

“Reflecting on the origin... Looking to the future...”

Thoughts at the beginning of the year 2011

First of all, I'd like to wish all of you a Happy New Year! 2011 marks the 80th anniversary of the founding of Osaka University. As you may know, the number 8 is considered to be the luckiest number of all in Japanese culture.

In order to understand this new era of Osaka University, during the New Year Holidays, I reread *The Fifty-Year History of Osaka University* published about 30 years ago by some faculty members and President Yamamura. The book has more than 550 pages laid out in double columns!

In 1931, Osaka University started as the smallest imperial university with just two schools: the Faculty of Medicine and the School of Science, but it has developed to a comprehensive university with 11 schools and 16 graduate schools! It has become the national university with the largest number of undergraduate students. I reread the book in order to discover what might have brought about such a development.

Some words in the book brightened my heart. Let me introduce some impressive words by previous presidents. Recalling the founding of the School of Science, the first president, **NAGAOKA Hantaro** said, “Universities are known for the research conducted by their faculty members. One can't be happy about having mediocre professors at one's university because they make the university like any other.” This comment made me feel the enthusiasm of staff for pursuing unparalleled things at the time of our university's foundation.

The third president, **MAJIMA Riko**, initiated the reconstruction of Osaka University devastated by World War II and, in addition, he made a drastic plan to revamp the university structure. He strove to make Osaka University a truly comprehensive university and submitted a letter proposing the construction of a School of Liberal Arts to the Minister of Education on behalf of the Osaka Imperial University Board of Trustees. In his letter of opinion, he wrote, considering the modern academic tradition of Osaka, that it was quite natural for Osaka University to become a comprehensive university. “Osaka is a birthplace of ancient culture and its unique culture brought it prosperity as a modern merchant city at the center of the Kansai region. *Kaitokudo*, in particular, took up its stand in Western Japan with, in the Kanto region, *Shoheiko*, a place of learning built by the Edo government.” President Majima considered Osaka as a place of learning that contended with national schools. He strongly believed that Osaka University was the academic institution that represented Osaka.

The 11th president, **YAMAMURA Yuichi**, in the commemorative ceremony of the 50th anniversary of Osaka University's founding, said as follows, “In addition to the national government's support, thanks to the support of its hometown Osaka, Osaka University was established and has developed in close relationship with local communities since.

“The new and old, tradition and creation, merchants' self-reliant attitude and modern scientific spirit: the combination of these factors has supported the 50-year history of Osaka University.”

The thing common to these two presidents' remarks is the university's uniqueness. Most national universities born after WWII under the new educational law originated from former schools established

by feudal lords in the Edo Era. However, Osaka University's roots reach back to two places of learning built by merchants; *Tekijuku* and *Kaitokudo*. In other words, the defining characteristic of education and research at Osaka University lies in the combination of advanced scholarship and the self-reliance of merchants.

Osaka University has often been said to be practice-oriented. In this case, if “practice-oriented” means delivering education in the applied sciences, addressing the heart of the problem that the times faced, as **FUKUZAWA Yukichi**, one of the *Tekijuku* students, thought, we should take pride in announcing that Osaka University values practice-oriented learning. In keeping with this spirit, Osaka University established forward-looking schools such as the School of Engineering Science, integrating science with the challenges of engineering, and the School of Human Sciences, integrating science and liberal art courses.

After the change of legal status to the national university corporation, Osaka University did not do as many other universities did regarding education and research, in university management, and in cooperation with society. We strove to challenge areas that others had not challenged. We made efforts to undertake pioneering approaches that others would emulate as "*Handai style* [Osaka University mode]. We took such approaches because we were deeply aware of our tradition of pursuing uniqueness.

For example, two years after the legal status change, Osaka University was the first university to recognize the necessity of advanced education in the liberal arts and communication education. To this end, we established the Center for the Study of Communication-Design. We think that in advanced liberal arts education, the higher one advances in scholarship, the more one needs a foundation in liberal arts. This mode has been emulated by other universities in recent years. This is one more example of how Osaka University style has been emulated.

Osaka University has worked on its unique approaches; for example, along with industries, Osaka University offers joint research courses and CLIC (Cooperation toward Leadership in Innovative Creation) programs, provides Basic Seminars as general education for first-year students, created Student Commons on campuses, and developed Kaitokudo for the 21st Century projects as initial attempts at university-society cooperation.

