

# THE ICLA OBENTO

JUNE 2023 | ISSUE:5

## CREATIVE WRITING CLUB



iCLA has many clubs started by and managed by students for other students. Activities like gaming, dance, mixed martial arts, or literature – iCLA students have gathered like-minded members of the community and established clubs. If the club you’re looking for doesn’t exist yet, iCLA encourages students to take the initiative to start something new.

The Creative Writing Club was started in April this year by students with a special passion for writing. The group meets once a week on Wednesday evenings to discuss and peer review works written by members of the club. The club welcomes writing of all styles, lengths, and even languages. If you love to write, read, and discuss creative writing, the Creative Writing Club may be the perfect club for you.

## INTERVIEW WITH CREATIVE WRITING CLUB REPRESENTATIVES, DANIA & ZOE

### Q. What is the Creative Writing Club?

**DANIA:** The Creative Writing Club is a place where we share stories with each other once a week. The idea is that you can write, sometimes following prompts, or if you feel like writing whatever. The rest of the people in the club will read what you wrote and give you feedback, hopefully to help you improve it. The whole point of the club is to, first of all, encourage people to write because there are a lot of people that love to write but don’t find the motivation usually.

**ZOE:** And it’s a lot easier to write when your friends are really excited about your next story. As soon as you get positive feedback, it’s not as scary anymore to put words on the paper. We think that’s a really big part of why it encourages us to write.

**DANIA:** And the secondary purpose is to improve how we write. None of us are professionals, so the importance of the feedback is to get people to write and feel confident about what they write, and we try to be as objective as we can. We try to give tips on how to improve things, especially for people who want to pursue things further.

### Q: What kind of writing do people bring in?

**ZOE:** It’s mostly short stories. Dania is writing a novel so we get a few chapters every week and it’s very fun because we are all very invested. We come to the club and we’re like, “Oh, what happens?!”

**DANIA:** (Laughs)

**ZOE:** It’s a lot of short stories based on the prompts we get. In the beginning, we had some intense traumatic stories, then there’s been a little bit of romance, fantasy, comedy...

**DANIA:** The prompts trigger people to write towards different directions. There’s a prompt every week, so there’s only so much you can write in a week. But if someone really likes their first short story, maybe they might add chapters.

**ZOE:** If the Writing Club really likes their short story, there might be a little peer pressure to write another chapter... but we’re nice about it (laugh).

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT







**Q: Dania, I understand that you are the Club Representative who did the paperwork to create the Creative Writing Club. What was the motivation for creating the club?**

**DANIA:** I've been part of the Creative Writing Club in my high school in Canada, and then in Spain in my old university. I wanted to continue with that. Also, because I published a book [in Spanish] recently, a lot of people were giving me comments like, "I wish it were in English," or "I want to read something that you wrote". None of my friends speaks Spanish, really, since it's been years since I lived in Spain. I wanted to force myself to create something in English for them. I thought, maybe if I start this club, it's not only other people that's going to get motivation, I'm going to get motivation too. I created it because I really wanted to write for other people and I thought, if we do it together, it'd be more fun. I'm so happy that I did because I met super amazing people.



**Q: What does a typical club day at the Creative Writing Club look like?**

**ZOE:** The club starts at night after dinner. We have until the day before to submit our stories. Then we get together, everyone brings their snacks, we dump them on the table, and we sit in a little circle around the snacks. We talk about who posted for the week, Dania gives the prompt for next week, and then we dive in. We start with one person, we gush about it, and we give a few of our opinions, and then we go through the group. We try to talk about everyone's stories. Normally, we get hung up at some point somewhere, and we just forget the time, so we had to instate a timer to have a certain amount of time to talk about each story.

**DANIA:** Usually it's 15 minutes, because the first day, we realized that we could go on and on about the same story for hours. It was 11 pm and everyone wanted to go to bed.

**ZOE:** We've had to learn a little bit.

**DANIA:** We grew as a club. The main rule that I explained on the first day is that if you want people to give you feedback on your writing, you have to read all of the writing because the moment you write, everyone will read it. That's the only rule that I've been stricter about.

**Q: What would you say is the benefit of joining the club vs. writing on your own?**

**ZOE:** I'd say the routine of writing. It's really difficult to build a routine and it's a lot easier when you're doing it together with other people. You commit to wanting to write because you're in the club and you're surrounded by people who are writing.

