



Message from the President

The principles of Akita University can be summarized in the following vision: 1) Developing far-sighted leaders for the world and the region; 2) Building for the future with our sights set on both the local community and the wider world; 3) Constructing a rich and plentiful society in co-existence with the local area; 4) Aiming for a world with its roots in the community. The foundation of this vision is our leading-edge research which contributes on both a local and a global level and the development of talent to carry out this research. To fulfill our mission, as expected by society, Akita University has established a system of innovative education and research based on four faculties with a global perspective. This is the History and Proud Tradition that we have cultivated here.

Faculty of Education and Human Studies

Akita enjoys a reputation for taking in the brightest elementary and high school students in Japan. It has a strong track record of training staff who will become the pillars of the educational system. We operate teacher training that is focused on traditional formats for the school curriculum, in addition to our detailed educational programs. We aim to nurture and develop students who will be “able successors,” with responsibility for future generations as they take their place in the world. These students act as the link from generation to generation. In the Department of Regional Studies and Humanities, we aim to offer support to all students in the face of an increasingly uncertain outlook, furnishing them with an education to prepare them for any challenge, nurturing flexible thinking and developing their ability to find solutions to local issues from a global perspective.

Faculty of International Resource Sciences

Here in Akita, we are proud to have such an abundance of natural resources which connects us with the world at large. This is the thinking behind the name of the department, the Faculty of International Resource Sciences. Originally called the Mining College, the Faculty has developed as a faculty of mining and engineering and resource science and has become globally renowned for its research achievements. We are the only university in Japan with such a comprehensive education and research framework for resources sciences. We also operate branch schools and research laboratories overseas. When students reach 3rd grade, they are divided into small groups of four to five people and have the opportunity to participate in field work related to overseas resources. They get the chance to visit places that their high school contemporaries at other universities have never traveled to themselves and experience resource sciences on the ground. Through their participation in the front-line of Japan's academic achievements worldwide, our students appreciate for themselves how learning and scholarship are “alive” and constantly evolving.

Faculty of Engineering Sciences

The Faculty of Engineering Sciences was established as a faculty of resources and then developed from the Faculty of Engineering and Resource Science to incorporate additional elements of science learning. Akita is the University's laboratory, continuously producing research results of which we are justifiably proud. An example of this is our research on composite material molding made from metal nanocoils. The research objective is finding ways to reduce the weight and cost of composite materials. We expect that in the future, this technology will be applied to aircraft fuselages. The eyes of the world are upon us in this research undertaking. Furthermore, we are building a framework to help take the education of science and engineering and associated areas to a new level, focusing on technology that is central to the fourth industrial revolution, such as IoT, AI, and robots.

Faculty of Medicine

In the Faculty of Medicine, we can cite the results of educational research that is shared worldwide and contributes to medical care in our community. In particular, as a leading institute in Akita, we are proud to have played a major role in controlling the spread of COVID-19, while supporting local health care as a major provider of medical treatment. Akita University's annual pass rate in the National Medical Practitioners Qualifying Examinations is the highest in the country. This bears testament to the depth and comprehensive nature of our educational offering. In the School of Health Sciences, we maintain our commitment to providing support for those who need it and to sustaining high pass rates in all national examinations for general nurses, specialist public health nurses, midwives, as well as physical therapists and occupational therapists.

In addition, we remain focused on activities that contribute to the community. The Center for Regional Revitalization in Research and Education was established for the purpose of consolidating our contribution to local revitalization. It consists of two divisions, Community Cooperation and Regional Industrial Research. Three branches of the Community Cooperation Division are now established in the prefecture. They bring together local residents, university students and faculty staff to reaffirm the merits and virtues of the region. We run initiatives to expand our pride in our hometowns. These include activities aimed at helping and encouraging aspiring teachers, such as the “Mini Education Practice,” which is an initial step on students' road to the realization of their dreams and ambitions. The Regional Industrial Research Division is responsible for the development of research projects in association with key policy initiatives in Akita. We believe that by aiding the development of regional industry, we can contribute meaningful solutions to local issues. In addition, the Research Center for Regional Disaster Prevention and Mitigation conducts cross-disciplinary surveys and research on disaster prevention measures that are tailored to Akita's own circumstances in response to the increasing number of natural disasters and complex emergency situations in recent years. Dissemination of the results of this research and raising awareness of the issues concerned drives the improvement

of regional disaster prevention capabilities overall. In addition, the whole University is committed to research and nurturing human resources for the development of a green society. The Akita University Joint Research Center for Electric Architecture was established in collaboration with Akita Prefecture and Akita Prefectural University to work on the electrification of aircraft based on next-generation motors and to promote R&D and the cultivation of human resources. The project was selected by the Cabinet Office for a grant under its local university and regional industry development program. We are also working on other renewable energy topics, such as offshore wind power generation and the utilization of surplus electricity, which are focus areas for the prefectural government.

