

Consular Office of Japan in Portland
1300 SW 5th Ave, Suite 2700
Portland, Oregon 97201

Foreign Minister's Commendation for FY 2026 Summary of Contributions



Suwako Watanabe

Portland State University, Department of World Languages and Literatures, Department Chair

Contribution: Promotion of Japanese language education in the U.S.A.

Dr. Suwako Watanabe has been involved in Japanese language education at Portland State University since 1990. She has served as a professor and director of the Institute for Asian Studies and, in 2020, she was appointed Chair of the Department of World Languages and Literatures. For over 35 years, she has dedicated herself to fostering future Japan experts and Japan enthusiasts through Japanese language education. She has also held key positions, including president, within the American Association of Teachers of Japanese in the United States. She has been involved in assessing the proficiency of Japanese language learners in the U.S., working to raise learners' awareness, and maintaining and improving the standards of Japanese language education nationwide. Additionally, by conducting evaluations and assessments of Japanese language programs at educational institutions, she has made significant contributions to strengthening the foundation of Japanese language education and advancing Japanese language programs in the U.S.



Graham Morris

Japan-America Society of Oregon, Executive Director

Contribution: Promotion of mutual understanding between Japan and the U.S.A.

Mr. Graham Morris has served as Executive Director of the Japan-America Society of Oregon since 2015. In his time there, he has worked to strengthen the organization's operational foundation while leading efforts to expand programs across a wide range of fields—including business, culture, education, women's leadership, sister-city exchanges, youth development, and community support—showing

tireless dedication to deepening relations between Japan and the State of Oregon. Through his initiatives the Japan-America Society of Oregon has doubled its membership and grown to host 20 programs and 160 events annually, attracting a total of 5,000 participants. By significantly expanding the foundation for local exchanges with Japan, the Society has made great contributions to promoting friendship and mutual understanding between the two nations.