

Enhancing the Functions of National Universities

—Independent and Autonomous Efforts toward the Functional Enhancement of National Universities—

Japan faces such multiple challenges as rapidly declining birthrates and ageing population, prolonged economic stagnation, and deteriorating fiscal structure. We are also in urgent need of rebuilding our nation from the devastation caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake.

If Japan is to continue its development as an attractive and vibrant country, it must achieve innovations in all aspects of society. In this context, national universities are strongly expected to lead education and research in Japan as centers for developing “people and knowledge.” In order to play such a role, national universities also face many expectations from various quarters to enhance their functions and improve their system of governance.

Just a few years ago, we released ***Enhancing the Functions of National Universities—Pledge to the People*** (interim report, dated June 22, 2011) in which we wrote, “In order to reconstruct Japan and ensure its continuous development,” national universities will “thoroughly enhance the function as National Center,” “drastically enhance the function as Regional Center,” and carry out the “functional enhancement as an organic collaborative system.”

In line with the ideals and directions described in the *Pledge to the People*, we conducted in-depth discussions on issues of growing importance and matters that need to be addressed in a more speedy fashion in view of the ongoing changes in social situations. These discussions culminated in ***Fundamental Views concerning the National University Reforms—Independent and Autonomous Efforts toward the Functional Enhancement of National Universities*** (dated May 2, 2013).

In the knowledge-based society, the strength of a country's universities represents the country's national power itself. As a driving force for Japan's growth and development, national universities will make independent and autonomous efforts to drastically enhance their functions in terms of education, research, and social contribution. Each national university will make the best use of its characteristics and do all it can to facilitate the reconstruction of the quake-hit regions and ensure the sustainable development of our country. At the same time, all universities will work closely together and cooperate with each other in order to dispel the stagnant atmosphere and sense of helplessness that have affected our country in recent years. To that end, as centers for developing highly talented individuals and creating knowledge, we are determined to further improve our educational and research capabilities so that we will be better able to produce “global human resources” and carry out a broad range of research projects.

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The Japan Association of National Universities



Fundamental Views concerning the National University Reforms

- All national universities share such common functions as education, research, contribution to local communities, and contribution to the global community, which should not exist as categorized ones. No university has functions that are isolated or unique.
- While all universities face common challenges in order to refine and enhance these functions, there are also different challenges facing individual universities, depending on their size or the characteristics of the local communities in which they operate.
- However, we should not attempt to address such challenges through an approach or method that classifies the challenges based on the sizes or organizational forms of universities, assigns different functions to different universities, and perpetuates such assignment. This kind of shortsighted view that advocates the division of roles among universities will only lead to the shrinking of the entire body of national universities, resulting in loss of the diversity currently enjoyed by all national universities.
- We will adhere to the position that we should address these challenges by improving the organic collaborative system among national universities.
- Diversity of national universities cannot be achieved by developing diverse forms of university organizations or assigning different functions to different universities. It should rather be achieved by diversity in the characteristics that universities express when they adapt their missions to changes of the times, refine their missions ahead of the times, make autonomous decisions about the functions that need improvement, and draw up and implement specific measures for enhancing relevant functions.

Reconfirmation of the Public Roles of National Universities

- Education and research at universities have developed human resources and brought about scientific and technological progress through sophistication of research activities, thereby making great contributions to society.
- Because of their contribution to society and their exposure to constant expectation to increase such social contribution, universities are regarded as organizations of “public nature.” And since universities are expected to make a social contribution that exceeds the amount of investments made in them, they are recognized as organizations whose spending should be partially covered by the government. National universities, among other types of universities, have enjoyed substantial benefits from investments made by their founder, namely the national government.
- National universities are entrusted by the people to play vital roles that will greatly affect the future of our country. National universities must continuously and autonomously improve the quality of the social contribution they make through their education and research, thereby appropriately fulfilling the roles entrusted by the people. Doing so is what justifies the existence and public roles of national universities.

Functions and Roles to Be Enhanced and Challenges to Be Addressed

—Four Functions and Three Forms of Organization—

■ Educational Function: [Capabilities and talents to be developed with greater emphasis]

- ★ Train global leaders who can play significant roles in the international arena.
 - Develop abilities to apply highly specialized knowledge and skills to actual problem-solving.
 - Develop sophisticated communication skills that ensure intercultural and interdisciplinary understanding.
- ★ Train individuals who can be top leaders in various fields of society.
- ★ Train researchers who can lead the next-generation academia.

■ Research Function: [Functions to be further enhanced]

- ★ Implement various scientific research activities.
 - Develop research universities commensurate with the scale of the nation.
 - Strengthen research institutions producing excellent research results.
- ★ Help outstanding researchers devote more time to research activities and produce results more quickly in the competitive environment.
 - Develop a system in which research technical staff and URAs (University Research Administrators) can provide research assistance and various other experts can play roles in such activities as intellectual asset management and utilization, and appropriately evaluate such staffers, experts, and their activities.
- ★ Develop a research environment for young researchers and an environment that facilitates active promotion of female researchers.
- ★ Draw up measures to improve the social status of individuals with doctoral degrees.

■ University Hospital Function: [Roles and functions to be defined more clearly]

- ★ Develop and disclose to society indicators concerning the quality of medical care.
 - Clarify standards and definitions of medical care.
- ★ Develop a new system for providing community medical care through the introduction of enhanced medical ICT.
 - Train general physicians, doctors specializing in specified diseases, and other medical professionals and enhance university hospitals' function to dispatch doctors to local communities.
- ★ Reorganize existing departments or create new departments in a way that corresponds with new fields of medicine, and promote team medicine.
- ★ Develop global human resources and promote international exchange of hospital personnel.
 - Promote overseas research and training and invite medical professionals from overseas.
- ★ Support doctors (particularly female doctors) who come back to work after a period of leave or career break and build a system for their retraining.

■ Function as Regional Centers: [Functions and roles to be defined more clearly]

- ★ Function as local think tanks.
- ★ Function to act as local opinion leaders in promoting community development from a global perspective.
- ★ Role as coordinators in making regional contributions through inter-university cooperation and other arrangements.
- ★ Commitment to solving problems that may arise between government, local people, and industry.

■ Universities: [Direction of problem-solving measures]

- ★ Reorganize education and research systems into more flexible ones.
- ★ Strengthen presidents' governance.
- ★ Under the leadership of presidents, promote university-wide efforts toward strengthening research capabilities.
- ★ Inter-departmental allocation of resources.
- ★ Enhance the capabilities of humanities and social sciences researchers to work and communicate internationally.

■ Single-department Colleges: [Direction of problem-solving measures]

- ★ Strengthen governance in ways that make the most of the advantages of single-department colleges (e.g. quick and responsive management).
- ★ Promote research projects unique to each college.
- ★ Build research hubs with more enhanced functions.
- ★ Build (national and regional) hubs for training individuals with practical, highly specialized skills through cooperation among national, public, and private universities as well as among industry, academia, and government.
- ★ Provide many opportunities of practical, hands-on learning both inside and outside the country.

■ Graduate Universities: [Direction of problem-solving measures]

- ★ Operate universities and strengthen governance by making the most of the strengths of graduate universities (which have no undergraduate departments and therefore can flexibly reorganize their education and research systems).
- ★ Develop a system to provide leading-edge graduate education to students with diverse backgrounds.
- ★ Build strong research hubs.

This leaflet is a summary of *Fundamental Views concerning the National University Reforms—Independent and Autonomous Efforts toward the Functional Enhancement of National Universities* (May 2, 2013).



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