



## Japanese Law Student Thrives at USC's LL.M. Program

[by Anayat Durrani]

As a practicing lawyer in Japan, Takahiro Kawaguchi's keen interest in American law and the U.S. legal system brought him to America to enroll in USC Law's master's degree program, an intensive two-semester, full-time curriculum. Mr. Kawaguchi, 32, is a fifth-year associate at Mitsui Yasuda Wani & Maeda, currently Mitsui Yasuda & Wani, one of the most prestigious law firms in Japan. The firm deals with a range of financial matters, including capital markets, structured finance, and banking and corporate matters. After his first three years at the firm, Mr. Kawaguchi chose to specialize in securitization transactions and private finance initiative transactions, including risk assessment and contract drafting.

Mr. Kawaguchi earned a LL.B. from Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan, in 1995 and was qualified to practice law in 2000 in Japan. He said he came to USC because he was impressed by the school's standing as a top-20 law school and because a friend already enrolled in the program praised it as having a very enthusiastic and accommodating approach to the needs of foreign students and their career objectives. "It sounded like USC had an ideal environment for not only legal education but also career development," said Mr. Kawaguchi.

It was also helpful that the school's location was in the Los Angeles area. Mr. Kawaguchi said the city of Los Angeles is known as a cosmopolitan city and that studying in the area has exposed him to diverse students and faculty. It has also provided for many opportunities for students to de-stress themselves. "While studying law sometimes puts stress on us, Los Angeles offers us a lot of fun: for example, playing golf, scuba diving, watching sports games, and so forth, to relax and release our stress."

Mr. Kawaguchi said that the LL.M. program has classes designed specifically for foreign students not familiar with the U.S. legal system. One of the courses he enrolled in was an introductory course on the U.S. legal system. "The class outlines all aspects of the U.S. legal system and assists us in understanding the difference between the U.S. legal system and those of our own countries."

During his professional career as a lawyer in Japan, Mr. Kawaguchi took part in several

M&A transactions. He said Japanese corporate law has become deregulated to promote M&A transactions in the Japanese market, and this has prompted greater discussion of the legal aspects of M&A. Mr. Kawaguchi is currently taking an M&A course where students are dealing with about 20 M&A cases and issues related to M&A contracts. "Reviewing cases facilitated my understanding of the development of rules and practice in M&A transactions in the U.S., which has enabled me to deepen my comprehension of M&A transactions based on my experience as well as predict what will happen in Japanese M&A markets."

Mr. Kawaguchi said because of the recent reform of the judicial system that will allow foreign law firms to hire Japanese lawyers, he said establishing a global network during the LL.M. program is important for him. He said through his experience with international transactions, he would like to establish a strong global network of legal professionals and business people to consult with, which he said the LL.M. program is helping him do. "For example, LL.M. students can find a J.D. student to cooperate and work well together with in each other's study and foster career development through the kind offices of the LL.M. staff. LL.M. staff also arrange for us to get acquainted with business school students in USC."

Mr. Kawaguchi said the LL.M. office staff has been really helpful to him in his studies. He said he has enlisted the help of the LL.M. staff to help him organize a study session so that he can learn how to make an impressive

presentation in order to improve his professional skills.

Mr. Kawaguchi said that in his experience he found that the deregulation of the Japanese corporate and financial markets has made it easier to introduce new corporate transactions and financial products. Furthermore, he said that many of the new corporate transactions and financial products in Japan are based on similar transactions or products developed in the U.S. market. "I believe that there is great demand for legal services for such new deals in Japan. To meet this demand, detailed knowledge of the U.S. corporate and financial system relating to such deals, as well as the general business and legal environment, is required."

He said that the LL.M. program has helped him realize his career goals because the program focuses on meeting the demands of foreign legal professionals. He said he is very satisfied with the program. He said that the "reciprocal development of the LL.M. program and LL.M. students" has allowed for deeper legal and professional knowledge and experience while providing opportunities to grow and also broaden one's global network.

"USC's LL.M. program requires students to figure out what we should do during the program and encourages us to achieve our success. That is what I believe is the best way for career development," Mr. Kawaguchi said.

After receiving his LL.M. degree, Mr. Kawaguchi plans to work at an international law firm.