



Message from the President

Following an extensive re-organization in 2014, Akita University adopted a four-faculty structure: the Faculty of International Resource Sciences, the Faculty of Education and Human Studies, the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Engineering Science.

Also, from 2016 onwards, we established a comprehensive system of post-graduate education and research, comprising four graduate schools (Graduate School of International Resource Sciences, Graduate School of Education, Graduate School of Medicine and Graduate School of Engineering Science). This has strengthened our organization, ensuring we are fully focused on leading-edge education and research as we fulfill the role and mission of a university as expected by society.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has identified “A framework of support for three priority areas” in its reform of university management expense grants, as the basis of its management approach towards universities in Japan. The objective is to enable universities throughout the country to make optimum use of their strengths and key characteristics through the provision of support in the form of grants for operational expenses, fine-tuned to those areas that most need to be addressed. These areas are: 1) Promoting the development of human resources and research to respond to the needs of the community; 2) Promoting the formation of best-in-class educational research bases and networks in

each field; 3) Promoting outstanding education and research in line with the world’s top universities. At Akita University, we have selected 1) “Promoting the development of human resources and research to respond to the needs of the community” as our priority focus. We believe that there is a greater need than ever for leading-edge education and research that makes an active contribution to the community.

To help us achieve this, we are guided by the following vision: 1) To develop far-sighted leaders for the world and the region; 2) To build for the future with our sights set on both our local community and on the wider world; 3) To construct a rich and plentiful society, co-existing with the local area; 4) To aim for a world which has its roots in the local community. The foundation of our vision is leading-edge research which contributes to the world and to the community, and the development of the talent to carry out the research that fulfills this objective. The world is constantly changing with each passing second. As society evolves at an unprecedented rate, Japan must now find a response to the needs of Society 5.0 (the “Super Smart Society”). The reforms we are implementing are intended to ensure we produce students who are fully equipped to adapt to this new society. State-of-the-art education and research for the future: this is what defines Akita University and it is also our core strength. In these uncertain times, we recognize that our overall priority is to educate and nurture students who are confident in themselves as they set out into the world. “The student comes first.” This is the fundamental principle on which all the faculty staff here at Akita University are focused. We provide students with a comprehensive educational environment, stimulating their intellectual curiosity, to help them plot a course through the world, as well as the local region.

The four faculties of Akita University have their foundations in the local area but offer a perspective on the wider world. This is the basis of the “History” and “Proud tradition” that we have cultivated here.

Let us look at the Faculty of Education and Human Studies. Akita has a reputation for having the brightest elementary and junior high school students in Japan. This faculty has established a track record for training students who will become the lynchpins of the educational system. We are developing teacher training opportunities focused on traditional formats for the school curriculum, in addition to detailed educational programs. The faculty aims to nurture and develop students who will be “able successors” as they are sent out into the world, taking on responsibility for future generations. These students act as the link between society’s different generations. At the Regional Culture Department, the aim is for our students to acquire “a sense of culture” that equips them to deal with all of life’s different circumstances. Through the notion of flexible thinking, we help and support all our students as they confront the increasingly uncertain outlook for the future.

Here in Akita, we are proud to have such an abundance of natural resources. This is what connects us with the wider world at the current time. This is the rationale for the name of the Faculty of International Resource Sciences. Starting out as the Mining College, the Faculty developed as a faculty of mining and a faculty of engineering and resource science, and became world-renowned for its research and human talent.

We are laying the foundations of a framework of comprehensive education and research for resource sciences, the first of its kind in the world. When students reach 3rd grade, they are divided into small groups of four to five people, and are given the opportunity to participate in field work on overseas resources. High school classmates who have gone onto other universities also have the opportunity to visit places they thought they would never travel to during their lifetime.

Here students can experience resource sciences on-site. By having the opportunity to participate in the front-line of Japan's academic achievements worldwide, they can appreciate for themselves that learning and scholarship are "alive" and constantly evolving.

