

Premium College: Tokyo's Path to a New Youth

TOKYO, JAPAN, December 12, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Tokyo in the 22nd Century: Living Healthy up to 120—this is the Tokyo 100 years from now predicted by AI.

Imagine Tokyo as the world's longevity capital, where living to 120 is an everyday reality. A recent World Bank report warns Japan is aging faster than most developed nations. In response, Tokyo is rolling out bold policies to ensure life remains purposeful, vibrant, and full of possibility.

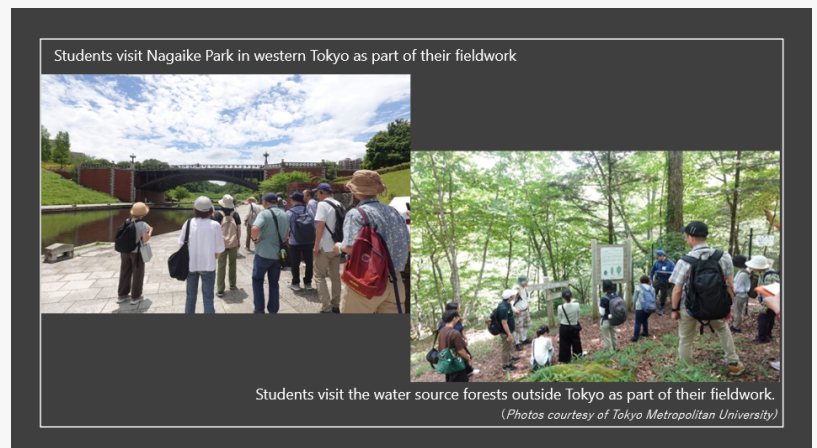
Governor Koike Encourages Senior Students

One example is Premium College, established within Tokyo Metropolitan University for learners aged 50 and above. This summer, Governor Koike Yuriko visited the college and shared AI's future vision during a roundtable with faculty and students.

Encouraging the adult learners, she remarked, "You are amid your youth. I hope you continue to study with enthusiasm."

Diverse and Purposeful: Inside the College

In 2019, Premium College was launched as a "University for Lifelong Learning up to Age 100." It offers an inspiring space for learning and



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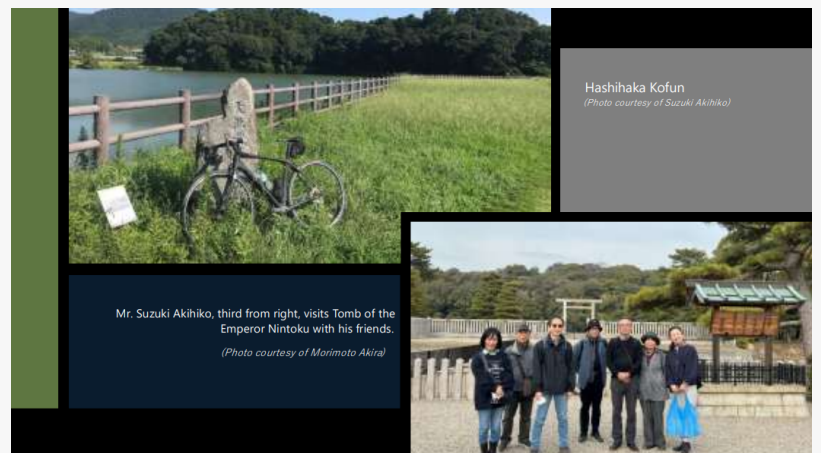
connection in a truly unique setting where most faculty members are seniors themselves.

The backgrounds of students are remarkably diverse. Among them are teachers, journalists, bankers, business professionals from insurance, food, and trading companies, as well as self-employed individuals and homemakers. This rich variety is one of the program's greatest attractions.

The program spans a wide range of fields, from history and culture to nature, featuring lectures and seminars by distinguished professors, hands-on fieldwork, and opportunities for independent research. Through these enriching experiences, Premium College ignites intellectual curiosity and empowers participants to stay active and engaged in society—proving that learning truly has no age limit.



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To graduate, students must present research and submit a research paper, helping them deepen their interests and develop the ability to share their insights with society. The program can be extended up to four years, allowing for gradual and flexible learning.

