

S&T Articles from Japan

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1. **[Zero Tuition]** The Tokyo Institute of Technology (TIT) announced that no tuition will be charged to their Ph.D. program students from April 2008, whereas it has been Yen 535,800 (~\$4,871) per year, regardless of their financial situation. About 540 students are expected to be enrolled in TIT's Ph.D. programs. Of them, 140 will have financial support from JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science) or be tuition exempt. TIT will hire the rest 400 students as RAs (Research Assistant) or TAs (Teaching Assistant) in compensation for their tuition. They plan to bear the required cost of Yen 200 million (~\$2 million) by cutting expenses. (Summary translation of an article in Nihon Keizai Newspaper – 12/22/07)

2. **[Exchange of Students]** The University of Tokyo, Kyoto University, Waseda University and Keio University have announced to exchange their graduate students between them effective April 2008. The system allows the graduate students to study at one of the other three universities from 6 months to up to two years or even to study at more than two universities. Professors who mentor the students while they are visiting students at their universities can join the Ph.D. thesis defense committee, with the approval of the universities the students are enrolled in. Prof. Komiyama, President of the University of Tokyo, is proud of this exchange system, saying that it is more proactive and reasonable than the idea proposed by the Education Rebuilding Council to limit the number of grad students who come from the same university's undergraduate programs to 30 percent. (Summary translation of an article in Nihon Keizai Newspaper – 12/26/07)

3. [Discussion on Performance-based Subsidies] MOF (Ministry of Finance) and MEXT (Ministry of Education, S&T) will drastically revise the Government's subsidies to national university corporations. Whereas the subsidies are presently determined based on the number of faculty members and students, the discussion between MOF and MEXT focuses on whether it is possible to determine the amount based on the university's performance. The total amount of subsidies for JFY2008 will be Yen 1,181.3 billion (~\$10.7 billion). MOF's proposal is to divide the national university corporations' finance into "education" and "research," make it mandatory for the universities to report the results versus investment, and decide the amount of subsidies. A formula for the results versus investment will be decided later. On the other hand, MEXT is more than cautious as the revision will definitely affect future merger of the universities. The discussion between MOF and MEXT would have a hard going. [\[NSF Tokyo Office will follow up on this and keep reporting.\]](#) (Summary translation of an article in Nihon Kaizai Newspaper – 12/31/07)

4. [Private Universities' Finance in Difficulty] The Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools of Japan analyzed the finances of 521 private universities and 144 private junior colleges, focusing on the cash flow, debt, operating capital, and student enrollment number. The result was that the finance of 64 private universities and 34 private junior colleges are in difficulty and 15 of them are critical or ready to go bankrupt (the Corporation did not reveal the names of the universities/junior colleges). The Corporation will give them advice, including improvement of their finance and possible merger with other universities. Because of the sharp decrease in the number of 18-years-old and a rapid increase in the number of universities, the environment surrounding the universities/junior colleges is in critical need of improvement. (Summary translation of an article in Nihon Keizai Newspaper – 12/23/07)

5. [\$20 million Investment] The Japanese government decided to invest Yen 2.2 billion (~\$20 million) in the iPS cell project (reprogramming human skin cells to behave like embryonic stem cells) in JFY2008. MEXT (Ministry of Education, S&T) plans to invest more than Yen 10 billion (~\$91 million) in total in the next five years to support it from the basic research through clinical applications. (Summary translation of an article in Nihon Keizai Newspaper – 12/23/07)

6. [Reduction of R&D Tax] According to the draft plan compiled by the LDP's (Liberal Democratic Party) Tax Committee, the maximum reduction rate of corporate tax on

R&D investment will be increased from 20 percent to 30 percent. This measure expects to strengthen international competitiveness of Japan's technologies, especially in IT and medical areas. (Summary translation of an article in Nihon Keizai Newspaper – 12/11/07)

7. [Player of University Management Reform] In Japan, faculty members have traditionally been major players of university reform, and administrators have just been following their decisions. However, this is beginning to change. Examples are seen in the following. A "University Administrators' Summit" meeting that was held in the fall of 2007 at Yamagata University where fiery discussions between the faculty members and the administrators were observed as to how to cooperate to bring about management reform. A non-profit organization called the University Administrator Support Center has recently been established. The Center holds seminars on financial management at private universities, career support for university students, and employment of university administrators. Also, Ohbirin University has established a course on "University Administration" in their division of international studies, which has expanded to a distance education course where university administrators and university managers all over the nation began to enroll. In addition, Tohoku University Graduate School has newly established a course of "University Management and Policy." Further, the "National University Management Study Meeting" was established two years ago. It presently has about 500 members who share the know-how of reform and other information among them. [\[All of this stems from a sharp decrease in the number of the 18-years old in Japan, which has enhanced competition for recruiting more number of students between universities. The university administrators' proactive participation in university management reform is becoming critical to Japanese universities.\]](#) (Summary translation of an article in Asahi Newspaper – 12/3/07)

8. [OECD Academic Tests] OECD reported that the result of their 2006 test shows that Japanese students had dropped from second to sixth place in science among some 400,000 15-year-olds in 57 countries and regions. Also, Japan fell to 15th from 14th in reading and to 10th from sixth in math. In the 2003 survey in which 41 countries and regions took part, Japanese students' math ranking dropped from the top to the sixth place. The result shocked many in Japan and helped prompt the government to reverse its "relaxed and lighter curriculum" education policy and reform the education system. The education ministry will analyze the math results and try to put more emphasis on reading skills and knowledge in revising its curriculum guidelines, possibly in 2011. (Summary of an article in Japan Times – 12/5/07)

9. **[New Version of Asimo]** Honda Motor Co. unveiled an updated version of its Asimo humanoid robot that can operate more autonomously – picking up a tray to serve tea to guests, or charging its battery on its own when its power falls under a certain level or when it has worked too hard. Equipped with improved intelligence technology, the latest Asimo is capable of choosing between stepping back and yielding the right of way or walking ahead while taking into account the movement of approaching people. Further, the new Asimo can assist each other because a newly developed system enables them to share information on what they are doing and what needs to be done to complete their assigned tasks. If there is work to be done, the robot will leave the charging station to give other Asimos a helping hand if its battery has enough power. Thus the robots are now able to perform uninterrupted services. (Summary of an article in Japan Times – 12/12/07)