Message from the President



Introduction

Tohoku University was founded in 1907 and is well known for its guiding principles of putting research first, having an open-door policy and committing to practice-oriented research and education.

Despite being Japan's third national university, Tohoku University has been first in many ways that matter. We were the first university in the country to accept women and one of the first to welcome international students.

These days, Tohoku University is a vibrant academic community, home to 18,000 students across 10 faculties, 15 graduate schools and six research institutes. About 10 percent of our students come from abroad, contributing to one of the most cosmopolitan academic environments in Japan.

Our diverse student population and research achievements, coupled with our wide network of collaborative partners, have earned us recognition from the Japanese government. In June 2017, we were among the first three institutions to be awarded the status of a Designated National University and we are currently the only remaining candidate for the "University for International Research Excellence" government project, which aims to boost research activities at Japanese universities.

And in March 2023 - for the fourth year in a row - Times Higher Education ranked Tohoku University number one on its annual list of Japanese universities, highlighting our learning environment, international outlook, and research influence.

Open Doors: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

This year, we celebrate the 110th anniversary of our first female students. On August 21, 1913, the official gazette announced the admission of three female students to Tohoku Imperial University, the precursor to Tohoku University. That moment broke the gender barrier in Japanese higher education, marking the first time in the country's history, that female students were accepted into a national university.

Those three extraordinary women - Chika Kuroda, Ume Tange and Raku Makita - were not only trailblazers as students, but also in their successful post-graduation careers.

Another pioneering alumnus was writer Lu Xun, a leading figure of modern Chinese literature. He was a student at the Sendai Medical College, which later became the School of Medicine. His experiences in Sendai are immortalized in a famous collection of short stories, many of which revolve around his professor Genkuro Fujino, who provided support and care during a time when international students were a rarity in Japan.

For over a century, our unwavering "Open Doors" policy has welcomed talented individuals, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, nationality, or economic background.

In April last year, the university unveiled the "Tohoku University Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Promotion Declaration," renewing our commitment to create an environment where all voices are heard and respected.

Practice-oriented Research and Education: Creating New Social Values

Tohoku University has always been committed to fostering a culture of practice-oriented research and education, with the ultimate aim of positively impacting our communities.

To that end, we have used our research success to address a wide range of challenges. These include building resilience in the aftermath of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, and establishing a Green Goals Initiative to promote future sustainability.

For over a decade, Tohoku University has been a global leader in the development of disaster science and risk mitigation strategies through our International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRIDeS). For example, we are proud to have developed RTi-cast, a system adopted by the Japanese government that provides real-time data on tsunami inundation and damage estimation using our supercomputer.

At the 3rd World Bosai Forum held in Sendai earlier this year, we submitted recommendations to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) on ways to increase global resilience. These recommendations will contribute to the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

An integral part of building resilience is also improving healthcare. And at the Tohoku Medical Megabank Organization, which houses Japan's largest population biobank, we are working on developing personalized medicine research that will significantly enhance healthcare across the country.

Currently, we are building a 40,000m² Science Park on the new extension of Aobayama campus. Upon completion, it will serve as a hub for advanced science and technology research and development, and is expected to draw investments from private companies and industry.

Together with NanoTerasu, the next generation synchrotron radiation facility due to begin operations in 2024, the Science Park is set to become one of Japan's premier research complexes for developments in public-private partnerships.

Research First: Towards a New Model for the University, Becoming a Platform for Value Creation

We envision a future where Tohoku University will pursue excellence in research and education on a scale greater than ever before. Going beyond the framework of conventional institutions of higher education, we hope to evolve into a modern platform that creates value through engagement and co-creation with society.

Tohoku University aims to establish a new research ecosystem that will further provide the means for positive change in the world. We are dedicated to fostering an open environment that welcomes diverse talents, promotes internationalism, and develops a research support system that will enable researchers, especially those in the early stages of their careers, to make rapid progress.

We are strategically working on increasing and enhancing engagement, including the creation of startups, facilitating funding flow, nurturing talented individuals capable of creating social values through research and co-creation, promoting entrepreneurship, and implementing management reforms to support these initiatives.

Conclusion

In the following pages of this Fact Book, you will find detailed information about Tohoku University's academic activities, research and community engagements. I would also recommend our official website (https://www.tohoku.ac.jp/en/) as a resource for the latest news on the university's activities.

Tohoku University's enduring relationships with its community, partner organizations, local and national governments, and alumni around the world, are big reasons for our success these last 116 years.

Thank you all very much, and I look forward to your continued support.

Hideo Ohno
President, Tohoku University
September 2023