

# Thoughts at the beginning of the year

## Osaka University 2009

We have embarked on a new year. At the end of last year, many more people lost their jobs and are now sleeping on street corners, wrapped in a blanket against the cold. As in the days after the Great Hanshin and Awaji Earthquake, remembering them and their hardships, I find it hard to wish you a Happy New Year.

However, in such difficult times, universities, as research institutes, have the responsibility for identifying causes and structures of the devastation and for clarifying ways to overcome the crisis. Furthermore, as advanced educational institutes, universities are responsible for nurturing tough young people who can view such difficulties from multiple viewpoints, consider solutions, and act. Universities must view changes in society neither from too far or too close. Such responsibility is very great.

However, universities are not remote islands. A university itself is a community within a greater community, a society, encountering the same difficulties. Although university management subsidies have been cut year by year and management of the organization has become more difficult, national universities are impacted less by the recession. It may be true that universities are economically blessed communities. As management becomes more subdued, donations from private companies and off-campus organizations shrink, and budgets for university-company projects continue to decrease; thus, we must be vigilant in the implementation of

university management.

The social responsibilities of universities like Osaka University continue to increase even more than when they were national universities. The responsibilities of universities continue to grow like that of the responsibility for research. Education must be diversified, social contributions and international activities must be broadened, and the financial foundation for, and the evaluation and publication of activities must continue to expand. At the same time, we must not let up in providing and assisting education and research. Students have only so much time at Osaka University. Faculty and staff must work to provide them with the best environment for making optimum use of their valuable and limited time for study and research.

Education and research do not finish at a fixed time. Educators and researchers find that they never really have enough time to devote to education and research. Administrative staff feel as if their workload is more than they can handle in their regular working hours. Faced with such situations, university people find it difficult to do what they want or must as individuals, family members, and citizens. University people crave more time.

In the last year's "Thoughts at the beginning of the year", I wrote that we should go back to the starting point precisely because we are in such a difficult period, finding ourselves without enough time. Osaka University began as a national

university, but actually it was built by strong support from citizens. Going back, Tekijuku, one of the greatest places of study Western learning is the university's origin. Going further back, Kaitokudo, established in 1724, a place of study for merchants, is the spiritual origin. Osaka University has a unique history. It was from this background that the current university's motto, "Live Locally, Grow Globally" was born.

Although a year has passed since I wrote last year's "Thoughts at the beginning of the year," I believe, as I said last year, that we must learn from spirit of Kaitokudo and Tekijuku, places for learning with cutting-edge knowledge in their time, places that were open to the public.

For the past many months, we have discussed the direction for Osaka University in the future at meetings of the Board of Trustees and meetings of the Council of Deans and Directors. The result of these meetings is the **Osaka University Ground Plan**.

The Ground Plan can be said to be the "spirit" that should be shared by Osaka University affiliated persons both now and in the next generation. At the same time, we compiled challenges that we should tackle in, for example, the academic year of 2008-2009. The result was the Osaka University **Action Plan 2008**. We consider such action plans as statements to be reviewed and updated every year by the administration bureau and each school in accordance with the Ground Plan.

*New Century for Osaka University*  
**Osaka University Ground Plan**

*Osaka University traces its beginnings to the Edo Period, to the foundation of Tekijuku in Osaka in 1838. Reaching further back, scientific and educational development in Osaka was enhanced by the establishment of Kaitokudo in 1724 by five local merchants. Osaka University takes pride and inspiration from these two educational institutions, not founded by Japanese feudal lords, but by local citizens.*

*Both Tekijuku and Kaitokudo pursued scientific truth and knowledge while cultivating virtue and socio-cultural awareness in students. Today Osaka University once again recalls its original spirit and prepares to develop it in the modern day.*

*Osaka University, "an institution open to society," has a responsibility to society and will fulfill it with the following three mission statements based on the University's motto "Live Locally, Grow Globally."*

- 1. Create a greater international presence by promoting advanced research, derived from both basic and emergent approaches. Strive to always secure society's trust by closely cooperating with both government and industry in tackling contemporary social issues and problems.*
- 2. Commit to specialized and disciplined education, while ensuring an education that fosters broader perspectives and comprehensive understanding from the undergraduate through to the graduate levels. Create an education system capable of nurturing scholars and professionals with the capacity to make sound social judgments.*