**DANIA:** I also feel like when you read other people's stories it triggers you. We all know the same prompt, but you can see how different the results are, so it triggers you to want to write.

**ZOE:** If you want to continue writing, it's really interesting to see how people react to your work and which parts they pick up on. I remember writing a story and thinking "This is great!" and everyone's like, "It's beautiful, but I have no clue what's happening!" Then I knew where it went wrong. Slowly, every time you write a story, you start to get a sense of what your reader will see.

**Q: Can you give me some examples of prompts which you guys have been writing?**

**DANIA:** The very first week, the prompt was that you had to start and finish your story with the same sentence. The sentence was, "I wish I had thrown it away a long time ago." It was supposed to trigger drama because of the kind of sentence it was, it would condition the entire plot.



**DANIA:** Last week, because we are in mid-terms and it was stressful and everyone's writing less... We did an exercise where you would pick up a paper and get paired up with someone that has the same color paper as you. We told each other a good quality that you think the other person had, to bring up the spirits. After you pair up and you tell the other person something good about them, you have to agree on the same scenario. So both of your stories have to happen in the same place, even if they're not related. I know some people chose "Tokyo" as a scenario. My partner and I, we chose science fiction.

**ZOE:** And we've decided that our characters are going to be staying at the same hotel.

**DANIA:** The whole idea of the last prompt was to get people to connect and interact because I feel like we've all been in our heads because of midterms.



**Q: Are there any requirements to join the club?**

**ZOE:** Be excited to read other people's stories and engaged in talking about them. There's no pressure to write at first. Just an interest in writing, really.

**DANIA:** There's no fee or anything. The only fee is that you have to buy snacks and bring them to the club.

**Q: How can one join the club?**

**DANIA:** Because we have activities on the day, I always ask people to tell me in advance if they are going to come or not. There's no pressure to come every week, but I do like to know. If they cannot find me, then they can just show up. It's on Wednesdays at 7:30 in Classroom C203.

**Q: What are the plans for the future of the club?**

**DANIA:** I won't be here next semester, but a future thing that I hope for would be a bigger club with people still being excited about snacks and willing to stay until 11 pm because we're having a lot of fun. I would also wish that the club stays a safe place. I feel, as it is right now, it's very safe and people feel okay to write anything even if it's really personal. Of course, we try to be objective, professional, and try to improve, but the main thing that I would like to keep for the future is that safe space where anyone can write anything.

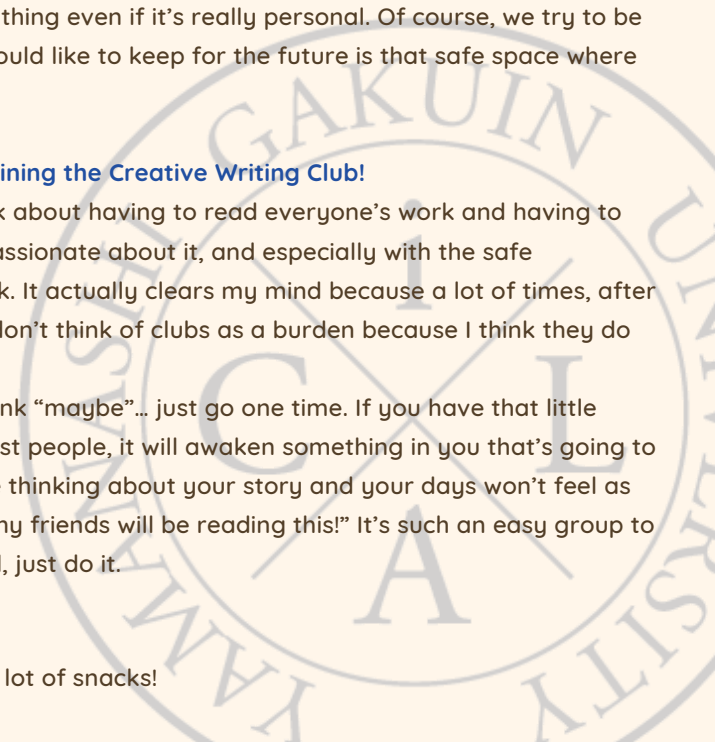
**Q: Finally, please give a message to students who are interested in joining the Creative Writing Club!**

**DANIA:** Clubs sometimes sound like a lot of work, especially if you think about having to read everyone's work and having to write once in a while. But I think if you're in the right club and you're passionate about it, and especially with the safe environment that we have in the club right now, it doesn't feel like work. It actually clears my mind because a lot of times, after the club, I get home and I'm actually productive. My advice would be, don't think of clubs as a burden because I think they do really help.

