



MESSAGE
FROM
THE PRESIDENT

Takashi Ohyama
President

Looking Back Over the History of
the Past Six Years

al Trustee to the existing Research Trustee, Education Trustee, Medical Trustee, and Financial Trustee roles. The number of trustees at National University Corporations is fixed, so I eliminated the role of General Affairs Trustee. I wanted to choose somebody who is familiar with the workings of the university, so I replaced the extramural Trustees with staff from within the university.

With these Trustees in place, I established the Strategy Council and Implementation Council as a top-down fiduciary organization and as a means of gathering opinions from the bottom up. When an opinion is put forward concerning the direction proposed by the Board of Trustees, the representatives of each faculty get together in the Strategy Meeting to discuss it. Meanwhile, with the bottom-up approach, we made a mechanism where opinions from each faculty are passed up directly to a respective Strategy Meeting and so on, via the Trustees to the Board of Trustees.

Work such as admissions, information management, and academic-industrial cooperation is carried out directly below the President. Here I created the new post of Vice Presidents to oversee these projects. Under these Vice Presidents I established committees where various sorts of staff gather for discussion.

In my second year after taking office, I asked Professor Sei Sasaki who was then Trustee of Planning and International Exchange to propose the mission for the university. I edited the booklet “Attitude and Knowledge of Health Care Providers, The Analects of Confucius,” and I had lectured all the students on my philosophy. A person first qualifies as a medical practitioner when they combine knowledge and skill with a strong human sensibility. Professor Sasaki

Six years have passed since I was appointed the tenth President of Tokyo Medical and Dental University. At the time of my appointment, I was working on the preparations for the start of private office and I didn’t imagine I would be made President. But it’s my character to do something thoroughly if I end up doing it. My first task after taking office as President was sorting out governance. I placed particular emphasis on addressing top-down and bottom-up issues. As a general framework, I added the new role of International

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encapsulated this in the wonderful expression “Cultivating Professionals with Knowledge and Humanity.”

One of the things that I started as President was the Student Council. I started it because I like students, and I wanted an opportunity to engage with them directly. Although there are lots of highly capable students at the university, there are some who require “moral” education. I hope that in future they won’t become hubristic doctors who can’t understand the feelings of patients.

You can’t teach empathy. However, you can create learning opportunities. Nowadays, people often mistake the word “*toku*” in “*toku wo migake*” (polish your virtue) for another “*toku*” (profit), which sounds the same in Japanese. There’s also a proverb “Virtue is the master, ability the servant.” It means that virtue is the master of ability, and ability is nothing more than the servant of virtue.

International Strategy

Before I took office as President, I regarded international strategy as a problem for the university. Consequently, over the last six years, I established the International Exchange Center for a start, and then set up overseas offices in Chile, Ghana, and Thailand and so on. The Chile office received no support from the government. Starting three years ago, we’ve been seconding people there for a personnel development project. This project has won praise as an achievement of the university. As project for the support of medical equipment and medical technology overseas, it recently became eligible for funding support from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

Furthermore the plan to establish a graduate school in Chile is making progress. It will be an educational center that draws people from countries all over Central and South America, like Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay and Brazil. This will be a six-year course, unlike the four-year system at Japanese graduate schools. In Japan you can become a leader by excelling in research alone, but in developing countries, you aren’t any help to the nation if you lack top class clinical abilities too. Consequently, we’re going to make it a graduate school where you can study both clinical practice and research at a high level. Students will spend two of those years at TMDU.

However, we still face many challenges with our

international strategy. TMDU currently ranks 260 among the world’s universities. Although we’re ranked eighth in Japan, further globalization is essential for us to meet our target of getting into the top 100 worldwide. Globalization can be considered from various perspectives, but the shortage of foreign academic staff is one of the weaknesses of the university. Of 1,400 graduate students, more than 200 are international students, so in this regard we’re very global. But with undergraduates, we believe our main goal should be to train doctors who can provide proper medical care in Japan, and so we don’t intend to increase the number of international students or conduct lessons in English. Even if students study medicine in English, they can’t do their clinical training with Japanese patients.

