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For Immediate Release

**The U.S. – Japan Council Honors Senator Daniel K. Inouye with the “TOMODACHI Inouye Scholars Program,” Launched as a part of the Government of Japan’s KAKEHASHI Project**

WASHINGTON, DC (June 23, 2014)--This summer, nearly 100 college students from four American universities will travel to Japan on a ten-day educational exchange program as the inaugural cohort of TOMODACHI Inouye Scholars.

The program was created in honor of the late U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye of Hawaii, who believed that the relationship between the United States and Japan was the most important bilateral relationship in the world. His commitment to public service, justice and U.S.-Japan cooperation inspired this program, which provides 200 American and Japanese university students the opportunity to develop a deeper mutual understanding of each other’s cultures and people. The participants will also learn about Senator Inouye and his contributions to his state, country, heritage and the U.S.-Japan relationship. The program aims to broaden the perspectives of global leaders who will carry the future of U.S.-Japan exchange.

The U.S.-Japan Council (USJC), a non-profit, Japanese American-led organization dedicated to strengthening ties between the United States and Japan in a global context, supports the TOMODACHI Inouye Scholars program as a part of the KAKEHASHI Project. Senator Inouye, along with other Japanese American leaders, created the Council in late 2008. The program is also part of the TOMODACHI Initiative, a public-private partnership between USJC and the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, which builds a new generation of American and Japanese young people through cross-cultural educational exchanges and leadership development.

“The Senator had an optimism and confidence in the next generation’s ability to continue to make the world better,” Irene Hirano Inouye, President of USJC who was also the wife of the Senator, said. “He was a strong supporter of TOMODACHI’s vision of investing in young people in the United States and Japan to create the next generation of leaders in our countries.”

This program is carried out under the Government of Japan’s KAKEHASHI Project. The KAKEHASHI Project is a youth exchange project between Japan, the United States and Canada that aims to heighten interest in Japan and increase the number of overseas visitors to the country, as well as enhance international understanding of the nation’s strengths and attractiveness. Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida announced the launch of the program at the USJC Japan Symposium in May 2013.

The program is unique in that participants from the United States and Japan will learn about Japanese Americans, their history in the United States, and examples of their leadership in the legacy of Senator Inouye as well as through engagement with Japanese American leaders who are USJC members.

USJC selected four universities in the United States to participate in this program. Each American school is paired with a Japanese partner institution as follows:

- Depaul University, (Chicago, IL) ----- Ritsumeikan University (Kyoto)
- Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles, CA) ----- Sophia University (Tokyo)
- University of Massachusetts Boston (Boston, MA) --- TBD
- University of Hawaii, Manoa (Honolulu, HI) ---- Matsuyama University (Ehime)

Each school group consists of 23 students and 2 chaperones, one of whom is a faculty member, who are noted Japanese Americans in their field.

“I believe that the TOMODACHI SCHOLAR universities selected for this honor share a commitment to Senator Inouye’s legacy in public service,” said Dr. Kathryn Ibata-Arens, Director of Global Asian Studies who leads the group from DePaul University. “DePaul’s mission is built on respect for diversity and service to community. Our DePaul scholars reflect this mission in their own life journeys and extensive expertise in international community service, despite their young ages.”

In addition to visiting historic and cultural sites in Tokyo and attending meetings centered on the legacy of Senator Inouye, each school group will visit one more city, typically that of the partner university and participate in activities with its students. The group from Loyola Marymount University is focusing on leadership and diversity. They have selected student leaders of campus organizations and looking at Senator Inouye’s advocacy for disenfranchised or underrepresented groups as a model for leadership.

“As champion of those less fortunate, Senator Inouye's commitment to diversity inspired countless others to the call of service,” states the LMU faculty lead Dr. Curtiss T. Rooks. “The program seeks to honor his legacy through the development of LMU student leaders from historically underrepresented populations in our University community.”

The faculty leaders are also excited about the opportunity that a program like this offers to students that may be new to the U.S.-Japan relationship. “In honoring the legacy of Senator Inouye this program extends that honor to a select group of students at the University of Massachusetts Boston,” says Dr. Paul Watanabe. “Our students are humbled, grateful, and excited to learn more about Japan, U.S.-Japan relations, and the Senator. We are looking forward to what for many students will be a life-transforming experience.”

The reciprocal portion of the program will take place during the 2014-2015 academic year, when 100 Japanese participants will travel to Los Angeles, CA, Washington D.C. and the city of their partner university, each site marking a stage of Senator Inouye’s life and career. Japanese students will learn about Senator Inouye’s contribution to politics and the Japanese American community while exploring historic and cultural sites in the United States.

“This experience provides students with an opportunity to consider how Hawaii can contribute to US-Japan relations,” Dr. Dennis Ogawa, who leads the group from the University of Hawaii, Manoa, said. “Like the students on this program, Senator Inouye was proud to be an undergraduate of the University of Hawaii. The people-to-people friendships and inter-cultural relationships he experienced were invaluable.”

This program is-administered by the Japan Foundation. The U.S.-Japan Council supports the implementation of this program, through coordination with the Japan Foundation and the Laurasian Institution. All U.S. participants will complete projects that reflect their understanding of Senator Inouye’s legacy through this program, which will be featured by the Daniel K. Inouye Institute.

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The U.S.-Japan Council is a 501(c) 3 non-profit educational organization that contributes to strengthening U.S.-Japan relations by bringing together diverse leadership, engaging stakeholders and exploring issues that benefit communities, businesses and government entities on both sides of the Pacific. By promoting people-to-people relationships, the Japanese American-led organization cultivates an international network, and collaborates with other organizations and institutions to develop programs that allow leaders to engage with their counterparts in the United States and Japan. The Council also develops the next generation of leaders committed to a vibrant and dynamic U.S.-Japan relationship.

For more information about the program and the individual schools, please visit: <http://usjapantomodachi.org/programs-activities/tomodachi-inouye-scholars-program/>.