

Sudani enjoys her Elon experiences

From p. 15

"These four years of college are the best place to learn a lot of stuff. I hope people will get the chance to know other cultures and know more about me. I love telling my stories."

Sudani already has some impressive stories to share. For starters, there was the time she left Japan at the age of 16 to attend high school in America all alone. Leaving her family and friends behind, Sudani enrolled in St. Mary's Hall High School, in San Antonio, Texas.

Having taken ballet lessons for 12 years when she was growing up, Sudani chose to attend St. Mary's for its prestigious dance program.

"That is probably the most courageous and brave thing I've ever done," she said. "I left my comfort zone, but I never would call home and cry."

Like any other student in her senior year of high school, Sudani began thinking about colleges. She told her counselor she wanted to attend a "small school that is not too small," with few Japanese students ("I didn't want to hang out with Japanese people all the time") and a beautiful campus. Her counselor suggested she check out Elon.

"I just fell in love with this school and its beautiful campus," she said. "I knew I would get a good education here."

Sudani, who is majoring in international studies and pursuing a minor in communications, acknowledges that there are many challenges she has had to overcome in her schoolwork since she is an international student.

One of the biggest is the language barrier that separates her from her professors and peers. She is proficient in English, but she admits that it has been hard for her to do things like make class presentations, read lengthy novels in English and complete basic homework assignments.

"Giving presentations in English in front of my whole class was the worst," she said. "I would practice, like, 20 times beforehand."

Sullivan, a philosophy professor, said she makes good use of his office hours and doesn't think twice about asking for help.

"She often asks for clarification of the things we discussed in class," he said. "She is very involved and anxious to learn about things, people and other cultures. Giving class presentations can be difficult because you are crossing from one culture to another, but I think she has navigated very well."

Sudani attributes her academic success in part to her professors who have helped her overcome the language difference. She said all of her professors have been helpful and generous, giving her time to complete assignments, chances to earn extra credit or even giving her different assignments geared to international students.

Although she said she looks forward to graduating in the spring, Sudani says she'll be sad to leave behind her younger sister Keiko, who is a sophomore at Elon.



Martha-Page Ransdell/ Photographer
Asami Sudani and her younger sister Keiko are not only sisters and best friends, but also roommates.

"I try not to think about her graduating in a few months," said Keiko, who commented that her older sister was more of a mother figure to her, always looking out for her and keeping her best interests in mind. "Something in my mind is sad, but hopefully she'll stay here and work so I won't have to be alone."

Sudani said that given her personality and her own experiences as an international student, helping foreign students adjust to college life would be the perfect job for her.

"She has a certain vitality and she is outgoing, warm and compassionate," Sullivan said. "She has all the qualities to work with international students in a university setting."

A job helping others on a college campus would complement Sudani's interests and passions in life. With an inner strength that stems from her Zen Buddhist beliefs, she says she is always looking for new ways to talk to others about her life, her background and her faith.

"It's like I'm a peanut," she explained, her hands gesturing wildly and eyes glowing with the idea of sharing her religion with someone unfamiliar. So she does, smiling the entire time.

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