Students belong to a seminar, which is a small-group academic course. Under the guidance of a professor, seminar classes emphasize active participation, presentations, and collaborative learning. At Premium College, each seminar serves as preparation for writing a graduation paper in one year.

College Director Finds Joy in Lifelong Learning

Dr. Matsumoto Jun, the Director, says, "College students are very enthusiastic."

Specializing in geography, climatology and meteorology, Dr. Matsumoto finds inspiration in the lively exchanges among students of similar ages. Previously focused on his own field, he now enjoys listening to presentations on a wide range of topics researched by seminar students and appreciates the diversity of expertise among his colleagues. "I find intellectual pleasure in being shown worlds I never knew," he remarks.

“Seeing people energize each other and live vibrantly makes me feel that Premium College offers opportunities for a rich life,” Dr. Matsumoto said.

“We even have participants in their 80s. Some who initially couldn’t use a computer become proficient and, after a year, write papers and present their achievements. Witnessing such progress makes me want to do my best, too,” he added.

Learning Beyond Limits: Two Women’s Second Youth

Ms. Shimada Taeko, now in her second year, runs her family’s sake brewery and is also a brewer. She became interested in meteorology and climatology, and said, “It’s a world I would never have known without coming to the college.”

She added, “I enjoy mountain climbing, and meteorological knowledge is extremely useful. Even in sake brewing, I’ve started thinking about things like how this year’s rice will grow from a meteorological perspective.”

This year’s research theme is “The Shifting Foundation of Sake Rice.” She is exploring the question: Could sake breweries become key players in agriculture through collaboration with local communities?

For Ms. Ide Michi, who started studying at the college this year, the motivation came from wondering, “Will my life end with the knowledge I have now?” She had tried studying alone but ended up feeling the limits of self-learning. After joining Premium College, she finds the seminar with peers incredibly enjoyable.”

During overseas life, Ms. Ide became accustomed to markets within walking distance. After returning to Japan, she wondered why supermarkets dominate and traditional markets are no longer a familiar part of daily life. To explore this question, Ms. Ide plans to examine the current state of markets in Japan.

Learning Together, Living Longer with Purpose

“Isn’t it a plus to gain new human connections along with learning?”

Governor Koike, during her visit, expressed the significance of the college in this way.

In an era where people might live healthily for up to 120 years, what they need is not only knowledge and skills but also good human relationships as an essential element for fulfilling life.

Ever wondered what life looks like after completing a fun and fulfilling journey at Premium College? Graduates take diverse paths. In the next chapter, we will introduce some inspiring alumni.

Beyond the Classroom, Lifelong Learning

At Premium College, adults over 50 discover a vibrant community, fresh perspectives, and opportunities that reshape their lives. For some, it rekindles old passions; for others, it sparks new dreams. Here are stories of graduates whose journeys took unexpected turns—toward global careers, cultural exchange, and even archaeological research.

Welcoming the World at UN University Headquarters

Ms. Usahara Mayumi, 64, has built a career that bridges cultures. After two years at Premium College, her new journey began in 2022, at an international environment—the United Nations University (UNU) Headquarters in Shibuya, Tokyo. Today, three to four days a week, she is the hospitable face at the main reception desk, greeting guests and managing calls.

A Career Reimagined

English has always been central to her work, from guiding overseas tours to serving as a hotel receptionist in Japan and abroad. Motivated by a desire to “learn more deeply about Tokyo,” she enrolled in Premium College in 2019.

“Becoming a university student again as an adult made me feel closer to the academic world. I even began to see universities as potential workplaces,” she recalls.

Where Global Conversations Begin

After completing the program, Ms. Usahara joined a building management company responsible for security and facilities at UNU Headquarters Building. The building hosts the university’s headquarters. It also houses several UN agencies including UNICEF and ILO.

Her duties range from welcoming guests to supporting events. Despite the challenge of diverse English accents, she enjoys her work: “Even reading the event titles here expands my view of global issues.”

Empowering Language Education

Since 2015, including her student year in FY 2019, Ms. Taketomi Yukiko, 58, has served as a regional coordinator for a company that dispatches foreign language instructors.

Her work primarily takes place in Tokyo’s elementary and junior high schools, where she escorts instructors on their first day, attends meetings, and helps bridge communication between Japanese teachers and foreign instructors.

