Greeting from the President



Introduction

Since its founding 118 years ago in 1907, Tohoku University has produced leading talent and research results, building a legacy defined by its "Research First" tradition, "Open Doors" philosophy, and spirit of "Practice-oriented Research and Education."

Since the official announcement in December 2024, I believe that it has now become well known that Tohoku University has been recognized and accredited as Japan's first "University for International Research Excellence." As one of the top research universities in Japan, this kind of recognition is a great honor and a great responsibility. We are committed to fulfilling this responsibility as a world-leading university by making significant contributions that aim to drive Japan forward. We believe that dedicating all our capabilities toward accomplishing this is the mission that has been entrusted to us.

The "Universities for International Research Excellence" Program

The Japanese government's new "Universities for International Research Excellence" program establishes a system to accredit and support universities expected to conduct world-class research and meaningfully apply those research results to bring about positive social and economic change. With accreditation comes financial support from a 10-trillion-yen "University Fund" established by the government. This support is then granted to selected universities to promote the realization of their Research System Strengthening Plans.

These improvements are expected to further enhance the research environments at accredited universities, promote the acquisition of excellent talent, and create a virtuous cycle of intellectual value creation, thus advancing Japan's academic research network and realizing a caliber of excellence that is on par with top-level research universities around the world.

To realize our mission as a University for International Research Excellence, we have established three central commitments to "Impact," "Talent," and "Change," which respectively describe our aim to create social value, foster brilliant talent, and enhance governance to accelerate reforms. Under these overarching commitments, we have formulated six guiding goals, including comprehensive internationalization, and nineteen strategies to accomplish them.

Commitment for Impact: Creating social value for the future

Our "Commitment for Impact" articulates our drive to positively impact society through innovation and the uncompromising pursuit of research excellence, and is based on the university's founding principles of "Research First" and "Practice-oriented Research and Education." Our community deeply identifies as a comprehensive research university that is engaged with and co-creates valuable contributions to society. This identity is particularly informed by our track record of helping to solve the challenges of the immediate and long-term aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake, and it serves as the foundation of our university's dedication to creating social value in an unpredictable world.

To improve our research capabilities, we are working to both establish an environment that can compete internationally to attract outstanding researchers from around the globe and realize a flat, flexible research system where researchers can operate independently as Principal Investigators (PIs). We are increasing the number of highly specialized professional staff, including University Research Administrators (URAs), and fundamentally expanding the research support system in order to create the conditions in which researchers can focus on the work they wish to pursue. The diverse and outstanding research conducted by our researchers is the source of Tohoku University's value, and we believe it is the university's role to create an environment conducive to that research.

To create social value, we will promote industry-academia co-creation by taking advantage of world-class, cutting-edge facilities. For example, we will make the most of NanoTerasu, the 3GeV high-brilliance synchrotron radiation facility built and operated on our campus and established through Japan's first public-private regional partnership, and the "Co-Creation Research Institutes," which are based at our university and collaborate with industry partners. Our university will serve as a platform for "STI" (Science, Technology, and Innovation) and develop a "Science Park," a unique project that brings together stakeholders from industry, academia, government, and finance, thereby creating an ecosystem for collaborative innovation.

Furthermore, we will accelerate the growth of this innovation ecosystem by expanding university-launched startups, working to swiftly give the university's knowledge back to society, attracting talent, and pursuing new research and development.

Commitment for Talent: Fostering brilliant talent for the future

Our "Commitment for Talent" is a pledge to attract diverse individuals and nurture their talents for the future. This commitment reflects the university's legacy of leading the way in this area, maintaining an "Open Door" policy in its search for talented individuals and its track record of breaking established conventions of Japan's higher education as the first Japanese university to admit female students in 1913.

We believe that widening our investment in diverse talent and producing outstanding individuals who can change the world is our lifeline.

As part of our graduate school reforms, which are driven by internationalism and openness, we will establish an Advanced Graduate School for more integrated management of our graduate education. We will enhance our students' ability to respond to social needs and academic advancements, innovate education through interdisciplinary, challenging degree programs designed by students themselves, and nurture talent capable of leading international value creation. In addition, our "Gateway College" will open up a new form of undergraduate education, focusing on the cultivation of international responsiveness and providing university-wide education. We will offer international and collaborative learning environments where Japanese and international students study together as well as opportunities for students to study abroad at top overseas schools. The Gateway College will provide an education focused on developing the abilities necessary to shape the future of a complex world.

In creating opportunities for students to meet a wide range of people from across and outside of Japan and gain inspiration from the diversity on our campuses, the university aims to provide an educational and research environment where students can explore their full potential and grow as individuals.

Commitment for Change: Governance to accelerate reforms

Our "Commitment for Change" is a declaration of our resolve to change and transform. Rather than focusing on the promotion of specific research fields, our plan is to focus on systemic reforms that will chart a trajectory of growth for a university that can truly compete on the global stage. The world's top schools are expanding beyond the traditional roles and frameworks of higher education institutions and exhibiting remarkable international competitiveness. At Tohoku University, we will promote comprehensive internationalization initiatives driven by our Chief Global Officer (CGO) to enhance our international responsiveness and transform into an even more globally-oriented institution. Furthermore, by incorporating insights from professionals from diverse specialties as well as experts from overseas, we aim to enhance our university management, give our research outcomes back to society, and create value, thereby increasing Tohoku University's presence.

Concluding remarks

As the first University for International Research Excellence, Tohoku University will accelerate its development by leveraging its history and government support to pave the way to a better future through outstanding research, human resource development, and co-creation with society. Taking on this challenge is significant not only for our university but also for the future of Japan. To fulfill this important responsibility, consistent dialogue and collaboration with stakeholders will be vital. Driven by your belief in us, we wish to create a brighter future together with you.

Going forward, I sincerely hope that we may count on your continued support of our efforts.

Teiji Tominaga
President, Tohoku University
September 2025

Tohoku University Official Symbols and Songs

◆Tohoku University Official Symbol, Logo and School Colors

Tohoku University's distinct logo was created in 2007, on the 100th anniversary of the university's founding. The key concepts behind the design are three-fold : creativity, globalization and tradition.

The logo shows Sendai's native bush clover, known as Hagi in Japanese, which grows naturally in the wild. The bush clover represents Tohoku University's international aspirations and globalization.

Purple and black were selected as Tohoku University's official colors. Purple symbolizes intelligence and creativity, while black represents diligence.

◆Tohoku University Songs

The official school song, Aoba Moyuru Kono Michinoku, was originally sung by the Tohoku University Students' Association in 1953 and has been passed down through the generations since.

In 2013, singer/songwriter and alumnus Kazumasa Oda composed an additional song, Midori no Oka (Green Hills), for Tohoku University staff and students in a show of support following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.