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Message from the New President

Becoming the Toughest and Smartest University in the World

Susumu Yamauchi
President, Hitotsubashi University

Highlighting Our Strengths to the International Community

In the past, Japanese universities hardly ever competed directly with universities overseas. With globalization today, however, competition with foreign universities has heated up. In this context it is critical that Japanese universities effectively present their unique features to the international community, and Hitotsubashi University has taken various initiatives to highlight its special qualities. Here, being a social sciences university is both a challenge and a strength for us.

Universities that focus on the sciences generally write up their research findings in English and release them to the international community. The *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings and other such league tables use such research content and the number of academic-paper citations as criteria for evaluating both a university's faculty and the university overall. In the world of the social sciences, however, with the exception of some fields of economics, there has generally been little need for Japanese academics to write their papers in English because their research generally looks at the domestic situation and a paper's audience is usually Japan and the Japanese. It is natural for papers on Japanese law, for example, to be written and discussed

in Japanese, so there is from the start no reason or need to write such papers in English. Despite this, Hitotsubashi University today must prove to the international community that it is a great institute of higher education. This is the challenge we face.

On the other hand, Hitotsubashi can contribute to the world by resolving problems faced by Japanese society. This is our strong point. The various problems that Japan has today have much in common with those in other industrialized countries, and Japan's past experience offers much that may be of reference to emerging economies as well. In other words, the resolution of issues faced by Japan has significance for other members of the world community. This means then that there is great value in releasing our research findings in English.

Education and research work at Hitotsubashi University are of a very high level, even when considered internationally. Of course, it is important as a national university corporation that Hitotsubashi contribute directly to the well-being of the people of Japan. It is very important, however, that we not look inward exclusively, but also contribute to the international community by releasing our outstanding research findings in English. I would like to see us search out the necessary support methods and put in place a framework to achieve this.



Advancing Internationalization Measures: English-Language Education

The basic framework for our internationalization strategy is already set. The task that lies ahead of us is how to put it into practice. One thing that will always be key here is English-language education.

Our university aims to raise the overall level of students' English by giving them language skills that are practical. What is important here is for students to gain a

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Born in 1949 in Otaru, Hokkaido, Japan. Graduated from Hitotsubashi University Faculty of Law in 1972 and completed his PhD in Law at the Graduate School of Law in 1977. After becoming a professor at Hitotsubashi University he held such positions as Dean of the Faculty of Law and Board Member. He became Executive Vice President for Finance and Social Outreach in 2006, and President of Hitotsubashi University in December 2010. His areas of specialization are legal history, medieval European legal history, and the history of legal culture. He received the Suntory Academic Award for *Crusades to the North* (Kodansha, in Japanese).

balanced overall command of English, including writing, listening, and speaking skills in addition to reading ability. Building on that foundation, students will develop the ability to engage in discussions in English in their field of specialization and the skills to use English in business settings. Traditionally, the Japanese education system has emphasized reading and not much class time has been allotted to thinking in English and expressing oneself in English. However, practice in thinking and expressing oneself in English leads also to improved conversation skills. In that sense, education in both high-level, academic English and conversation skills is expected from today's universities. In principle, English-language education is not the task of only the university: it is something that, I believe, should be considered comprehensively throughout the national education system. The university, however, has a greater role to play to the extent that it is closer to the time that students enter society.

In response to this, Hitotsubashi University, in cooperation with the British Council, is placing particular emphasis on improving students' overall English skills. To support students in their weak areas we are emphasizing everyday conversation, but the goal is always to improve their overall English skills. Our students are naturally talented so this initiative is having a greater impact than we had anticipated.

Encouraging Students to Try Going Overseas

By enhancing English-language education at the university we can give students a tool to cope with globalization. It will, however, be hard for students to be active on the world stage with this tool alone. That is why I would like to see students experience life overseas at least once during their university days. I would like to see them create an opportunity to examine themselves by going overseas—a context where they cannot communicate in Japanese and their Japanese values are not necessarily shared by the local community. By having such experiences, students will know both the strengths and weaknesses of our university and, even more importantly, they will be able to sense the distance between themselves and the world. Through this, they will be able to expand their own possibilities.

I recently had an opportunity to meet with some corporate human resources officers and ask about their impressions of Hitotsubashi students. My attention was arrested by the person who replied that Hitotsubashi students are intelligent, but quiet. Japanese students today enjoy convenience and affluence in various senses, and they sometimes develop the illusion that they can live without actively engaging with the international community. From the perspective of an officer of a major corporation that has offices throughout the world and engages

in global interactions, however, Japanese students end up appearing feeble on the whole. I would like to see our students be both smart and tough. Our university fortunately has a strong study abroad system thanks to the support of our graduates and other people. Additionally, we have short-term study abroad programs. I would like to see our students grow by taking advantage of these services that the university offers and going overseas.

Adding a Smart Style to Our Traditional Strengths

To date, our university has implemented many initiatives under the slogan of “number one in Asia and unique in the world.” This stance remains unchanged today. I would like, however, to add something. I would like to see our university be “the toughest and smartest university in the world.” The concept of “smart power” was coined by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in the United States to refer to a new strategy for foreign policy. This strategy takes a comprehensive approach and aims to develop international cooperation not just through the hard power of military force and economic power but also through the soft power of culture and technology. By “smart” here, I mean a wisdom that harnesses both hard and soft elements, like the CSIS concept, but I would like our smart power to carry also the nuance of “chic.” In the case of a university, hard power is education and research, which are its traditional core elements, while soft power is a culture and atmosphere which constitute a special something extra. I would like to see our university show off its soft power as well.

One example of soft power is campus renovation efforts, where places are created for students to gather together freely. The Kunitachi Symphonica is another fine example of soft power; this is a resident orchestra based at the Kanematsu Auditorium that started up in 2010 with the cooperation of some Hitotsubashi graduates. I would like to see us build a campus where students can refine their sensibilities just by being on campus. I would be most delighted if this were to become a draw for our university—one that would attract applicants from throughout the world and also be a source of pride to our graduates.

To this soft component of being smart, I would like to add the concept of toughness. Strength is required to get things done. To be the toughest and smartest university in the world. To be a university that delivers excellence in education and research and also offers an ambiance of culture. To be a university that is both tough and chic. Creating this kind of appeal is critical for Hitotsubashi University to compete internationally.

(Based on interview)