3. *Actively carry on the role of mediator and communicator of diverse cultures as an institution of global caliber possessing a strong foothold in the local community.*

*These three missions will be kept in the hearts of those who support the University and will be carried out by staff, students, and graduates. The following is the University's master plan as of 2008. As the University collectively works towards fulfilling these measures, a comprehensive philosophy and a mode of action which we call "Osaka University Style" will be acknowledged. Thus, the pride and identity of being a member of Osaka University will be born and consolidated.*

### **Research**

*Strongly focus on research that is basic, exciting, and responsible. Respect fundamental studies while striving to open a new scientific era with groundbreaking research and fulfill its responsibilities by confronting the difficulties that modern day society faces.*

*Demonstrate the highest level of vitality in research and raise Osaka University's international presence as a world-class institution through active cooperation with domestic and overseas scientific institutions, industries, and public bodies.*

### **Education**

*Strengthen the liberal arts education for junior- and senior-year undergraduate students and promote minor programs for graduate students that integrate graduate courses and specialty fields. Train future scholars and professionals not only in highly specialized fields of study but also*

*in comprehensive knowledge to enable them to make positive social judgments.*

*Cultivate the ability to comprehensively deal with problems and their solutions through the development of Comprehensive Understanding (the ability to make sound social judgments with broad perspectives), Synthetic Imagination (the free play of imagination and the ability to create a network linking people from different fields and social standings), and Transcultural Communicability (the ability to communicate with and understand people from various backgrounds and cultures), and through the incorporation of on-site field work in curricula.*

### **University-Industry Collaboration**

*Design appropriate organizations and facilities to realize "Industry on Campus," a base for the creation of new industries through the collaboration between the University and industry.*

### **University-Community Collaboration**

*Fulfill the University's social responsibility as a community-based institution by promoting various cultural and educational activities with citizen groups and NPOs as well as programs of corporate-social responsibility through Osaka University's "Kaitokudo for the 21st Century."*

### **International Exchange**

*Strengthen education to cultivate global knowledge and sensibility.*

*Based on the successful merger of Osaka University and the former Osaka University of Foreign Studies, undertake bold educational*

*reform to raise the foreign language proficiency of students and promote their participation in study-abroad programs.*

*Promote further the internationalization of the campuses by providing international researchers and students with support appropriate to their research, study, and daily life and by training staff to deepen their international perspective.*

### **Campus**

*Develop campuses of “diversity,” “sustainability,” and possessing a pleasant atmosphere that students will remember long after graduation.*

*Contribute further to the cultural and industrial development of Osaka by making the University's Nakanoshima Center the fourth campus of the University and a base for university-industry and university-community collaboration as well as for adult life-long education.*

### **Publicity and Finance**

*Implement effective public relations activities that are both targeted at the business community and civil society and that are user-friendly in order to generate stronger support that will contribute to the advancement of the research, education, and social outreach programs of the University.*

*Systematically promote fundraising activities to establish a sound financial base for the University's teaching, research, and collaboration activities.*

*Establish these measures above in relation to teaching, research, and collaboration with industry and community as the “Osaka University Style,” in the hope that this Osaka University style may become a role model for universities all*

*across the nation. Through active participation in this establishment by the faculty, staff, and students, the pride of being “a member of Osaka University” or “an Osaka University student” will certainly be fostered.*

From **Research to Publicity and Finance**, the nine goals mentioned above are important and indispensable and are already being promoted by the entire university. Now permit me to elaborate on educational reform requiring a much longer time to realize.

Japan is changing from a period of strong mutual trust to a period of debilitating mutual distrust. From education to the market, trust has been drastically shaken. Universities are no exception. Universities once enjoyed strong trust from society as “places seeking truth” and “places of advanced learning,” ones that did so without pursuing profit. However, as social organizations or communities, universities are not immune to acts that destroy that trust. Actually, they have faced many scandals. There is no doubt that confidence in universities has been shaken as well.