Beyond the Classroom

Her responsibilities extend far beyond the school setting. To ensure newly arrived instructors settle smoothly into life in Japan, she assists with apartment arrangements, municipal paperwork, and opening bank accounts—supporting every aspect of daily life.

How Lifelong Learning Changed Her Approach

“Learning about social contribution and volunteer work at Premium College made me ask myself, ‘What can I do?’ My mindset and attitude toward work have changed,” she says.

“I try to add something extra—so that foreign instructors feel secure, and Japanese teachers and students enjoy their language classes. It’s all about small steps that make a positive difference.”

Her international outlook was shaped by living in the United States for a total of 11 years during two overseas assignments with her husband. “After returning to Japan, I wanted to find a job where I could use English,” she recalls.

Inspired by her college peers, she continues to study English.

“Everyone at Premium College was eager to learn. Their spirit of challenge motivated me to improve my English skills, which really helps in my work today.”

Even after graduation, she maintains ties with like-minded peers through fieldwork and seminar group activities.

One Graduate Takes Flight

“I was ready to dive back into work.”

After a fulfilling year at Premium College, Ms. Seo Megumi, 57, decided her next step would be a return to the workforce. What sparked this determination? A classmate’s research presentation.

The findings from a 2016 report were striking: a woman who stays with the same company until retirement earns over four times more than one who quit for childcare and later works part-time.

That revelation hit hard.

An International Outlook

Ms. Seo had always had a global perspective—she spent five years in Hong Kong during her school years because of her father’s overseas assignments. Her first career was as a flight attendant, traveling the world. At 42, after having two children, she left the job to focus on raising her family.

Building a New Career Beyond Borders

After graduating from Premium College, she was determined to find work connected to the world beyond Japan. She first worked at an English-language kindergarten in Tokyo, then in January 2025 registered with a Tokyo-based company specializing in overseas tours.

Starting with an 11-day trip to Turkey in April, she accompanied tours every month. By year’s end, she will have spent more than 100 days abroad, visiting destinations such as Australia,

Egypt, and countries across Europe and the Americas.

Memories That Travel

Memories of Premium College often return in faraway places.

"I learned in Tokyo history class that many stones on the walls surrounding the moat of Edo Castle bear engraved marks," Ms. Seo says. They indicate the feudal lords who contributed to its construction or the stonemasons responsible for the work.

"In France and Egypt, for instance, history is also carved into stone. When I see inscriptions of donors' names, I think, 'Just like Japan!' My job now is so much fun, and without Premium College, I wouldn't be enjoying it this much."

From Global Business to Ancient Secrets

Mr. Suzuki Akihiko, 69, is currently pursuing a master's degree at Kokugakuin University in Tokyo. His passion for archaeology began during his time at Premium College, where he spent three years deeply engaged in the study of Kofun (Japanese ancient burial mounds). That dedication eventually inspired him to embark on full-scale academic research.

A Career Spanning Continents

Previously, Mr. Suzuki worked for a major trading company, taking part in large-scale projects overseas such as building plants and transportation infrastructure. Over the course of three assignments in Saudi Arabia, he spent a total of seven years.

Despite his extensive international experience, in recent years he has become firmly rooted in Japan. At Premium College, he discovered the world of archaeology and built a solid foundation in discipline.

More Than Studies: Lifelong Friendship

Although Mr. Suzuki threw himself into his studies, when asked what stood out most about Premium College, he says, "The best part was gaining so many new friends."

"In business, you meet countless people, but those relationships always involve some kind of constraint—sellers and buyers, bosses and subordinates. At Premium College, everyone can form genuine, mature connections. Even after finishing the program, many of those friendships remain strong."

A Second Youth Through Shared Interests

One example is a club for archaeology and history enthusiasts, which he has been part of since his student days. This spring, together with six companions, he embarked on a three-day trip to the World Heritage Site of the Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group and other places of interest in western Japan.

Through trips and social gatherings, he has deepened friendships while enjoying intellectual stimulation—truly racing through a “second youth.”

The Power of Lifelong Learning

Premium College is more than a place to study—it’s a gateway to new possibilities. For these graduates, learning didn’t just add knowledge; it opened doors to careers, friendships, and adventures they never imagined. Their stories remind us that education has no age limit—and that curiosity can lead to a second youth filled with purpose and joy.

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