge of this vast and complex country. I struggled to make complete sentences, let alone a conversation, but the Chinese I had picked up at Calvin proved to be a great foundation for survival and future learning.

I supplemented my Calvin education degree with an MBA and am now with Wall Street English (Pearson) as a center development director in Shanghai. This job has allowed me to fully use my education, Mandarin and project management experience for the opening of new training centers across China. I have had the privilege to witness the company grow from 2 centers in Beijing to more than 70 in 11 Chinese cities.

However, the most satisfying experiences have come from joining outreach trips into rural China with the International Fellowship here. No matter what the circumstances are, the Chinese people are wonderfully hospitable. God has taught me much about human nature and its needs in a completely different culture, and has graciously and gradually equipped me to serve him here.
I spent six years in northeast China making sense of my role as a Christian in an atheist nation. I graduated from Calvin College in 2007, and later earned a Master of Arts in Asian Studies from the George Washington University in Washington, D.C. During that program, I was awarded a Chinese government scholarship to study at Liaoning University in Shenyang for a year. Later, I participated with the Shenyang International Christian Fellowship. My master’s thesis was titled Towards Greater Insight: The Christian Church, the Chinese State, and How Foreigners Can Move Forward. I am currently enrolled in Calvin Theological Seminary.
I am currently the Director of Teaching Affairs for Education in English (EIE) at the Henan University of Technology. My job is to both teach English and also to supervise a program of 15 teachers and around 2,500 students. I use my Chinese daily in small ways to help my students understand complex grammar structures or when communicating with university staff and faculty. In addition to facilitating daily tasks, my knowledge of Chinese language and culture helped me obtain my position as EIE’s youngest director.
JAPANESE LANGUAGE GRADUATES

IN EDUCATION
Eric Baker
Kelsey Bouse
Drew Esterline
James and Cara McDonough
Roz Scuolar
Luke Van Denend

ATTENDING GRADUATE SCHOOL
Aaron Delgaty
Melissa Van Wyk

IN BUSINESS
Dustin Brewer
Kory Du Pilka

IN COMPUTER SCIENCE/ENGINEERING
Justin Searls

IN MISSION WORK
Stephen and Yire Woerner
Jon Van Farowe

IN JOURNALISM
Jana Fadness
In high school I became interested in Asia and Asian history. When I heard about Calvin’s semester in China, I jumped at the opportunity my sophomore year and followed up with a smattering of language, history and religion classes to earn my minor.

When I graduated in 2006, I wanted to fully immerse myself somewhere, anywhere away from the Western world I knew. I applied to teach EFL here and there and ended up signing on for two years in the rice paddies of rural Kyushu with the JET Programme. While lonely at first, I soon made friends and loved going to work each day with hundreds of genki middle school students, continually learning about Japan and the language.

When I came back to the States, I decided I rather liked teaching, and joined New York City Teaching Fellows to simultaneously teach and earn my MA in education. My Japanese teaching experience and Calvin liberal arts foundation helped me quickly gain competency in the classroom and to embrace teaching a range of subjects. In three years at my small public high school in New York City, I’ve enjoyed teaching Japanese, English, History and Photography, as well as coaching boys’ soccer.
I’m an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). I first came to Japan through the JET Programme. I currently teach in Fukuyama City, located in Hiroshima Prefecture. I teach English at various elementary and junior high schools, and occasionally kindergarten. Along with teaching English, I occasionally teach about my own culture. In order to communicate with my teachers at an elementary school, I use Japanese on a daily basis. I use it to get around my city, but also to communicate with my co-teachers and sometimes with my students. I also use it to connect and make new friends and acquaintances and travel to new places around Japan. I could only achieve this life in Japan through hard work and being able to study Japanese at Calvin College.
Since leaving Calvin, my knowledge of Japanese language and culture has been the cornerstone of my life both professionally and as a husband and father.

Being able to speak Japanese has opened doors in my career in two ways. First, I have participated twice in Japanese government programs in Japan. In 2003 I began on the JET Programme, and later I was given the opportunity to attend grad school in Japan by the Ministry of Education. Secondly, I have worked in private industry for two Japanese automotive component supplier organizations. Currently, I work for Denso as a research analyst. Japanese language skills allow me to conduct and elevate my research to various levels of the organization because I can tailor it to Japanese audiences.

Japanese language and culture is also a permanent feature that enriches my personal life. My wife is originally from Nagasaki, Japan. We have two sons, and we travel to Japan often. Raising my children bilingually is a challenge, but children learn well when exposed to multiple languages at a young age. Gaining those Japanese skills at Calvin has turned into a tool for enriching the lives and futures of my children. I really cannot imagine our life experiences without the surroundings of both languages and cultures.
I’m currently a PhD student in the anthropology department at UNC Chapel Hill. My dissertation research considers industrial and craft beer brewing as a lens for exploring local response to social and environmental conflict in Okinawa, Japan.

