

Higher Education in Japan

Contributing solutions to the world's common challenges

By Minister Hirofumi Hirano

With our long held shared values and interests, the United States and Japan are close partners in addressing together novel global issues the international community faces: international financial and economic crises, climate change, energy challenges, and so on.

At first, I wish to express my sincerest gratitude for the stalwart support we in Japan received from the United States when the Great East Japan Earthquake disaster struck, ranging from large-scale rescue efforts by the United States military in "Operation Tomodachi" to the thousands of messages of support from American citizens. Owing to the efforts of the many parties involved, I am pleased to report that classes at all universities have reopened to normal instruction schedules and that the many international students in Japan are able to pursue their studies calmly and safely.

It is a source of pride for us that higher education in Japan enjoys a high international reputation. In addition to the government's sensible system for ensuring educational quality by maintaining high standards for granting approval for the establishment and accreditation of institutions of higher learning in Japan, educational reform is constantly undertaken along with many outstanding and diverse educational and research activities.

Formal university education in Japan began more than 100 years ago, and, since that time, a world-class educational and research environment has been created with academic

freedom guaranteed by the Japanese Constitution. Particularly in the field of the natural sciences, Japan's international competitiveness ranks with that of the United States and Europe. Joint international research is also flourishing at Japanese universities. This has been evidenced by the fact that Japan has produced 16 Nobel Prize laureates in the natural sciences. In the past decade—between 2002 and 2011—seven Japanese scien-



Hirofumi Hirano, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

tists have received the Nobel Prize, the second most in the world for one country after the United States.

Japanese universities do not focus only on fundamental research in the natural sciences; they also function as a hub for education and research in Asia in areas such as manufacturing and Asian history and culture. A particular characteristic of the educational and research approach at Japanese universities is the establishment of many research laboratories where faculty and students study to-

gether as teams. This approach is especially highly evaluated by overseas students from Asia. In addition, the safety of Japanese communities and cities, the richness of nature in Japan, and the "cool Japan" contemporary culture are attractive to international students.

One important factor that further enhances the attractiveness of Japanese universities is their internationalization. According to OECD statistics, the total number of international students around the world jumped from 800,000 students in 1975 to 3.7 million in 2009, a 4.6-fold increase in 34 years. Among them, the number of international students in Japan increased from 10,000 in 1983 to some 140,000 in 2011. The Japanese government has set a goal of increasing this number to 300,000 international students by 2020.

As a step in this direction, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) launched its Global 30 project in fiscal 2009. Through this project, MEXT selected 13 core universities as model universities that will offer outstanding education programs for international students that will place priority on supporting their various foreign language and daily life needs. MEXT provides funds to support these universities' efforts to internationalize their systems and organizations, such as by expanding programs in which international students can acquire degrees in courses offered exclusively in English.

On the other hand, the number of Japanese students studying abroad

has been decreasing since 2004. In particular, the number of students going to the United States from Japan fell to 21,290 in 2010, over half fewer than 10 years ago. The Japanese government wants to reverse this trend of decreasing numbers of Japanese study abroad students and make efforts to give opportunities to more Japanese students to study in the United States and other countries.

For this, MEXT has decided to provide new support from fiscal 2012 to universities which prepare mechanisms aimed at supporting Japanese students' overseas study. In fiscal 2011, MEXT developed a quality-assured model program for joint education with overseas universities. To promote further student exchanges, MEXT also started a student exchange program with relatively short periods of study of under three months that will provide solid motivation for Japanese students to pursue credit programs overseas.

In 2009, there were 6,166 American students studying in Japan. We want more students in the United States and from around the world to know about the appeal and desirability of Japanese universities, and, at the same time, we want more Japanese students to study abroad in the United States as well as in other countries. My sincere hope is that these students will develop as valuable human resources who will study together with colleagues around the world, produce new knowledge and technology, and contribute to the finding of solutions to the world's common challenges.

Continuing to motivate students to think and act globally

International universities can play a central role in promoting the objectives of the United Nations. 2011 saw the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon establish The United Nations Academic Impact initiative (UNAI) and J. F. Oberlin University is spearheading the participation of Japanese University's in the UNAI program.

UNAI Secretary General, Dr. Ramu Damodaran visited

J. F. Oberlin University in December 2011 to discuss the roles of the United Nations and UNAI in higher education.

Ranked as one of the best university presidents in Japan by his peers (Asahi Newspaper, the University Ranking 2011 and 2012), J. F. Oberlin President, Toyoshi Satow is eager to lead this new initiative:

"One of the missions of J. F. Oberlin is to help students become globally-mind-

ed doers. The UNAI program is an ideal platform for every international college and university to work together for a better world," he says.

J. F. Oberlin was chosen as the Hub School for promoting Principle One: Commitment to the United Nations Charter and has announced a textbook series aimed at educating international students on the most important aspects of the United Nation's work.

Founded in the UK in 1964,



J.F. Oberlin, President, Toyoshi Satow

the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP) aims to strengthen the international mission and improve the quality of higher

education around the world.

President of Fairleigh Dickinson University, Dr. J. Michael Adams heads the IAUP with Satow holding the position President-Elect. The association has around 600 members from over one hundred countries and continues to discuss and identify the major issues, opportunities and challenges being faced in higher education.

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Pursuing the vision of an ideal human society in a Metropolis



首都大学東京
TOKYO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Ranked amongst the top ten Japanese Universities in the Times Higher Education World University Ranking, Tokyo Metropolitan University (TMU) is building on its reputation within the international education sector.

Founded in 1949 and reorganized in 2005, TMU currently has more than 700 faculty members instructing approximately 7,000 undergraduate students and 2,000 graduate students.

"TMU was founded by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government," says Fumio Harashima, President of TMU. "Today our core competencies are based on improving the urban environment, building a highly intellectual society within a dynamic industry structure and realizing a society of vitality and longevity".

Located in the heart of the Tokyo metropolis, TMU pursues the vision of an ideal human society engaged in relevant and beneficial research and education. The

ogy courses.

The university's mission focuses on the essential relationship between education and research which Harashima refers to as – "the

modern society, education has evolved in line with the basic human needs of purpose and personal fulfillment. Humankind has built civilizations based on educating and nurturing people and by creating a sense of value and culture we are able to pass on our knowledge to the next generation".

TMU's International Center is playing a vital role in laying the foundations for future generations while also accelerating the globalization of the university. Relationships are increasingly being established with international institutions and today TMU students attend programs at Georgetown University to acquire American-style scientific presentation skills.

Harashima intends to further develop the fundamental pillars of education and research and is driven to internationalize TMU in line



Tokyo Metropolitan University,
President, Prof. Fumio Harashima

with his vision for the continued positive development of society, gender equality and diversity within the university. www.tmu.ac.jp

The university's mission focuses on the essential relationship between education and research...

university's strengths lie in its MBA, sociology, architecture, civil engineering, robotics, bio-informatics, astrophysics, chemistry and nanotechnol-

succession and creation of knowledge".

Diversity, gender, disability and race are close to Harashima's heart; "In our



J. F. Oberlin University

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