

Gretchen Clark: Mid-Career Scholar 2024

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I have known Gretchen Clark since I joined JALT in 2019. Although we did not connect until the pandemic when everything went online, I noticed how she thrives within the organization through her leadership skills, enthusiasm for her work, and empathy for others.

In the Kyoto chapter, Gretchen has held several officer roles, including president, secretary, and currently, program and facilities chair. Her ability to take the initiative in various roles demonstrates how active and dedicated she is in JALT. Beyond Kyoto, she has volunteered for key positions at JALT's international conferences. In particular, she is a valued member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, where she continues to ensure that JALT is a place where everyone feels safe and has the opportunity to grow in their own capacities.

Gretchen also has a keen eye for detail, which is a significant asset in academic publishing. She has served twice as a PanSIG abstract reviewer and has a knack for organizing data for analysis. Her latest research on the experiences of language teachers with ADHD highlights her passion for amplifying the voices of those who need to be heard and her empathy for those walking the same path as she is.

Personally, Gretchen has provided me and others with constructive feedback on abstract writing for conferences. Thanks to her advice, I was motivated not to give up on my own abstract, which ultimately led to my paper being presented at an international conference. I genuinely admire her dedication to elevating others and recognizing their worth in JALT and in academia. In doing so, she has become a mentor and an inspiration to many who are just beginning their careers in language teaching, both within JALT and beyond.

I believe Gretchen is well-deserving of this award, and this recognition will exemplify the achievements of a JALT member who has gone many extra miles, not only for herself but also for the community around her that continues to grow.

Emily Choong

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I am honoured to nominate Gretchen Clark for the Mid-Career Scholar Award (Research). As a long-time friend, co-researcher, and co-author, I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand her unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions to the Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT) community, particularly through her work with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee.

In her capacity as a dedicated member of the DEI Committee, Gretchen has played a pivotal role in fostering an inclusive environment within JALT. Her contributions have not

only enriched the DEI Committee but have also had a far-reaching impact on the English Language Teaching (ELT) community at large.

Gretchen has consistently demonstrated her commitment to advocating for underrepresented groups within JALT. She tirelessly dedicates her time to actively listening to the concerns of others and engaging in research to identify and implement strategies for creating a more equitable and inclusive community. Her work is characterized by a deep sense of empathy and a genuine desire to make JALT a better place for everyone.

One of Gretchen's significant contributions has been her leadership in curating and showcasing presentation topics related to DEI at both JALT National Conferences and PanSIG Conferences. Through her efforts, the DEI table has become a focal point for raising awareness and promoting discussions on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Her work in this area has been instrumental in bringing DEI to the forefront of these important events.

Furthermore, Gretchen has played a crucial role in organizing and facilitating DEI Committee workshops on active allyship and handling microaggressions in the workplace. These workshops have been vital in providing members with the tools and knowledge needed to be effective allies and to create more inclusive environments within their own workplaces.

Gretchen's contributions to the JALT and ELT communities are both significant and impactful. Her continuous dedication has made a lasting difference, and I can think of no one more deserving of this recognition.

May Kyaw Oo

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I would like to nominate Gretchen Gately Clark for the Mid-Career Scholar Award (Research). I was first introduced to Gretchen by an acquaintance in the JALT orientation and mentoring committee as I was seeking professional connections during the pandemic in 2021. I was very lucky that I was, since Gretchen had sparked the beginning of a growing group of educators in Japan from all regions, ranks, and backgrounds who had come together online. She has been highly supportive of everyone in this community, and I felt encouraged emotionally by her presence from the first time I met her at a gathering on zoom. She is always enthusiastic about responding to others in our educators' community, and she has helped me and others write academic papers, conference proposals, and job applications with generous amounts of comments and feedback. I also know her for her many contributions to JALT as the president of the Kyoto chapter, and she has given inspirational presentations advocating for neurodiverse teachers and DEI in general at every conference I've seen her at over the last three years. Gretchen and the community of educators she initiated have motivated me to volunteer for the relatively newly established DEI committee in JALT, where she actively contributes to its activities. Despite all of the

positive influence she has made, she refuses to take credit for organizing our circle of mutual support. I hope that by nominating Gretchen for this award, we can give her some of the recognition she deserves from our academic community of language teachers.

Risa Ikeda

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I am writing to enthusiastically nominate Gretchen Clark for the Mid-Career Scholar Award.

I met Gretchen at the JALT International Conference in Fukuoka in 2022. The period has been brief, but the leadership, care, discernment, and courage that she has demonstrated in this time is inspiring. There are many times over the past two years at which I've turned to her for professional and academic advice, and she is always a powerfully uplifting force and a wellspring of concrete information and down-to-earth encouragement.

Gretchen's research trajectory has spanned topics related to critical thinking, extensive listening, and equity, all of which connect to her orientation toward transformative change. Her recent scholarship on the strengths that instructors living with ADHD bring to the learning environment is courageous and sorely needed. Sadly, the stigma surrounding neurodiversity is very real, and Gretchen's scholarship on this essential equity issue is leading edge. As far as I know, this research is the first of its kind in the Japanese higher education context.