In many ways, my BA from the Asian Studies department at Calvin was the starting point for all of this. Calvin offered a Japanese and Chinese major, something totally outside my realm of experience. But the Asian Studies department offered more than language classes. At the end of my first year, I was offered a spot on a small class excursion to Japan. I was terrified—I had never left North America before—but I was strongly encouraged by Larry Herzberg to take the leap.

I’ve built a career and life out of taking similar leaps—trying new things, going to new places and exploring new ideas. I owe that momentum in large part to my experiences as a student in the Asian Studies department at Calvin. Specifically, I owe the impetus to Larry and the other dedicated, caring faculty in that department. It is true that learning a language is a practical skill, a skill that distinguishes you from others and that no one can take from you.
After graduating Calvin with a minor in Japanese studies, I spent 5 years in Japanese work environments. I started in the JET Programme, then landed a job with Toyota translating new sections of Repair and Owners Manuals for world markets. This hands-on experience with top Japanese supply chain methodologies continued to define the rest of my career as I went on to get my MBA in Supply Chain management from Michigan State University. After completing an internship in quality management at Motorola, I was offered a position at United Technologies where I still work today. Currently I work in managing solutions that help protect the efficacy and integrity of pharmaceutical products.

Even when not working with Japanese companies, throughout my career, my Japanese language skills have always made me a more marketable business candidate and a differentiating factor in getting second looks from HR and recruiters.

Japanese language has not only enriched my career, but my personal life as well. Volunteering with a Japanese conversation and community group while living in Boston has put me in touch with so many interesting people from different walks of life that I never would have encountered otherwise. Sometimes, just sitting down to watch and understand my favorite Anime series without subtitles provides its own sense of satisfaction as well.
As an assistant language teacher (ALT) through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, I teach communicative English classes at a combined junior and senior high school in Numazu, Shizuoka. After classes and club activities finish, I spend my days participating in language exchange events with locals, teaching volunteer adult English classes or exploring the country around me. Graduating from Calvin with a degree in Japanese is the cornerstone to my success here. Not only did my Japanese skills give me a leg up in the application process for the JET Programme, but the courses and professors also taught me life skills that have allowed me to smoothly transition into living here. I believe that I owe such an enriching experience in Japan to the guidance and support of the faculty and staff in the Japanese and Asian Studies departments at Calvin.
I studied abroad in Japan and China as a Calvin student, then taught English in Taiwan for a year. I’ve lived and worked on and off in Japan for a total of five years. I’ve recently started a new chapter in life, working from my computer while continuing to wander around the world.

Growing up in the United States, I always had the unsettling feeling that I didn’t belong— or worse, that there was something wrong with me. I never really understood why this was until I went to Japan, where the culture seemed to accept my quiet, introverted personality in a way American culture did not. I decided to make Japan my new home, but after living there for a while I began to see that maybe this country wasn’t such a perfect fit for me after all. I realized that some things about Japan, mostly its demanding work culture, were difficult for me to accept. A combination of wanderlust and disillusionment continues to take me all around the world, trying on different languages and cultures. Wherever I go, my experience is greatly enriched by my knowledge of the various languages and cultures I studied at Calvin College, where I also learned to appreciate cultures other than my own.
Since graduating from Calvin, we have been working in Hiroshima, Japan for the JET Programme. We credit our Calvin education for inspiring and molding our ability to learn about, adapt to and understand other cultures. We have studied abroad at the Japan Center for Michigan Universities, taught at a high school in China and now teach with the JET Programme.

James teaches at two local high schools where, aside from teaching English, he helps with communications for his schools’ foreign sister school programs. Armed with the knowledge and experience that we gained from living in China and Japan for six years, James’ goal is to continue his studies on Japan with a focus in modern Japanese history.

Cara teaches English at a local high school and a middle school. She also assists other JET participants in our area with various problems they encounter as they adjust to living and working in Japan. For Cara, the Japanese language training we received at Calvin has proved indispensable for not only her daily life in Japan, but also helping other foreigners in her area to adapt.

Cara plans to use her experiences from the JET Program and local connections to establish a business relationship between Japanese and American specialty coffee companies.
I’ve loved spending time with children as long as I can remember. Since 2014, I’ve been an assistant language teacher in Ono City, Japan, through the JET Programme. I teach at two elementary schools and act as a cultural ambassador to my students and community.

