TOHOKU UNIVERSITY
WORLD-CLASS EXCELLENCE IN CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH
AND INTERNATIONALLY BASED EDUCATION

Tohoku University is a research-oriented institute located in Sendai—the 'City of Trees'—in the heart of the Tohoku (northeast) region of Japan. The university was established in 1907 as Japan’s third Imperial University, and today its researchers are internationally recognized for their outstanding contributions especially in materials science, physics, chemistry, engineering, and medicine.

CONTRIBUTING TO HUMANITY AS A WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITY

"By applying the knowledge we have accumulated over the past century and encouraging innovative research and education, our university is committed to playing a leading role as a ‘world-class university’ to overcome the challenges faced by humanity today," says Akihisa Inoue, the 20th president of Tohoku University, appointed in 2006. "Since the university was established in 1907, the philosophy has always been to put Research First while maintaining an ‘Open-Door’ policy to emphasize Practice-Oriented Research and Education."

Tohoku University is a comprehensive university comprising 10 undergraduate faculties, 16 graduate schools, 3 professional graduate schools and 5 research institutes. It is one of Japan’s leading universities, with approximately 5,700 faculty and staff and 18,000 students. As a research university, it embodies the notion that good teaching practice is founded on advanced research capabilities.

"According to a survey by the Asahi Shimbun [newspaper], Japanese high schools chose Tohoku University as the best Japanese university in both the ‘overall assessment’ and ‘academic and personal development’ categories," says Inoue.

Sendai has been a thriving center of culture, scientific discovery, and entrepreneurship since the samurai Lord Masamune Date laid his castle’s foundations there. The city has been internationally active for more than 400 years, with records showing that in 1613 Masamune dispatched a samurai named Tsunenaga Hasekura on a diplomatic mission to Spain and Rome. Like Masamune, Tohoku University continues to reach out to the world in the pursuit of truth. Intriguingly, the university’s main campus is located in Aobayama, the site of Masamune Date’s Sendai Castle.

Modern Sendai has a population of approximately one million, with about 80,000 students attending 13 universities, and 6 junior and technical colleges in the area.

Logistically the city is less than 100 minutes from Tokyo and less than one hour from hot springs, ski resorts, and the stunning scenery of Matsushima Bay. Daily life in Sendai is quiet, peaceful, and cultural. The commute from home to lab is less than 30 minutes for most students and academics alike. The moderate cost of living offers a high quality of life in an environment conducive to creative thought.

THE INOUE PLAN 2007

In March 2007, with a view to enhancing Tohoku University’s standing as one of the world’s premier institutes of education and research, the university launched the ‘Inoue Plan 2007’. "This plan has five pillars," says Inoue. "Education, research, social contribution, campus environment, and organization/management. The key words are ‘challenge’, ‘creation’, and ‘innovation’.

The Inoue Plan introduces a new, innovative liberal arts curriculum, which includes an overseas internship program. The university has also launched the Institute for International Advanced Research and Education and the Advanced Institute of Materials Research. The latter is one of Japan’s World Premier Research Center Initiatives and is searching for breakthroughs by fusing multiple conventional research fields and nurturing world leaders in the field of materials science. Specific targets of the Inoue plan include increasing the number of international teachers from the present 130 to 300, and increasing the number of international student from 1,500 to 3,000 by 2022.

Notably, the world academic citation rankings compiled by Thomson Scientific for January 1999 to December 2009 placed Tohoku University third worldwide (first in Japan) in materials science, tenth (second in Japan) in physics, and 18th (fifth in Japan) in chemistry.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Research Laboratory; University House Sanjo; Japanese Archery Club; International Festival
TOHOKU UNIVERSITY

INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND STRONG LEADERSHIP

In 2009, Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) selected Tohoku University as one of 13 centers as part of the Global 30 Project for Establishing Core Universities for Internationalization (G30). The main goal of this initiative is to give international and Japanese students the opportunity to study courses taught in English. “We are seizing this opportunity to promote the internationalization of education,” says Inoue. “We are developing degree programs offered completely in English to meet all international student needs.”

Tohoku University has a history of strong leadership on its ‘Open Door’ policy. In 1913, it was the first of Japan’s universities to admit female students—Chika Kuroda, Ume Tange, and Raku Makita. Needless to say, Tohoku University is still a leader in supporting female researchers.

Another example is the Chinese writer Lu Xun (1881-1936), who in 1904 was the first foreign student admitted to Sendai Medical College—the predecessor of the School of Medicine at Tohoku University. Later, in 1906 Lu Xun withdrew from medicine to study literature and returned to China where he wrote many influential works, including ‘The True Story of Ah Q’. Lu Xun is also remembered for his story entitled ‘Fujino Sensei’, a fictionalized account of his experiences with his mentor, Professor Fujino, at Tohoku.

Now, in the 21st century, Tohoku University is setting new standards as an open, dynamic, and innovative world-class university. “We welcome talented people from all backgrounds and all over the world to join us,” says Inoue.

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GLOBAL NETWORKS AND SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Enhancing international exchanges and global networks is a high priority for Tohoku University. To promote academic and industrial collaboration globally, it actively participates in three inter-university consortia: APRU (Association of Pacific Rim Universities); T.I.M.E. (Top Industrial Managers for Europe); and AEARU (the Association of East Asian Research Universities). Furthermore, the university has exchange agreements with 445 institutions in 45 countries and regions and has 16 overseas offices in nine countries.

Tohoku University offers excellent support for its international students and researchers. The Center for International Exchange assists international students with Japanese language courses, finds accommodation at both university dormitories and private apartments, and promotes exchanges with local students and the people of Sendai.

The university also has a wide range of scholarships for international students including the President Fellowship program launched in April 2010. When it’s time to graduate, the university offers career advice for international students, as well as job fairs, and workshops on Japanese culture and communication skills.

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