The project in celebration of its 80th anniversary is “Reflecting on the origin... Looking to the future...”. This project intends to make possible discussion of Osaka University's future by returning to its spiritual origins and by using such as our springboard. Pursue rational intelligence thoroughly based on scientific approaches and develop cultural literacy in the same ways as *Kitokudo* and *Tekijuku*, origins of Osaka University, pursued these two purposes. Let us remember such origins and make a big leap forward by coordinating such approaches in ways that fit the present time. Our predecessors made efforts to revive and enhance the places of learning established by Osaka merchants at Osaka University. We must continue to enhance the quality of education, research, and social contribution to an unparalleled level — Osaka University's future depends on such fundamental efforts.

Osaka University has always emphasized: (1) Cutting-edge research, (2) a university tradition of combining and creating overlooked areas for research, (3) an atmosphere revering both learning and research (which is why we have been called a "University of Education"), (4) respect for a liberal arts

education at our graduate schools, and (5) active contributions to society through university-industry and university-society cooperation. Now is the time for the University to embrace this unique education and research style as the definitive “*Handai style*.”

In order to reconfirm this, on the 80th anniversary of its founding, Osaka University established a project “Reflecting on the origin... Looking to the future...” Along with the rebirth of “E-go Kan” on the Toyonaka Campus as Osaka University Hall, we fully intend to conduct memorable 80th anniversary events during the first semester.

As you know, since their status change, national universities have had a harder time financially. Although duties such as evaluation, legal work, risk management, safety management, information disclosure, and public relations that we weren’t involved in before the change increased significantly, our basic management budget has been cut by 1% per year. This year’s budget was cut by 1.8% and next year’s will be cut by 1.6%. This makes it very difficult. Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research for the next academic year will increase a little, but the budget for management, a foundation of university operation, will continue to be reduced. In such a setting, we cannot afford to ignore such budget reductions. National universities can't afford to do so!

To tell the truth, I was shocked by the news from a friend living in the UK. The British government announced last October a comprehensive spending review for the next four years in order to eliminate a structural financial deficit of 11 trillion yen per year. My friend informed me the details of the plan. The government ordered each ministry to cut its budget for by an average of 19%. Higher education spending will be cut by 25% over 4 years. The budgets for the next year will be reduced by 6%. If we include inflation, that means about 8% in real terms.

In particular, in England, the budgets for university management will be cut by 40% next year. They say that research subsidies, especially, budgets for national strategic fields such as bioscience, medicine, engineering, and mathematics, will be left as is. In practice this will mean the total withdrawal of state funding from social sciences, the humanities and arts. In other words, tuition fees alone will finance research. Because of this, a major increase in tuition fees is inevitable; the cap has been revised to almost twice its current level.

In order to address this situation, cooperation and integration of facilities among universities have been accelerated. We should pay attention to the fact that functional differentiation of universities in the UK is being discussed in relation to such a budget reduction. Japan may fall into the same situation. Our nation’s financial predicament does not allow optimism. We must lose no time in addressing areas such as the reduction of the amount of paperwork and revision of the structure of education and research in Osaka University schools. At the same time, university staff training and staff development programs must be improved.

At the same time, we must support young researchers and improve their research environment. Furthermore, in response to the accounting irregularities revealed last year, comprehensive ethical education for faculty and staff must be achieved immediately.

Just after I assumed the presidency of the university, Osaka University merged with the former Osaka University of Foreign Studies. Creating new systems and road maps to enhance this merger is one of the

major challenges that we must address in the first half of this academic year. Most students of the former Osaka University of Foreign Studies will graduate in March. We intend to carry out a drastic reform of language instruction so that people will be impressed with linguistic ability of persons graduating from the School of Foreign Studies. Through such a drastic reform of language instruction, we'd like to nurture students' intellectual abilities to function on the international stage with confidence, poise, and a voice of informed authority.

We have hammered out details of plans with related schools since last year. We have brought our discussion to a final stage so that we can show you the whole plan in the beginning of the next academic year.

For such an educational reform of language instruction and improvement of learning environment for students of the School of Foreign Studies on the Minoh campus, we will present a blueprint to transfer the School of Foreign Studies from the Minoh campus to the Suita Campus in the first half of this year. Based on our challenges and approaches for the next year I mentioned above, I'd like to touch on our approaches from the 2011 Osaka University Action Policies.