Although working around language and cultural barriers has been challenging, speaking English with my students makes the challenges worthwhile. One time, a student came to the office to ask for some more tennis balls. She asked for them in broken English. After I gave them to her, she ran back to her friends and told them excitedly, ‘I did it! I had an English conversation with Miss Roz for the first time!’ That was a very rewarding moment for me.

I was prepared for this role because of Calvin’s Japanese and Asian studies departments, as well as my study abroad experience. I also participated in Model United Nations, was part of the first Japan House community, and was a member of the Grassroots floor in the van Reken Hall for two years, which explores race and ethnicity. My work is highly rewarding, and I have grown so much as a person since I moved here.
Calvin’s Asian studies and computer science departments proved invaluable in teaching me how to continuously accelerate my learning independently. A decade later, I somehow find myself at the top of my field, owning a wildly successful business and being world-renowned in my professional community. Looking back, my Asian Studies major gave me the foundation on which I built my adult self by instilling in me an appreciation for cultural sensitivity, historical perspective, and the joys and struggles that are common to all of humanity.

You may hear that Chinese and Japanese are “hard to learn” languages for those coming from English, but that truly hasn’t been my experience. What I will concede, however, is that they are profoundly different, and that difference is precisely why learning an Asian language can change your life, as it’s surely changed mine.

Calvin’s mission is to make its students into “agents of renewal in the world,” but that mission cannot succeed if those agents lack a clear understanding of the full breadth of what can be changed in the world. My Asian Studies coursework and study abroad program gave me the gift of that awareness, and I will forever be grateful for its impact on my life.
Since receiving a Master’s degree in history with a concentration in Japanese–U.S. Foreign Policy,

I have been working for three years at a high school in New Jersey as the director of a learning center and a growing international student language and cultural immersion program for Chinese and Korean students. It is challenging and fun work, but I am considering applying for a PhD program in the near future.

My study of Japanese language and Asian history at Calvin College instilled in me a love for Japanese culture and the Japanese people, as well as a passionate interest in U.S.–Japanese relations. Before returning to graduate school, I feel I must first return to Japan, to more fully immerse myself in the country, the language and the culture. Not only will it further my academic career, but I feel my personal, spiritual and world-view development depend on this.
I was one of the first Calvin graduates to participate in the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme. Over the last 15 years, I have had four different types of visas and I have lived in Hirado City (Nagasaki), Fukuoka City, Tokyo, Guam and now the greater Nagoya Metro area.

The key to success in Japan is not only to know Japanese, but also to know the people and, most importantly, to know oneself. Today I work with the Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society out of California. I work with several local churches, including the Reformed Church of Japan. We have an English school with more than 120 students. We have local contracts with Japanese companies, a nursing college, an elite junior high & high school, an elementary school and many local community classes.

The secret to making it to where we are has been knowing who we are. This has allowed Japanese people, regardless of their belief system, to trust us. I am thankful for the start I received at Calvin College. In the end, as much as the Japanese language courses helped me in my career, what was even more valuable was a Reformed Christian worldview, which helped me to become someone others see as trustworthy.
I am currently a PhD student at the University of Michigan in the Asian Languages and Cultures department researching Japanese literature and theater. My research focuses on stage technology and stage tricks in Japanese kabuki theater from the 19th century to the 1920s and how they were depicted in books, woodblock prints and other ephemera related to the theater. I began my studies at Calvin College in 2004 and graduated in 2008 with majors in classical studies and Latin, having studied abroad in Kyoto and Yokohama. After graduation, I spent a truly amazing summer on an internship in Hikone, Japan for six weeks, and resolved to return to Japan as soon as possible. I spent a year teaching English at a middle school in Higashiomi, Japan as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) on the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme. I entered a master’s program in Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan in 2010, and continued on to the PhD program in 2013. I spent last year (2014–15) attending the Inter-University Center for Japanese Language Studies in Yokohama, Japan.
We are missionaries to Japan supported by the Christian and Missionary Alliance. God has used Calvin College and Asian Studies department to equip us for his purpose in Japan. Stephen felt God's calling to serve in Japan and found that among Christian colleges, Calvin College was the only one with a Japanese major at that time. Yire also had her call confirmed during her time at Calvin.

We have seen how God has opened door after door as he uses our language abilities to reach people. This past December, we both passed the Japanese Language Proficiency Test Level 1, which is required if one wishes to enter undergraduate or graduate schools in Japan, and are the first missionaries in our denomination to have passed this test.

By no means do we sound like native speakers! Nevertheless, Stephen preaches in Japanese regularly, and Yire shares her story and the gospel in Japanese with those she comes in contact with. A whole new world has been opened up for us because of our training at Calvin, and we hope and pray God continues to use us for his Kingdom to make an impact in this nation.