

Mari Odake: International Resident Assistant

Mari Odake, an international student from Osaka, Japan, will be one of two international students to join the housing staff of 22 in the 2015-16 academic year at the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith.

“I’m grateful for the opportunity and ready to use all my abilities to be supportive for the residents and the other staff members,” Mari said.

Following her graduation from high school in Osaka, Mari traveled to America to attend UAFS in the fall semester of 2013. When arriving in America, she tried to clear her mind of any past conceptions she had of America. She said she filled herself full of hope and it has yet to disappoint. Mari has maintained above a 3.0 GPA during her four semesters at UAFS. She has also developed a large network of relationships with groups such as Student Government Association, where she leads Campus Affairs Committee, as well as the Japan Club, and now Housing and Residential Life.

Living on campus, Mari said she was heavily influenced by her resident assistants, so much that she wanted to become one. After being put on the alternate list the first time she applied, she was ecstatic to finally read the words “we are pleased to offer” in an email from Housing Director Beth Eppinger.

Mari believes having international students on housing staff will improve the group through diversity. Coming here from Japan, Mari has experienced many of the challenges that all international students face, such as language barriers and culture shock. Having experience in conquering her fears in these areas, Mari will be able to help incoming international students as only a fellow international student can.