- Provide unique language instruction and international education that only Osaka University, a comprehensive national university with a school of foreign studies, can do.
- Develop education focusing on interdisciplinary knowledge, and multiple and global viewpoints by improving graduate school double major programs and initiating new minor programs.
- Provide undergraduate students with unique advanced liberal arts education and promote advanced liberal arts education for graduate students.
- Fully activate new international college activities while supporting the Chemistry-Biology Combined Major Program and Human Sciences Undergraduate Degree Program of Global 30. Additionally, improve courses in graduate schools.
- Improve support for international researchers and students and work on increasing short-term acceptance of international students and student exchange programs for the university as a whole.
- Devise worthy projects in order to obtain grants-in-aid for scientific research and funds for major research projects; establish a university-wide support system for such projects, reinforcing support to further improve research.
- Promote support for research activities enabling young researchers to conduct exciting research.
- Make a full use of the Techno-Alliance Building and strengthen university-industry cooperation.
- Further fortify university-industry cooperation activities and facilitate new plans for collaborative research centers and units developed from joint research courses.
- Promote society-university cooperation via Kaitokudo for the 21st Century at the Nakanoshima Center while enhancing collaboration on projects with Kaitokudo for the 21st Century.
- Enhance information network and information management through a revision of the current university public relations network and proactively conduct public relations activities outside the university. At the same time, facilitate familiarizing university members with information regarding these.
- Following the revision of part of the Regulations on School Education Law, facilitate the

publication of educational information at university.

- Build a network of universities with which Osaka University seeks to promote exchange based on Supervisory Office for Overseas Centers for Education and Research, thereby facilitating exchange among faculty, staff, and students.
- Develop the Osaka University Foundation for the Future established in 2009 in order to stabilize financial foundation. Additionally, provide educational support using funds and build a culture to nurture the young by donations at Osaka University.
- Reduce the number of executive positions at the Administration Bureau and promote the standardization of administrative organization at the university.
- Increase support for female researchers by providing career development support. At the same time, make efforts to expand job categories in order to facilitate employment of persons with challenges and promote further usage of diverse human resources.
- Enhance the quality of on-the-job training by organizing training by rank and nurturing appropriate advisers in order to develop staff that fit **the Ideal Osaka University Staff Member**.
- Provide newly assigned instructors with comprehensive training in order to partially help in the development of human resources supporting the university.
- Produce personnel and financial capacity for important projects and duties at schools and the administrative bureau by streamlining routine work through standardization, digitization, and unification. At the same time, establish administration systems and operation procedures enabling the significant improvement of education, research, and social contributions at the university.
- Facilitate seismic retrofitting and renovation of old buildings. Also, further promote activities in education, research, and social contribution by improving facilities such as Techo-Alliance Building and Immunology Frontier Research Center Building.
- Promote effective and continuous measures to achieve a low-carbon footprint by improving in-house promoting systems for green-gas reduction.
- Increase the capacity of daycare centers on the Suita campus and build a new daycare center on the Toyonaka campus in order to improve support for childcare for faculty, staff, and students.
- Regarding achievements and evaluation, exchange opinions between the Assessment and Evaluation Board and all schools in order to improve and reinvigorate education and research activities.
- Enhance faculty and staff awareness of being sincere and implement all possible measures to prevent illegal accounting of research funds by strengthening supervision systems and by inspecting delivered goods.
- Enhance consciousness regarding the risk management of faculty, staff, and students via educational activities such as lectures and workshop and establish a responsible safety control system in campus.
- Set up advanced information system using state-of-the-art communication technology and ensure higher information security.

I hope all Osaka University members will share an awareness regarding these major challenges. I

strongly hope that OU members will always act considering the above issues and the university situation.

As I said earlier, Osaka University will mark its 80th anniversary this spring. In commemoration, we have planned various kick-off events and commemorative projects. One of the major projects is the renovation of the former Naniwa Senior High School building, a tangible cultural property that has been known as “E-go Kan” to university staff, students, and alumni. The restoration of this building has been carried out so that it can be rededicated as “Osaka University Hall.” Supported by companies having close relationships with Osaka University, we are approaching the final stage of this renovation project. The E-go Kan will be reborn as “Osaka University Hall.” Furthermore, the improvement of the area surrounding the hall and walking trail on the west side of Nakayama Pond will be completed soon. The renovated hall, a symbol of Osaka University, will be unveiled on May 2, the day following the 80th anniversary ceremony.

In addition to the renovation, various projects are under way: international symposiums in three fields of immunology, nano-technology, and languages, a presidents summit in which managers who are graduates of Osaka University will get together, O+PUS movie contest initiated by students, publication of *OU days*, a collection of snapshots at Osaka University, and *Tokimeki Science* introducing the excitement of learning at Osaka University. I hope as many OU members as possible will gather for the anniversary ceremony on May 1 and be delighted as the university rededicates itself.

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