Besides her trailblazing research, Gretchen's leadership exemplifies integrity and humility. In her JALT leadership work, she has built genuine trust and collegiality with her collaborators. Also, Gretchen is always open to supporting others in their research journeys. This extends from formally and informally coaching and mentoring her colleagues through national-level leadership work, to her tireless efforts on the DEI Committee, to her work with Yoshi Grote on three Living on the Edge conferences highlighting DEI in ELE, her enthusiastic service in various essential roles in the Kyoto Chapter over the past 15 years is unmatched.

Overall, Gretchen's research background and her commitment to uplifting those around her demonstrates how her work is not about ego and self-aggrandizement, but is truly part and parcel of her vocation as a lifelong learner and educator. She is truly deserving of the JALT Mid-Career Scholar Award.

Yaya Yao

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I wholeheartedly nominate Gretchen Clark, Ritsumeikan University, for the JALT Mid-Career Scholar Award (Research). I have known Gretchen for about ten years now, firstly, through the JALT Learner Development SIG (LD-SIG). Since that time, I have experienced Gretchen as being highly productive in her teaching pursuits and research fields, and in a wide range

of teacher and learner development activities. Gretchen has been an active and foundational member of the Kansai LD-SIG Get-togethers, which provides professional development and peer mentoring, and where she helped to coordinate the student-led mini-conference, “Kansai to the World” (2017). As well as these professional pursuits, Gretchen has made enormous contributions in other volunteer activities that bring together teachers, researchers and students, serving more than ten years in various roles in the Kyoto JALT chapter, and as Program Chair since 2017.

Importantly, Gretchen brings her wide-ranging personal-professional skills and network connections to co-create strong, diverse and inclusive communities and events with colleagues around Japan. I have personally benefited from Gretchen’s encouragement and practical mentoring which supported me to participate and present in “Living on the Edge” conferences and “Educators for Equity”, an online research and teacher development network. Both communities of practice were key in sustaining many teachers through the isolation of emergency remote teaching and research projects during the global pandemic. Gretchen has been an invaluable figure in supporting teacher-researchers from minoritized communities in Japan, and her warm, professional and practical approaches have impacted many teachers in their own career development. Gretchen exemplifies true allyship in her ongoing work with others in JALT’s “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee” to collaborate and co-create best practices for an inclusive and thriving educational organisation.

As we move forward in a post-Covid world with different kinds of uncertainty and potential for both learners and teachers, the field of ELT in Japan, as well as professional organisations such as JALT, will continue to benefit from the inclusive teaching and research practices of diligent language educators such as Gretchen Clark. I unreservedly nominate Gretchen for the JALT Mid-Career Scholar Award (Research).

Jenny Morgan

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I am thrilled to nominate Gretchen for JALT Mid-Career Scholar Award (Research). I have had the privilege of witnessing her dedication to both her professional and personal commitments. Balancing the demands of motherhood, family life, and teaching positions at multiple universities, she has shown remarkable resilience and perseverance. Her steady progress in academic publishing, and her amassed experience of teaching diverse student populations from junior and senior high school to university really shows how committed she is to advancing English language education in Japan.

What really sets Gretchen apart is her deep commitment to the community. She has been advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion in language teaching. She has also taken on the important task of researching mental health issues that affect both students and faculty members, which has become increasingly relevant in our field. Her research topics surely deserve more attention in the ELT field. Language teachers guide students in expressing themselves in a new language, a process that requires high cognitive abilities and naturally engages emotions. Advancing research on mental health for both teachers and learners is more critical than ever. In this sense, she is opening new doors for new

areas of ELT research in order to ensure that everyone involved in our field feels included and supported.

Her academic achievements have been steadily built up over many years with persistence. In Japan, English teaching positions are often unstable, with teachers having to work at multiple schools simultaneously or move from one school to another. Even during her time as an adjunct instructor with limited research resources, Gretchen continued her research and achieved the success she has today. I believe that Gretchen, who serves as a role model for many junior teachers and researchers who follow in her footsteps, truly deserves this award.

Sunao Fukunaga

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I am honored to nominate Gretchen Clark for the JALT Mid-Career Scholar Award (Research). As a long-standing Kyoto JALT Executive Board member, Gretchen's unwavering dedication to supporting marginalized educators and students through both research and practice has been truly inspirational.

Gretchen's leadership has been transformative for the JALT community. She has consistently created valuable opportunities for those who have lacked access to professional development and research opportunities. Whether through organizing inclusive workshops and events, producing, sharing, and publishing research papers, or mentoring individuals from diverse backgrounds, Gretchen has been a tireless advocate for equity and empowerment.

Moreover, Gretchen's groundbreaking research on supporting instructors and students with ADHD has had a profound impact. By developing innovative teaching strategies and fostering safe, supportive learning environments, she has opened new doors for students from marginalized communities. Gretchen's work has not only been shared at JALT conferences, but has also influenced practices across the academic landscape.

Most importantly, Gretchen's compassion and mentorship have touched the lives of countless individuals. As a trusted advisor and ally, she has consistently gone above and beyond to empower those who have faced systemic barriers. Her unwavering commitment to uplifting marginalized voices is a true inspiration to all who have had the privilege of working with her.

In recognition of Gretchen's exceptional contributions to JALT and the broader educational community, I enthusiastically nominate her for the JALT Mid-Career Scholar Award (Research). Her visionary leadership, impactful research, and transformative mentorship make her a truly deserving candidate for this prestigious honor.

Mahboubah Rakhshandehroo