For universities to regain public trust, they have no choice but to fulfill their duties in research and education. Concerning research, the Ground Plan stipulates that Osaka University fulfill its responsibilities by confronting difficulties facing society. As for education, we must put more emphasis on our responsibility.

Osaka University has focused on fostering “enlightenment,” “the power of design,” and “international mindedness” in its students as educational goals. Our fundamental philosophy is

to produce graduates worthy of society's trust. We want to produce graduates who will be spoken of in these ways: "People who've studied at Osaka University really are one step ahead," "You can depend on him/her," and "At a time like this, we wish he/she were here."

At a research-oriented school like Osaka University, professional education is strongly emphasized. We aim to foster professionals in various fields; however, for professionals to make truly good use of their specialty, mastering a particular field is not enough. A specialty must be oriented to the real world and to do so, it must incorporate other specialties. Professionals should remember that they are amateurs in fields outside their specialty.

There are no issues that can be totally seen from one perspective alone. For example, concerning BSE and the import of beef from other countries, epidemiologic understanding is important and basic; however, solving this issue requires understanding of diplomacy, trade friction, and, on a larger scale, stockbreeding's significance in human history.

The same can be said for environmental issues and computer-related social issues. Thus, specialists must position their knowledge in a compilation of scholarship; namely, they must map their knowledge in the bigger framework of all relevant current knowledge. Having a proper understanding of what you know and what you don't know, what you can do, and what you cannot do, is to be liberally educated.

As is stated in the Ground Plan, being liberally educated means having sound judgment based on a broad viewpoint. In other words, being liberally

educated is a quality of seeing things with compound sight. Those wishing to be doctors, those wishing to work in a legal profession, those wishing to become teachers, researchers, or developers of technology, need to receive practice in discussing external issues earnestly on a daily basis. In order to work on a project with professionals in other fields, it is necessary to be able to explain your own specialty in detail so that other specialists, specialists who are amateurs in your specialty, will gain understanding of what you see.

To this end, we must improve our communication skills so that we can understand people with different cultural backgrounds and non-specialists. We must learn to understand others from their positions. Truly effective specialists are those who can communicate and work with people from other fields. If we expand this to communication with people in other languages, it becomes our third educational objective, the development of international mindedness.

What is required after improving such communication skills is our second educational objective, the power of design. The power of design here does not refer to product design. Actually it also can be applied to it; however, the power of design here refers to an ability to establish networks that connect people in different positions for a project. In other words, it is the ability to imagine members and activities in relationships different from their current relationships.

We are sure society wants universities to nurture the acquisition of such characteristics in

their graduates. Nurturing versatile people for difficult times cannot be achieved if one never leaves the university because the fact is people at a university tend to have a homogeneous mind set.

In order to be tested and trained by people with different education and cultural backgrounds, we need to go to other towns and countries, even other universities. When you hear the word, “practical education,” you may think of on-the-site job training such as an internship; however, in established internships, it’s not possible to have participants take part in an internship for which they have little or no experience.

In educating students, the important thing is not to take students out to an internship amusement park where things are prearranged, but to a field where people make rules with people whom they meet and situations they confront. This is why we use the word of “fieldwork” in Ground Plan.

In 2008, Kaitokudo for the 21st Century started as an Osaka University university-industry cooperation project. It was established not for mobilizing students for social contributions, but for assisting them in gaining actual experience in a field of study. In Kaitokudo for the 21st Century, working as staff members, students get involved in planning various events that the university conducts in cooperation with local communities, financing the events, completing insurance procedures for them, implementing the events, holding evaluation meetings about them, and, finally, attending “job-well-done” parties. Such experience will surely make Osaka University students stronger and more reliable.

I believe that you can understand from what I mentioned above: A liberal education becomes more and more essential for students in their final years at a university because areas of specialization get extremely narrow. The liberal education obtained at one of Osaka University’s graduate schools is properly termed the “Handai style” [“Osaka University style”].

Osaka University has revitalized and deepened professional education. The importance of such professional education will never fade. However, to what degree that professional education makes a difference often depends on the quality of one’s liberal education. The curriculum for professional education is extremely tight, but I urge all schools to work together so that the learning students receive will be built upon a sturdy liberal foundation.