To promote a more effective and vigorous partnership with medicine, science and technology, we have relaunched the Medical, Science and Engineering Collaboration initiative, “Yume wo kataru kai” (Dreaming Out Loud). We are focusing on ways to create and promote local industries, for example through developing equipment and drugs for medical treatment and nursing care, as well as innovation in health foods. Akita is one of the most advanced prefectures in Japan in its response to the declining birthrate and aging population. The prevention and treatment of complications caused by these phenomena demand urgent attention. We believe Akita University can make a significant contribution to mitigating this situation. With the help of the prefectural government, we have established the “Advanced Research Center for Geriatric Medicine” as a research base specializing in medical care for the elderly. In addition to pursuing cutting-edge research on geriatric medical care and promoting interdisciplinary research based on our knowledge of regional sociology, we are also conducting research on the effects of the pandemic on mental and physical health. Amid growing concerns on this matter, in April last year, we established the Suicide Prevention Research Center with support from Akita Prefecture to engage in a broad range of research across the University on suicide prevention in cooperation with industry, academia, and government. We also established the Akita University Research Center for Infection Control, Epidemiology and Molecular Pathology in March 2023 as a “command post” to strengthen the infection control network across the prefecture. The Center shares and disseminates information on infection control, analysis of molecular epidemiology, prevention strategies and initiatives with relevant institutions across the prefecture and supports the development of medical personnel to deal with acute infectious diseases. We aim to promote clinical and basic research that will help to prevent the occurrence of infectious diseases. We are committed to developing new control strategies and new therapeutic agents through integrating epidemiological research (including infectious disease epidemiology and its social impact), genome analysis of pathogens (viral, bacterial, etc.) using next-generation sequencers and pathophysiological analysis related to host cells and intracellular signal transduction. We aim to foster medical professionals and researchers to enhance our response to infectious diseases.

In this way, Akita University strives to fulfill its role as the “center of all Akita.” Although many of our activities last year were curtailed by the pandemic, we intend to gradually resume our social contribution.

We offer a smooth and seamless progression from undergraduate to post-graduate education. Each research center has a clearly defined mission and objectives. These are the cornerstone of Akita University’s mission of “repaying society through the contribution of outstanding alumni and the delivery of excellent research.” In Nikkei HR’s “University Employability Rankings 2018”, Akita University achieved the honor of being ranked first by Japanese companies for “universities we would most like to recruit from”. Our graduates’ “dynamism” and “interpersonal skills” were held in particular high regard. In addition, in the Nikkei Global National Survey on University Contribution to Local Communities published in October 2021, we were ranked 4th overall in Japan, and in the “THE Japan University Rankings 2023”, we were ranked 61st out of approximately 800 national, public and private universities nationwide. It goes without saying that these achievements reflect the efforts of the students themselves, but I also think this vindicates the view that Akita provides students with an environment that brings such qualities to the fore.

In recent years, as the demands of Society 5.0 on young people have increased, in terms of the utilization of big data, the spread of IoT and the development of artificial intelligence, the need to produce students who have adapted to this new society has become ever more pressing. Using the 70th anniversary of the founding of the university in 2019 as a springboard, we have started the reform of our undergraduate departments with an eye on the future over the next 10 years. A key initiative is our decision to establish a new faculty, as well as to reorganize our existing faculties, with a focus on fostering human resources who can contribute to the new society. The aim of this new faculty is to produce human resources who are equipped with the capabilities to provide solutions to global issues based on leveraging the results of analysis of big data across all fields.

The COVID-19 pandemic that raged around the world has finally subsided and socioeconomic activity is returning to pre-COVID levels. However, the outlook for the future remains uncertain, not least because of soaring resource and food prices caused by complex international geopolitical factors, including Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and the ongoing depreciation of the yen. Here at Akita University, as we look towards an uncertain future, we recognize that our priority should be to educate students who are fully confident in their own abilities so that they can embrace the challenges ahead as they set out into the world. Based on our slogan, “Students come first” our faculty members and staff are dedicated to their task of stimulating the intellectual curiosity of our students and providing them with a comprehensive educational environment for all their learning needs. The crisis in Ukraine is deeply concerning. We are monitoring it closely and have been considering what sort of a contribution Akita University can make in this respect. We have resolved to do whatever we can to offer places for education and research for Ukrainian students, pupils and researchers, applying our slogan of “Students First” to overseas students. As of April 2023, we have nine Ukrainian students studying at Akita University in line with our commitment to the development of human resources.

Earlier, I outlined the characteristics of each faculty and the reforms we are putting in place based on the traditions of Akita University. At this time of crisis, we are moving quickly to consider how the world and society will look after COVID and after the resolution of the Ukraine crisis and we are adapting as effectively as possible to this new world outlook.

In conclusion, with Akita University as the “alma mater,” it is our heartfelt ambition to continue to send forth outstanding students into society, and thereby contribute to the growth and greater good of Akita Prefecture.

Akita University President

Dr. Fumio Yamamoto, M.D.