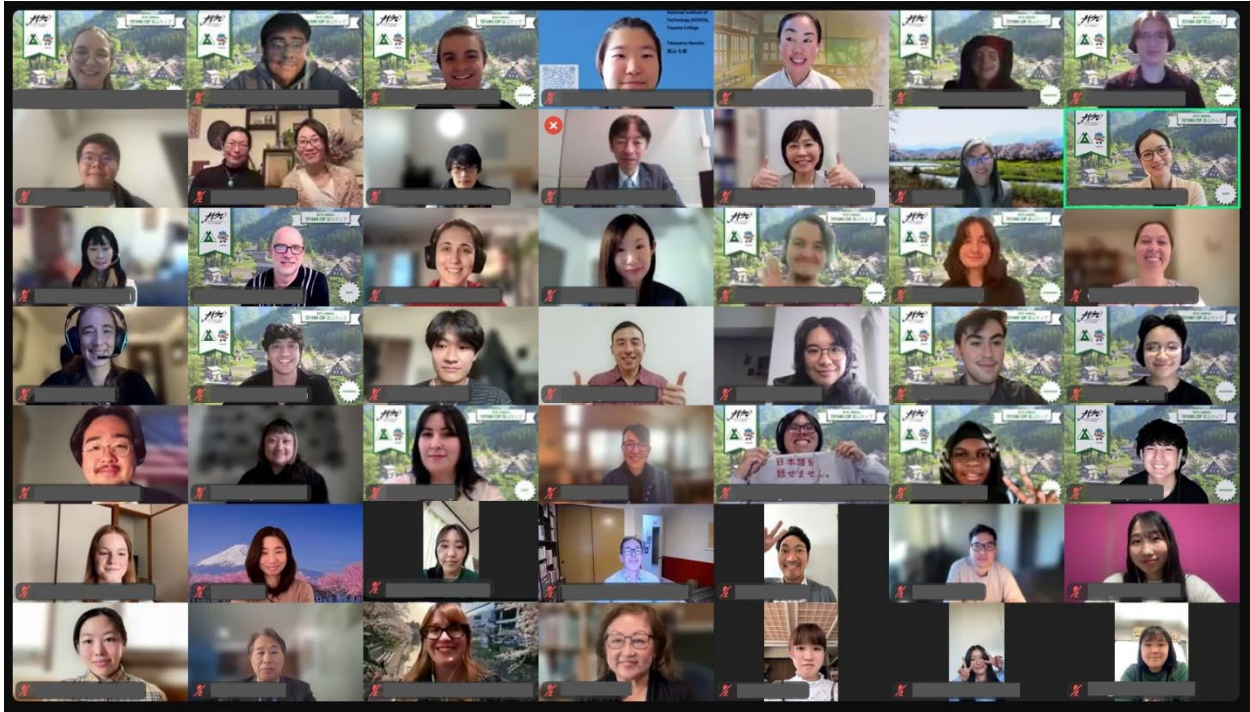


Mt. Hood Community College Student Wins 30th Annual Toyama Cup



PORTLAND, OR – April 25, 2026

In a fierce competition, Rin Nguyen from Mt. Hood Community College rose to the top of the most advanced division to win the grand prize of a trip to Toyama Prefecture in Japan, in JASO's 30th annual Toyama Cup.

Toyama Cup celebrated its 30th year of competition for college students studying Japanese language in Oregon and Southwest Washington. Every year, the level of competition intensifies, and this year was not an exception. Students' speeches covered a wide variety of topics, from artificial intelligence, global issues, personal relationships, and wrestling to the many ways students have found connection through Japan and Japanese culture in language, art, and exchange. Participants represented language programs from Lewis & Clark College, Mt. Hood Community College, Oregon State University, Pacific University, Portland Community College, Portland State University, and University of Oregon.

Toyama Cup champion Rin Nguyen faced eight fantastic competitors in Level Two, beating second place and third place winners Eliana Bly from Lewis & Clark College and Arfaan Karim from University of Oregon. Judges were impressed by Nguyen's intimate and vibrant execution of his speech "おばあちゃん、ありがとう！", "Thank You, Grandma!", where he shared about renewing his relationship with his grandmother and becoming her caretaker while she suffers from dementia.

In the Level One competition, first place winner Trey Trejo from Oregon State University took us on a journey with his speech “A.I. and the ‘Heart’ of Communication”, beating three other competitors.

Participants were cheered on by a crowd of viewers, including seven alumni Toyama Cup champions, students from Japan, government officials, college teachers, and their friends and families. After the speech portion of the competition, participants had the opportunity to brainstorm environmental sustainability efforts in Oregon and Toyama with students from Japan and alumni Toyama Cup champions.

“I love seeing so many people taking such joy in learning to understand each other,” reflected an alumni Toyama Cup champion.

This year, Toyama Prefecture and Oregon celebrate the 35th anniversary of their sister-state relationship. The Toyama Cup speech contest was born in 1996 to celebrate the 5th anniversary. Toyama Cup showcases the excellence of Japanese language programs all over Oregon and SW Washington, providing students in our community many local options if they choose to pursue their love of the Japanese language in higher education institutions.

Toyama Cup is sponsored by the Toyama Prefectural Government, who help fund the winners’ trip to Toyama later this year. Toyama Cup is also made possible through a community of local Japan-related businesses and organizations and a dedicated volunteer team.

The program is operated by the Japan-America Society of Oregon, the state’s largest grassroots organization dedicated to supporting business and developing community by strengthening the US-Japan relationship. Learn more about their programming and activities at <https://jaso.org/>

30th Annual Toyama Cup Results

Level 2

1. Rin Nguyen of Mt. Hood Community College, "おばあちゃん、ありがとう！"
["Thank You, Grandma!"]
2. Eliana Bly of Lewis & Clark College, "日本人の勤勉さと思いやり:よさこいから"
["Japanese Hard Work and Thoughtfulness: What I Learned From Yosakoi"]
3. Arfaan Karim of University of Oregon, "どのようにして言語を学ぶことは社会問題を解決するか" ["How Language Learning Can Solve Global Issues"]

Level 1

1. Trey Trejo of Oregon State University, "'A.I. and the 'Heart' of Communication"
2. Diego Gomez-Hernandez of Lewis & Clark College, "漢字が好き"
3. Mario Estrada Pena of Mt. Hood Community College, "Reaching Zero Through Wrestling"