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Concern over the Future of the Arts and Sciences at the University Level

— Joint Statement —

Proposals for not repeating past mistakes

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Scholarship is crucial for maintaining national integrity and it is also the foundation of science and technology supporting Japan's power as a nation. The role and mission of universities as major players in basic research have become increasingly important. When viewed internationally, advanced established universities have contributed to national wealth and enlightened human culture. On the other hand, weakened universities are linked to a deteriorating national foundation. Examples of such are too numerous to enumerate here.

Thus, governments in other countries have continued to invest in universities and basic science as a national strategy. On the other hand, in Japan, public investment in universities has been cut. This amount is one of the lowest among the OECD countries. We are concerned that the foundation of our scientific and technological nation may collapse and academic culture may be lost if financial support decreases any further.

Needless to say we understand the critical situations of our national finances. We do not deny the significance of increasing the transparency of policy making procedures. However, we have to worry that the current debate over drastic cuts of the budget for science and technology may run counter to the world trend concerning scholarship and what a university should be, thereby causing a new national crisis. A university is a place for nurturing people. Thus, damaging the environment of university may well compromise the future of the next generation. Faced with this potential situation, the nine heads of research centers and universities who believe being a center of learning is a mission of major importance for research centers and universities have decided to

issue a joint statement.

We believe that a solid scientific and technological foundation for the nation will secure the future for Japan. If, under intense competition, we give up aiming for the top of world scholarship, Japan will cease to grow. We expect that a political decision not endangering the state's future will be made through close dialogue with the universities while listening to opinions from the public. We earnestly hope that administration officials understand the following important points and promote academic policies taking into consideration immutable national policies and Japan's roles and responsibilities in the world.

1. Establish clear goals for public investment and its continuous expansion

China and Western countries have invested large amounts of money in basic research for their future. In particular, the Obama administration has decided to invest a record amount of money in basic research. We also cannot ignore aggressive national strategies and the entry into the academic world of other Asian countries, including China. Viewed in this way, the investment scale of Japan is insufficient. Our university budgets are the lowest among OECD countries. If this situation continues, it is inevitable that the level of academic research of Japan will drop. It's important to avoid such a situation and continue to expand public investment for the purposes of promoting scholarship and facilitating the development of universities linked, through their nature, to the promotion of scholarship. We trust the government will set clear investment goals and execute them steadily.

2. Strengthening investment that respects the free ideas of researchers

In the investment in basic research, enhancing Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research to support research based on researchers' free ideas in various fields is the primary foundation for promoting scholarship. Such funds secure the diversity and depth of research and lead to the development of science and technology that brings innovation. We sincerely hope that investment in budgetary requests will be secure for a while.

3. Increasing fundamental costs for university and creating a new framework

Concerning the investment in basic research, not only Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research, but also fundamental expenses for university should be enhanced. It is necessary to significantly increase subsidies for university operation costs, subsidies for improvement of facilities, subsidies for private universities, and indirect costs in competitive funds so as to make a solid research foundation in the universities. Conventional government policies cutting fundamental costs should be

abolished.

Furthermore, in order to promote segmentation of functions at university, a fund system based on the presidents' proposals for systematically changing universities is required. In creating a new framework, appropriate support for activities at research centers and universities playing an important role in building the state should be examined in accordance with the priorities in Japanese academic policies.

4. Support for young researchers

In implementing public investment for promoting scholarship, nurturing personnel who play an important role in science and technology and scholarship in the next generation needs to be improved. It is hoped that support for young researchers, outstanding graduate students, especially students in doctor courses, that a benefit type of financial aid such as Research Fellowship for Young Scientists, will be enhanced.

Moreover, we trust that the government will assist excellent young researchers in finding stable employment so that they can concentrate on their research without anxiety.

5. Emphasizing dialog with higher education in deciding policies

Under this new administration, we don't have enough information not only about budgetary planning, but also how basic scholarship policies will be discussed and determined. We are strongly interested in how basic planning for promoting science and technology will be decided and how our desires will be reflected in the plan. It is strongly hoped that such a chance for dialog with higher education will be secured.