

**The 3rd University Administrators Workshop:
*Laying Firm Foundations for University Internationalization***

OPENING REMARKS

by

Toshio YOKOYAMA

Distinguished guests, dear colleagues old and new, ladies and gentlemen! My name is Toshio Yokoyama, Kyoto University's vice-president for international relations. Let me express, on behalf of the university, my warm welcome. You have kindly come all the way here in spite of the cold weather, for which I express my heart-felt thanks!

Now, it is my great honor to announce the opening of the Third University Administrators Workshop, the theme of which is: *Laying Firm Foundations for University Internationalization*. The point is to construct a sustainable foundation for a process called 'internationalization,' while considering afresh what we really mean when we use that word.

Why has this theme been chosen? – It is perhaps a natural outcome of the past two workshops. Let me give you an overview of what we have been discussing in Kyoto during the last three years. At the first workshop, in March 2006, things were at the stage of experiment and general observation. The theme was *Enhancing the Quality of International Activities of Asian Universities*. Participants from 12 Asian universities overseas accepted Kyoto University's invitation, and in addition, 3 universities joined from the Kyoto area. Many reports in the sessions touched upon either great difficulties or good practices in promoting international cooperation based on university-level MOUs. Other topics were also raised, but were not fully explored at the time. These included such topics as how to train the staff of international offices; how to develop multi-lateral exchange programs; how proper risk management can be carried out for student exchange programs.

The second workshop was held in this room in February 2007. On that occasion, Kyoto University had sent a new type of invitation, that is, without offering the traveling expenses but only accommodation and catering – that was, in short, a timid request for participation. Despite that, however, 14 universities from abroad and 9 universities from within Japan kindly and generously joined us for the workshop. Under the general theme of *Innovating Universities through Internationalization*, the major topics discussed were: how to promote international research collaboration; and how to strengthen international offices. The discovery of one common difficulty, experienced by almost all of the Asian participants, whose mother tongues are not English, has been memorable; that is, how to recruit and train staff in international offices.

Thus the important point to discuss this time, with the representatives of 16 universities from overseas and 9 universities within Japan, is this: establishing, on the basis of a common understanding of each other's aspirations and difficulties, something valuable and durable for future.

Now, what can be a firm foundation for the internationalization of Asian universities? Tentatively, two general topics have been chosen, that seem to remind us of what we have so far discussed and will hopefully lead us towards the implementation of an approach which integrates

various good proposals: The first one is *Networking to Promote Student Exchange* and the second is *Advancing Campus Internationalization*.

For truly functional networking, a stable relationship among program officers is most important. Among them there would be the respect for mutual differences with the awareness of common interest. They would be above all willing to maintain close individual ties with mutual trust. Studying the synopses kindly submitted for this workshop, I am looking forward to listening to insightful presentations for two days. An effort that Kyoto University has been making may be of some use to you as an example. Its objective is to promote the university's culture of dialogue, by way of implementing an ambitious new prospect. That is the introduction in ten years' time, in close cooperation with other universities throughout the world, of multi-lingual courses of education that will ultimately comprise 30 percent of all courses offered on our campus. Imagine, for example, a multi-lingual course on the history of science and technology in three chosen countries; or the sociology of varieties of economic thought taught in several languages, each class being connected across the campus-boundaries by proper e-learning technology? Such courses would certainly make everyone in cooperating campuses, particularly program officers, more language-conscious and more concerned with the cultural diversity on this planet. They would also encourage and train students to be more broad-minded and deep-thinking, urging them to grow not only as experts, but also as world intellectuals.

With regards to the second topic of this workshop, advancing campus internationalization, many participants might be led to reconsider the true objective of internationalization. A small example that Kyoto University may offer is that of its recently established Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies. The school has been sending scholars and students to the midlands of Vietnam with the strong support of Hue University. I am glad to mention that Dr Le Van An of Hue University has joined this series of workshops for the first time. That region of Vietnam has a reputation for the strong resilience of its local communities against periodic natural disasters caused by typhoons. Students of engineering, architecture, agricultural sciences, and economics from Kyoto University are engaged in discussions with local people and Hue University members about how to appropriately and effectively combine modern knowledge with traditional wisdom of land management. It is important to note that those students from Kyoto are spontaneously studying the Vietnamese language, a practice not so common among the clever Japanese engineers of one generation before. The lesson here is that better communication abilities will facilitate more opportunities to civilize and innovate any new technology. Can we regard these undertakings as indicative of a new phase of so-called 'campus internationalization'? Now, campuses cannot exist in the conventional sense, but can effectively extend to anywhere if properly supported.

Perhaps I had better stop here, but to conclude my remarks, with no diminished importance, however, let me thank Mme. Elizabeth Bare, vice-principal and head of university services at the University of Melbourne, and Dr. Priscilla Stone, director of overseas and undergraduate programs at Washington University in St. Louis, who kindly agreed to travel across the Pacific and give guest speeches before the working sessions. Both Vice-Principal Bare and Director Stone will, I am sure, contribute greatly to our workshop's proceedings, by sharing with us their views with regards to

what is happening in and around their esteemed universities, and what kind of ideals are guiding those institutions.

The City of Kyoto, Japan's old capital, has had a history of ups and downs for more than thirteen hundred years, and has, as a result, developed a tradition of encouraging its inhabitants to show civility towards not only fellow humans, but also towards the non-human environment. It is my hope that holding a workshop in such a milieu will enhance mutual understanding and friendship among us, and foster chances to promote valuable initiatives among the participating universities. Thank you for your listening.