

# COLABS Now

Janis Scheffel has just arrived at Tohoku University (TU) from Technische Universität Dortmund (TUD) to participate in COLABS program. We had an opportunity to ask him about his COLABS experience and his home university, TUD.

## - COLABS Experience -

### Welcome to Tohoku University, Janis!

Thank you so much for this great opportunity!

### What exchange program are you participating?

I am doing COLABS for one semester.

### Why did you choose COLABS?

I am currently at the end of my master's degree. Therefore, I have chosen the program in which I can devote myself entirely to my interests in the form of my own research project. In addition, I am taking two Japanese courses to get to know the language and thereby the Japanese culture. COLABS offers me the opportunity to prepare myself academically for the end of my studies. I can also find out whether a Ph.D. is an option for me. That's why I would decide in favor for the COLABS program again in the future.



### What are the research projects you are working on through COLABS?

I am at the Graduate School of Engineering. My Professor Shuichi Ishida is in charge of the Department of Management, Science and Technology. Since I have worked in the automotive industry and will continue to work in the future, I was able to adapt my program to this area. Basically, I investigate the differences in supply chain risk management between the Japanese and German automotive supplier industries. Therefore, I started a survey among suppliers in Miyagi Prefecture. I will then compare the results with some German papers. I hope this will give me a deep understanding of the different management approaches between the two cultures. In addition, I hope to be able to contribute to current research in this field.

### How has your TU life been going so far?

Honestly, life is easier than I imagined how it would be. Thanks to the good help I got from both the international office and the organizers, I was able to get all the organizational points done very quickly. So, I was able to take a Japanese grammar course and a Kanji course. The level of the two courses is very high, but at the same time I am making a huge progress in my Japanese. Besides from that, I get great support in my lab from my professor and the other students. This means that I am free in my topic and therefore can concentrate fully on my research-interests. That's why I chose a topic in the automotive industry, which gives me a deep understanding of Japanese companies. That was exactly my goal for my time in Sendai. Through support, I also sent my survey to the companies at the end of November. I am very excited to see what results I can expect. Additionally, I can use my weekends to travel through wonderful Japan.

As a further personal goal, I was aiming for getting involved in the exchange between the TU and my home university. The Student Exchange Division is giving me great support for this, which allows me to be able to achieve my goals.

In summary, I can say, that my time at the TU has so far been one of the best and most successful chapters of my life. I am looking forward to the coming weeks!

### What are you studying at TUD?

I am studying industrial engineering in my third master's semester. In addition to my studies, I have been working for German automobile manufacturers or suppliers for two years now.

### Are there any differences between TUD and TU?

Of course, there are always differences between cultures. I can only evaluate the courses on the basis of my language courses. The fact is that we don't have any intermediate exams in Germany. This allows us to continuously retrieve performance, which I personally think is better than an examination at the end of the semester which counts 100% of the grade. We do not have a laboratory in Germany. This creates close contact with professors, which also has an advantage for the respective work. In contrast to this, we as students in Germany are of course much freer, as we have neither an obligation to attend nor any other

obligations during the semester. Both have their advantages and disadvantages, which vary from person to person. Hence, I would highly recommend such an exchange to everyone.

### What are your plans after your master's program at TUD?

Since I only have to write my master thesis, it is of course on the agenda. I will write it in the USA at a German automotive supplier. Afterwards, I will apply for jobs. Maybe my way will take me back to Japan, the country that invented the automobile production of today ... 😊

### - About TUD -

#### Can you tell us about your home university, TUD?

The TU Dortmund is a comparatively young rising technical university in the Ruhr area. Last year we celebrated our 50th anniversary. We currently have about 35,000 students, which is about twice as many as Tohoku University.

We offer about 80 Bachelor's and Master's degree programs from a wide variety of fields. Of course, we are particularly strong in natural sciences and engineering. But we also offer a wide range of courses for other students.

Apart from the pure facts and figures, we have a lot more to offer. Especially our H-Bahn, which connects the north and south campus, is one of the sights of our university. We also offer a range of great language programs and leisure activities such as trips to special companies in the area. But more about the fun facts in the next section.

#### Fun Facts about Dortmund

Every Japanese who loves football knows Shinji Kagawa. One of the good players who played in Germany's biggest stadium with the best atmosphere. The stadium holds about 82,000 people, who can be heard at a goal to the university grounds on match day. The BVB is one of the best German teams, which is why I can only recommend a visit to the stadium.

Apart from that, of course everyone knows the quality of German beer. Dortmund is also called one of our beer capitals because of its traditional breweries.

A tasting of our great beers should of course also be included, right? Another highlight is the Christmas market with the largest Christmas tree in the world!

Dortmund also offers beautiful small markets with a middle-age feeling. Of course, things that are free of charge are always particularly interesting for the students, aren't they?

One of my favorite places is our wonderful concert hall, where we Dortmund students come for free!

The Dortmund Philharmonic plays a wonderful classical concert every week.

Sometimes there are also special events where film music is played.

Who can claim to have heard Star Wars or Harry potter LIVE from an orchestra? Dortmund students!

Another important fact is our semester ticket. In Sendai the transport is comparatively very expensive. We pay our semester fee and can explore the whole federal state from Cologne via Düsseldorf to Holland or Belgium - free of charge.

We can even take a friend with us free of charge in the evening and on public holidays.





### Have you had a chance to meet any TU students at TUD? If so, how were/are they doing?

Yes, I took part in the Buddy Program in Dortmund. The TU Dortmund offers every exchange student at least one buddy (usually 2-3) who helps with personal problems, brings the German culture closer or simply drinks a beer with the buddy. With Futa I have found not only a buddy but also a friend. We have various activities like visiting the Christmas market, going out for dinner or visiting the concert hall. The friendship also continues in Japan, where Futa helped me in the beginning with various things (SIM card, bank transfers, ...). But pictures speak more than words: see for yourself!

### Are there any opportunities for TU students to mingle with TUD students?

Of course. On the one hand, TU students can participate in the TU Buddy Program and help a TUD student. This often leads to friendships, as you can see in my example. You'll also find out what the challenges are during a semester abroad. On the other hand, it is difficult to get in touch if you don't have a common course or live together. Therefore, an active contact would have to be searched for, for which I am very open. If anyone would like to have a beer with me or is looking for a nice chat, just let me know... 😊

### What opportunities does the TUD offer TU students?

The TUD is a direct partner of the TU. This means that there is an exchange of TU students and TUD students. Therefore, the TUD offers the possibility to spend one or two semesters in Germany. If this is too long, there is also the possibility to participate in a short summer program. A great opportunity to get to know another culture with exciting perspectives, isn't it? Of course, you can write a lot more here. If you are interested, just contact me or my university directly.

Best regards,  
Janis

