

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kyoto University: A “Window” to Society and the World



IN OCTOBER of this year I was honored to be appointed as the 26th president of Kyoto University.

Kyoto University was established in 1897 as Japan’s second imperial university. Located in Kyoto, which is widely regarded as the nation’s cultural heartland, the university has sought to provide its scholars with a rich academic environment centered on free thinking and frank dialogue. Since its foundation, the university has preserved a distinctive academic philosophy of self-reliance and self-respect, and emphasized that students must take responsibility for their own academic advancement. These ideas continue to inspire Kyoto University scholars to this day, as they blaze new trails of knowledge and discovery. Those robust ideals, coupled with the imagination and determination of our students and researchers have enabled us to consistently produce outstanding graduates, including several Nobel laureates and other international awardees, who are able to contribute to the betterment of our world.

Recent years have seen rapid changes in the domestic and international situation for Japan’s universities. In these rather turbulent times, we must seriously consider the role that universities are required to play. What form should Kyoto University take in thirty years from now? What about a hundred years from now? I believe that Kyoto University must strive to be a place where academic endeavor can proceed undisturbed, and that it should maintain a slight form of detachment from general society in order to be unconstrained by convention, but that it must also provide its scholars with a connection—a

“window”—to society and the world at large.

Kyoto University’s tradition of encouraging uninhibited dialogue and cooperation among its scholars and students has nurtured a fertile ground for the development of groundbreaking multidisciplinary fields of study and research. This, in turn, has paved the way for innovation and discovery. Through this vibrant environment, the university aims to cultivate students who can question commonly-held ideas and beliefs in order to push through and surpass our current level of knowledge. We then encourage them to take their knowledge and skills into the international community, where they can fulfill their potential and contribute to the world as a whole. In this respect, our relationships with our international partners around the world are of the utmost importance. Through our connections with our international partners, our scholars are able to combine the fresh perspective and knowledge of new encounters and collaborations with the accumulated wisdom of their peers and predecessors at Kyoto University.

This edition of *Research Activities* also seeks to serve as a “window”—a window through which the distinctive and cutting-edge work of our scholars may be viewed by people around the world. I hope that you will be infected by our enthusiasm for interesting and creative ideas, and perhaps even inspired to join us, and participate in some way.

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President, Kyoto University