**ZOE:** If you feel tempted to write or even just see this interview and think "maybe"... just go one time. If you have that little spark to write, you need to try it out one time, and you'll know. For most people, it will awaken something in you that's going to be fun. You know when you're bored, tired, and daydreaming, you'll be thinking about your story and your days won't feel as unproductive anymore because it's just filled with this excitement of "my friends will be reading this!" It's such an easy group to step into, so definitely go at least one time. If you feel slightly tempted, just do it.

**Q. Any last comments?**

**DANIA:** Don't have a heavy dinner on Wednesdays because we bring a lot of snacks!







## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

### INTERVIEW WITH CALVIN, SUHAYB, AND CLEMENT

The iCLA Career Support Team encourages students to take on internships and gain industry experience in their career interest before graduation. The team prepares students for the Japanese workplace by providing pre-internship training and overseeing the communication between students with their internship location. The iCLA Career Team also informs students about valuable career-related information such as internship opportunities, career forums, and company info sessions.

iCLA students Calvin, Suhayb, and Clement have embarked on an internship with answerknocks Inc. (株式会社アンサーノックス), a company based in Yamanashi Prefecture specializing in matching job searchers with employers. The students from Kenya, Somalia, and Malawi valued the experience of working in a local company that celebrates diversity and internationalization. Suhayb also shared his experience by presenting at the iCLA/YGU Internship Guidance session aimed at iCLA students who are looking for internship opportunities.

#### "ANSWER KNOCKS" INTERNSHIP INTERVIEW:

**Q:** What were your responsibilities during the internship at Answer KNOCKS?

**CLEMENT:** Our participation in the internship was to help brainstorm. They asked us questions about how we feel about the company after looking over the whole framework.

**SUHAYB:** They taught us the core values of their company and they would discuss with us about what we think. Sometimes we would compare to our own countries and whether we have the same kind of company. One of their values is diverse communities, so they cared a lot about diversity.

**Q:** What kind of support did you receive from the iCLA Career Team that you found especially helpful?

**CALVIN:** The iCLA Career Team gave us insights on what kind of etiquette we would have to use in a typical working environment. The environment [at Answer KNOCKS] was very lax, but we learned how we would formally address one of our seniors or the CEO.

**CLEMENT:** One assistance we got from the iCLA Career Team was the application process. They didn't just give us the internship and be like, "here it is!" But they were with us through the whole application process. They acted as the middle person between Answer KNOCKS and us.

**SUHAYB:** Just like Clement said, the iCLA Career Team was helpful and they helped us to mediate between Answer KNOCKS and us. Another thing that they did was they gave us an orientation about job hunting. It was helpful for me to have their support.



**Q:** Can you tell us a way which you applied your learning at iCLA to your work at Answer KNOCKS?

**CALVIN:** For me, it would be Japanese classes. Sometimes [the staff at Answer KNOCKS] would speak in Japanese, I would understand what they are trying to say. We had a translator, but for me, having known some level of Japanese, it made it easier for me to understand what they're trying to get across. Some of my business classes as well. They gave us a model of what the structure of the business is like, and I would understand in a deeper sense why it was working, what were all the mini factors that were going into it, why it was unique and how it has stayed the way it has and continue to improve over the years since it started.





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**SUHAYB:** What this company does is like Hello Work, the agency. But what makes them different is how they try to help people to be employed. If they match you with, for example, Toyota... Hello Work might just give you the contact and connect you with Toyota. But after that, it's between you and Toyota to figure it out. But what makes Answer KNOCKS different is that they will make sure that you get the job, but also, at the same time, they will be between the company and you. From what I have seen based on my business and economics classes, it's trying to decrease the unemployment rate, which is a really fantastic idea.