In terms of globalizing our academic staff, we’ll employ Chilean professors to teach the graduate school courses in Chile. Likewise, we’ll employ all local academic staff in our offices in Ghana and Bangkok, thereby increasing our roster of foreign professors by nearly 30 at one go. Of course it’s not just a question of numbers. We consider this a very important project for fostering medical professionals who will lead their countries.

Personally, I’ve actively pursued engagement overseas from the latter half of the 1980s, visiting most countries except for the Middle and Near East. Since I can speak a little Thai, I’ve volunteered at villages without dental services in Thailand for the last ten years or more. Even after becoming President, I take about a week off every year to go.

If you’re interested in this sort of volunteering, naturally you have to acquire some of local language. Heart-to-heart understanding can only happen in the local language. Some students are keen to volunteer in Chile and other Central and South American countries, so I want to start Spanish classes shortly.

Education and Research

In terms of student education, we’ve begun the process of educational reform, starting interprofessional medical and dental education and partnering with Harvard University. Speed is important for educational reform. When you know that there’s a better way of education, taking several years for preparation before you implement it is disadvantageous to the future of students who are learning now. I’m very grateful to have the outstanding academic staff who made the first round of educational reform possible.

Interprofessional medical and dental education was one of our educational reforms, but considering today’s healthcare, there’s nothing surprising about it. Many new drugs have been developed in recent years, and the causes of various illnesses are being discovered. For example, massive amounts of data have been accumulated on illnesses arising from the sphere of dentistry, such as heart problems from periodontal disease and pneumonia from aspiration.

Conversely, if a patient receiving bisphosphonate drugs to treat cancer that has metastasized to bone loses a tooth, there’s a danger of necrosis of the jaw. A patient taking the anticoagulant aspirin who has a tooth removed risks severe blood loss. In any case, when a doctor who is providing treatment introduces their patient to a dentist, they must pass on information about the drugs that have been prescribed. Dentists need to know the basics of medicine, and doctors need to know the basics of dentistry. That’s why we think it’s essential to implement interprofessional medical and dental education.

And as with education, there are a great many aspects of research that must be done “now.” The university qualified for MEXT’s program for promoting the enhancement of research universities in 2013.

We established the URA (University Research Administrator) Office, the Research Center for Medical and Dental Sciences, the Center for Experimental Animal, and the TMDU Bioresource Research Center. Since research changes according to the needs of society, it’s necessary to allocate resources strategically to areas that are considered necessary if you can spot a trend. In this case we will allocate people, equipment and money as a priority. Furthermore space is also essential in undertaking research, and so we won’t stint on funding here either. This is a resolution that must be taken at the top.

What’s important is to take the first step quickly. You don’t need to seek perfection in the first stage. First of all you establish a Center. Then if the Director of the Center finds highly capable colleagues who gradually build up the Center, that’s good.

Looking to the Future

I didn’t expect to be appointed President, but if I don’t pursue my duties with determination, there’s no interest in it for me. Looking back, when I took office as President, I had all sorts of ideas. That I was able to implement them is surely because the job of President was more interesting than I expected.

Zeami is known for his line “*Don’t forget your original intention in youth.*” But he continues “*Don’t forget your intention at each moment,*” and “*Don’t*

forget your intention in your old age.” In other words, don’t persist in your first idea to the end. Instead, pay heed to your beginner’s mind from moment to moment. Whatever ideas you have don’t need to be perfect from the beginning. It’s good enough if you can get over each problem that you encounter and grow the idea.

What I’ve learned in my six years as President is that the person at the top mustn’t put forward ready-formed ideas. Leaving all the decision-making to others saying, “Have you got any thoughts about how we

might go about this?” is a lazy way to manage things. But if you suggest a general framework for what you want to do, your capable colleagues will do the rest. TMDU has highly capable academic staff, so I can leave things to them with complete confidence.

The next President of the Medical and Dental University can make of it what he wants. I think today’s TMDU has a different character from the time of Akio Suzuki, the previous President. But my ideal university doesn’t have a fixed mold. I believe that if we read the trends of the time and combine the wisdom of my outstanding colleagues with bold decisions from the top, the university will make progress. I want us to keep moving all the time. If we keep moving ahead, things are sure to change for the better. I look forward to seeing the ongoing progress of TMDU.



Takashi Ohyama, President

