



Message from the President

The key principles of Akita University can be summarized in our vision as follows: 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. To realize this vision, the University carried out an extensive reorganization in 2014 to adopt 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. From 2016 onwards, we have also been organized into four graduate schools, The Graduate School of International Resource Sciences, The Graduate School of Education, The Graduate School of Medicine and The Graduate School of Engineering Science with a structure focused on education and research. As a result of this our organization has become stronger, a bastion fully focused on leading-edge education and research, which is a university's mission, as expected by society. Little by little the steady efforts we have been making in our educational and research activities have begun to bear fruit. This progress is evident, for example, in our appearance in the Top 50 in the "Times Higher Education World University Rankings - Japan Edition 2019" (ranked 48th).

The world changes literally every second, and as society continues to evolve at a hitherto unimaginable speed, Japan must now find a response to the needs of Society 5.0 (the "Super Smart Society"). Given the pressing requirement to foster students who are able to comfortably adapt to this new society, we have started to reform our undergraduate departments with an eye on the future over the next 10 years. As we look towards an uncertain future, we recognize that what it is most important is to educate and develop students who are fully confident in their own abilities as they set out into the world. Our fundamental principle is "The student comes first." All our faculty members are committed 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 four faculties of Akita University are grounded in the local area but offer a perspective on the world. This is 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 school students in Japan. This faculty has a strong track record of training staff who will become the lynchpins of the educational system. We are developing teacher training courses focused on traditional formats for the school curriculum in addition to our detailed educational programs. The faculty aims to nurture and develop students who will be "able successors", taking on responsibility for future generations, as they are sent out into the world. These students act as the link between generations. In the Department of Regional Studies and Humanities, our aim is to provide support for all students in the face of an increasingly uncertain outlook, providing them with an education to ensure they can cope with any challenge, nurturing the notion of flexible thinking and developing their ability to solve local problems with a global perspective.

Here in Akita we are proud to have such an abundance of natural resources, something which connects us with the wider world at the current time. This is the thinking behind the name of this department, the Faculty of International Resource Sciences. Originally starting out as the Mining College, the Faculty has developed as a The Faculty of Mining and a The Faculty of Engineering and Resource Science, and has become world-renowned for its research achievements and expertise. We are laying the foundations of a framework for comprehensive education and research into resource sciences, the first of its kind in the world. When students reach the third grade, they are divided into small groups of four to five people, and are given the opportunity to participate in Resource Science Field Work Abroad. They have the opportunity to visit places where their high school classmates who have gone onto other universities would never travel during their lifetime. Here students can experience resource sciences on-site. By having the opportunity to experience 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 established as a faculty of resources, and then developed from the Faculty of Engineering and Resource Science into a faculty which also incorporated elements of science. Akita University's laboratories here, continuously been producing research achievements of which we are justifiably proud. An example of this is our research on composite material molding for aircraft made from metal nanocoils. The aim of this research is to reduce 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. Furthermore, we are building a research framework to help take the education of science and engineering and associated areas to a new level, focusing on the technology that is central to the fourth industrial revolution, such as IoT, AI, and robots.

In the Faculty of Medicine, we can cite the results of educational research that can be shared worldwide and the contribution 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 thoroughness of the education that we offer. In the School of Health Sciences, we continue to rise to the challenge of helping and supporting people. Our pass rate in the National Nursing Examination, National Physiotherapist Examinations, and the National Occupational Therapist Examinations is extremely high.

In addition, we remain fully focused on education and research activities that contribute to the community. The Center for Regional Development was established in 2016 for the purpose of further contributing to regional revitalization in Akita. It consists of two divisions, The Regional Cooperation and Disaster Prevention Division and The 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 come together to farm rice or to make local *iburigakko* (smoked daikon pickles). These are typical of the initiatives we undertake as part of our aim to ensure the merits and virtues of Akita gain wider recognition. We are continuing our initiatives to expand our sense of pride in our hometown. These include activities aimed at helping and encouraging aspiring teachers, such as the “Mini education 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 important policies 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, through three-way cooperation between the University, the Tokyo Institute of Technology and the Akita Medical Association we are looking at ways to create and promote industries in the region. 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 terms of its response to the problem of a declining birthrate and aging population. The prevention and treatment of complications caused by this phenomenon are issues which demand urgent attention. Akita University is expected to make a significant contribution to this since this is very much in our current sphere of research. In 2017, with assistance from the prefectural government, we set up the “Advanced Research Center for Geriatric Medicine” to be a research base specializing in medical care for the elderly. 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 and each research center has a clearly defined mission. 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.” In Nikkei HR’s “University Employability Rankings 2018”, Akita University achieved the honor of being selected in the first place by Japanese companies for “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 proof of the University’s ability to provide 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 the society and thereby contribute to the growth and greater good of the Akita region.

Akita University President

Dr. Fumio Yamamoto, M.D.