

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Kyoto University: “A Jungle of Scholarship”



**I**N 1897, Kyoto University was established (in its former incarnation as Kyoto Imperial University) as a place in Kyoto, Japan’s traditional cultural heartland, where scholars could be free to engage in diverse and innovative research. The university’s fundamental principles remain unchanged to this day, as we continue to sustain and develop our historical commitment to academic freedom, and pursue harmonious coexistence within the human and ecological community on this planet. The university’s Mission Statement includes the following passage regarding research:

*As a university that comprehends many graduate schools, faculties, research institutes and centers, Kyoto University will strive for diverse development in pure and applied research in the humanities, sciences and technology, while seeking to integrate these various perspectives.*

If we actually take a look at the activities on our campuses, a wide variety of highly original and creative research is being carried out, reflecting the diverse personalities and characters that constitute our research faculty. As one of those researchers, I was absorbed for many years in research on gorillas in the tropical rainforests of Africa, searching for clues about the origin of human society from the perspective of primatology. Now, in my current position, I feel that Kyoto University has much in common with those jungles of Africa, where many different animals live amid lush and diverse vegetation.

To highlight one aspect of this rich and evolving landscape of research, we have chosen to base this issue of *Research Activities* on the keyword of “Japan.” We hope that our readers will enjoy this multi-faceted look at our country through

the eyes of researchers in such diverse fields as classic literature, history, law, and architecture, through to film, subculture, and gender studies. Although the range of projects that we could cover was limited by the number of pages in this small booklet, we hope that you will find some of the items to be of interest, and that it might even prompt you to venture even deeper into our “jungle of scholarship.”

One of the main features in this issue is an interview with Prof. Tasuku Honjo, a remarkable scholar whose breakthrough research has brought dramatic advancements to cancer treatment around the world. Despite the very practical contributions that Prof. Honjo’s work has made to the medical world, I can personally empathize with his assertions that research should be undertaken in a scholarly spirit of curiosity, rather than being preoccupied by whether or not it will prove to be useful in the immediate future. I believe that the provision of a place where such pure scholarship can flourish is a major role of universities, and I will be delighted if our readers can gain an appreciation of that philosophy through the pages of this publication.

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