

# Accelerating to a **New Career** at UCI



**Kazunobu Sawada's journey led to two ACP certificates and a dream job in digital marketing.**

Kazunobu Sawada was intent on pursuing a career in digital marketing, so after graduating from a university in his native Japan he found a job at an advertising agency where he was quickly assigned to the HR department. It was a good opportunity to learn and advance on the corporate side, he said, but Kazunobu felt unfulfilled.

Deciding to bet on himself and go for his dream, he quit his job to study digital marketing in the U.S. After doing a great deal of research, he made his way to UCI Division of Continuing Education (UCI DCE) and enrolled in the Accelerated Certificate Program Digital Marketing and Communications (ACP DMC). But first he needed to improve his English proficiency, so he enrolled in the DCE's Intensive ESL program.

"I wanted to fulfill my dream of learning digital marketing and living in the U.S. at the same time, so when I was researching places to study abroad, I learned about ACPs at UCI," Kazunobu said. "My English level when I started studying in the U.S. was quite low. Since the certificate program had an English language proficiency requirement, I decided to study English for six months before taking it."

Thanks to the ESL program, Kazunobu became quite fluent and dove into his digital marketing studies — a move that led directly to an internship and an exciting new career at Immerse, a growing company that offers innovative Metaverse Language Instruction blending live lessons with real instructors in a Virtual Reality environment.

"It was exciting to learn directly from instructors who actually utilize those skills," he said. "Not just one-way teaching but also workshops and actual practice. It has all been very helpful in my day-to-day work. I also had the opportunity to collaborate on team projects with students from different countries, people with diverse backgrounds. It was a great learning experience."

## Turning an internship into a career

When Kazunobu enrolled in the ACP, he learned about Internship Experiences, a valuable opportunity to get a foothold in his new field. He also applied for Optional Practical Training (OPT), which would allow him to stay and work in the U.S. for the duration of the internship, and that required him to take one more ACP.

He chose International Business Operations and Management and in 2019 started interning at Immerse, a startup at the time with about six employees. It was an outstanding opportunity that gave Kazunobu wide latitude to learn and grow.

"Immerse did not have a program designed only for internships, so even as an intern you're sometimes asked to do the actual execution of business practices and make proposals on real issues," he said. "It was the best place for me to start my career in the U.S., with the best coworkers and the best environment. I learned a lot on the job, especially about American business communication skills, which are very different to my last workplace in Japan."

Immerse allowed him to showcase the digital marketing expertise he learned at UCI, in an open and flexible environment. "I was lucky because Immerse is unique and gave me free rein to use the knowledge from my ACP, even when I was an intern," Kazunobu said. "It led directly to my current position as Immerse Growth Director in Japan. It was an amazing experience."

Kazunobu returned to Japan at the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 and established Immerse's Japan headquarters, tasked with building partnerships with Japanese educational institutions and university researchers — an exceptionally large first step in his new career.

## A global education

Digital marketing has evolved to be an essential pillar of modern business strategy, an invaluable tool for any company or

nonprofit. The intensive, three-month ACP in Digital Marketing and Communications puts international students on the fast track to mastering emerging and leading-edge technology, learning how to merge the latest innovations and strategies with traditional marketing tools and methods.

Students receive a solid background in best practices aimed at capturing new business, developing new products, increasing profitability and building customer loyalty. Advanced methods for determining return on investment (ROI) for marketing strategies are taught by a team of expert, experienced instructors.

After completing the accelerated on-campus certificate program, students will have earned a prestigious UCI designation recognized worldwide as a standard of excellence, along with strong networking connections in a wide range of fields and industries.

The ACP International Business Operations and Management provides a number of advantages for those pursuing digital marketing or anyone, really, involved in international sales and operations. With continued growth in global commerce, businesses worldwide have unprecedented opportunities for growing sales, increasing market share and ROI.

"As I said, the main reason I took the International Business Operations and

Management program was because I needed to complete one more ACP before I could apply for OPT," Kazunobu said. "However, I now realize that it was very helpful for my career, as I work with international companies and act as a liaison between Immerse's U.S. and Japanese companies."

Kazunobu learned the intricacies and unique nature of doing business with diverse cultures, negotiating international contracts and navigating sensitive points of concern. Together with his expert digital marketing training, DCE set him up to attain success early on in his dream job.

"I definitely would recommend DCE to other international students," he said. "When I came to study abroad, I could barely speak English, but UCI changed my life. I made a lot of friends at the university, and they come from many different countries and cultures. UCI offers the beauty of learning, playing, working, and growing with people that I would have never had the chance to meet otherwise. It requires an investment of time and money, and I can assure you that it is definitely worth it."

**UCI** Division of Continuing Education  
[ce.uci.edu/international](https://ce.uci.edu/international)