The Faculty of Engineering Sciences was originally established as a faculty of resources, and then evolved from a faculty of engineering and resource science to incorporate the wider elements of scientific study. Akita can be viewed as University's "laboratory", continuously producing research of which we can justifiably be very proud. An example of this is our research on composite material molding for aircraft made from metal nanocoils. The objective of this research is to find ways of reducing the weight and cost of composite materials. The expectation is that this technology will, in due course, be applied to the fuselages of the aircraft of the future. The eyes of the world are upon us as we conduct this research.

In the Faculty of Medicine, we can point to the results of educational research that we have produced and shared worldwide, as well as the contribution our research makes to regional medical care. Our annual pass rate in the National Medical Practitioners Qualifying Examinations is the highest in the country. This bears testament to the comprehensive and in-depth nature of the education that we offer here. In Health Sciences, we continue to rise to the challenge of helping and supporting people in society. Our pass rate in the National Nursing Examinations, National Physiotherapist Examinations, and the National Occupational Therapist Examinations is almost 100%.

In addition, we remain fully focused on education and research activities that contribute to the community. Center for Regional Revitalization in Research and Education was established in 2016 for the purpose of contributing to regional revitalization in Akita. It consists of two divisions: "Regional Cooperation and Disaster Prevention Division" and "Regional Industrial Research Division". Three branches of the "Regional Cooperation and Disaster Prevention Division" have been established in the prefecture. Under its guidance, the local community, students, and faculty staff participate together in activities such as farming rice or making local "iburigakko" (smoked daikon radish pickles). These are the types of initiatives we undertake as part of our aim to rediscover the rich culture of Akita. We are also continuing with our initiatives to enhance the sense of pride we feel in our local town. These include activities aimed at helping and encouraging aspiring young teachers, such as the "Mini educational practice," an initial step on the students' road to realizing their dreams and ambitions. The Regional Industrial Research Division is responsible for the development of research projects linked to topical policies and initiatives in Akita. We believe that by aiding the development of industries in the prefecture, we can greatly contribute to raising employment rates among university students, who are themselves the intended beneficiaries of the "COC+ project".

Furthermore, in order to promote strong and effective cooperation between medical science and engineering, we are looking at ways to create and promote industries in the region through three-way cooperation between the University, the Tokyo Institute of Technology and the Akita Medical Association. An example of this is the development of equipment and drugs for medical treatment and nursing care. Akita is one of the most advanced prefectures in Japan in terms of its response to the problem of a declining birthrate and aging population. The prevention and treatment of the complications caused by this phenomenon are issues which demand urgent attention. Akita University is expected to make a significant contribution here, since this is very much in our current field of research. In 2017, we established the Advanced Research Center for Geriatric Medicine with assistance from Akita Prefecture. In addition to pursuing cutting-edge research on medical care for the elderly, the Center promotes interdisciplinary research based on our knowledge of regional sociology. In this way, Akita University is working to fulfill its role as the "center of all Akita."

We have a smooth and seamless progression from undergraduate to post-graduate education. Each research center has a clearly defined purpose and objective. These can be said to be the cornerstone of Akita University's mission of "repaying society through the contribution of outstanding alumni and the delivery of excellent research." I am pleased to report that the result of all this activity in 2017 was a 100% success rate for students finding jobs after leaving the University from all faculties and departments, including the inaugural graduation class of the Faculty of International Resource Sciences, along with the Faculties of Education and Human Studies and of Engineering Science which were reorganized at the same time, as well as the Faculty of Medicine. Also, in Nikkei HR's "University Employability Rankings 2018", Akita University achieved the honor of being nominated in first place by Japanese companies in the list of "universities we would most like to recruit from". Our graduates' "dynamism" and "interpersonal skills" were held in particular high regard.

It goes without saying that such personality aspects are innate in the students themselves, but I would like to think that this offers some proof that Akita provides its students with an environment that brings these qualities to the fore.

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 greater good of the Akita region.

Akita University President

Dr. Fumio Yamamoto, M.D.