**Q: Did you encounter any challenges during the internship and how do you think it helped you grow towards your professional career?**

**CLEMENT:** We learned the basic etiquette of being at work. They're very small basic things, but it would be hard. For example, how can you take [an item] and put it down, or how to receive a customer. It was kind of a challenge for us, but we were able to think critically and adapt to situations.

**SUHAYB:** It was cultural differences.

**CLEMENT:** Yeah, it's like, [in Japan] we do this, but then we don't really do that in my home country, so how can I do that best?

**SUHAYB:** One good example of that was when you serve the tea based on the hierarchy. For example, the CEO, then the vice president... In my culture, we don't care, but for Japan, it is about respecting the hierarchy.

**Q: What did you learn from this experience?**

**CLEMENT:** One of the things I really learned was being proactive. You don't have to wait for anybody to tell you what to do. Everyone in the office can do what any other person can do. Basic things like receiving the customer - there is no receptionist who specifically does that. As a business student, I would expect to be in the background, but aside from your work, you're going to have to learn those skills. That's one valuable lesson I learned. Other than that, the Japanese language. Just being there, I realized I really have to work on my Japanese and communication skills. Even though Japanese companies might be more international now, the Japanese language itself is very, very essential.

**SUHAYB:** I'm into the philosophy of the company. I wish, if I had money, I could have invested in the same kind of company back home. The way they work is interesting, being between the companies. It could be a good way to help your community, but at the same time, make money. It can be a good investment and it can reduce unemployment.

**Q: If anything, how do you think one's learning experience in the internship is different from that of a classroom setting?**

**CALVIN:** You get real-life experience, compared to being informed about it in class. It was good knowing what it would be like if you worked for a Japanese organization.

**CLEMENT:** Being in the classroom, you're exposed to theoretical knowledge. In the internship, you're given the chance to put it into practice.

**Q: Why would you recommend doing an internship to your peer students? Any tips about internship opportunities?**

**CALVIN:** I would recommend it, but I would also say to be open-minded about what to expect for the internship. It's a great opportunity to learn typically what it's going to be like when you graduate.

**SUHAYB:** I would add - do research. If you're going to do an internship, know more about the industry that you're applying to. Before you apply to the company, check out their website, what they do... it's going to be helpful. [During the interview], they asked us questions that were based on their profile. Luckily for us, we did our research.



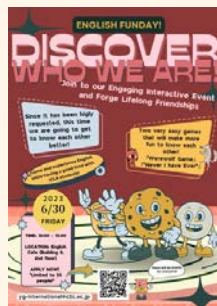
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## UPCOMING EVENTS



**Calligraphy with Elementary School Students**  
June 30  
8:45 am - 10:15 am  
Practice Japanese calligraphy with Yamanashi Gakuin Elementary School Students.



**English FunDay - Discover Who We Are!**  
June 30  
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm  
Play games and practice English at LaCoMo (English Cafe).



**Altair Tanabata Festival**  
July 7  
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm  
Enjoy performances, food, games, and other festivities at this annual Tanabata festival.

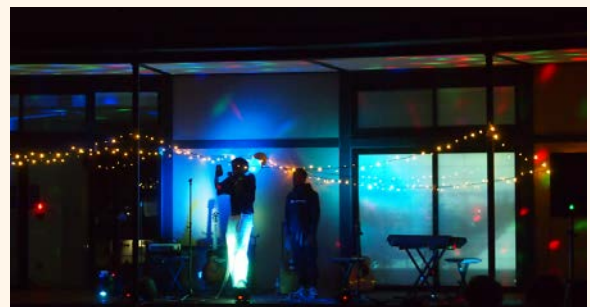


**iCLA 2023 SUMMER GALA**  
July 14  
5:00 pm - 9:30 pm  
Come and enjoy the semester-end event – performances, artwork, and food by iCLA students!

## SOCIAL MEDIA FEATURES



Students shared their exchange experiences in the Spring '23 Post-Study Abroad Reflection Session.



Acoustic Night & Rooftop Party was held with live music and sparkling lights.



LAC hosted an Ikebana Workshop with an Ikebana specialist and Flower Shop Owner.



Yamanashi Gakuin Kindergarten Visited iCLA to learn about world cultures.