

A Message from the President on April 3, Academic Year 2023

“Join Forces to Create the Future”

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My new term of office began in April 2023, following the approval of my reappointment at the Presidential Selection and Supervisory Committee meeting held in June last year. I would like to share my goals for this term with members of the executive committee as well as faculty, staff, and students while requesting their understanding and cooperation toward achieving these objectives.

Before addressing the challenges of my second term, I would like to look back on the three years of my first term.

Three years ago, in April 2020, upon assuming the office of TMDU president, I urged everyone at TMDU to make a concerted effort to combat COVID-19. Mindful that it was what society needed at the time, you all responded to the best of your ability. Not only the TMDU Hospital but also all departments and divisions did their utmost to overcome COVID-19.

Inspired by our slogan— “Join forces to protect patients and coworkers from COVID-19.” —we also emphasized “trial and error” and “support rather than blame.” In requesting your cooperation, TMDU made three promises: 1) to secure personal protective equipment (PPE) for the protection of frontline coworkers from COVID-19, 2) to conduct PCR tests of all hospitalized patients for the prevention of nosocomial infection, and 3) to periodically conduct PCR tests of medical staff engaged in COVID-19 response. As we declared at the time, “TMDU had no option but to tackle the infection crisis in Tokyo with every tool at its disposal.” Despite PPE shortages, the consequent risk of infection and the related anxiety, TMDU medical staff worked resolutely to combat COVID-19. I am deeply grateful to all of you.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was especially noteworthy that all of us at TMDU took ownership of TMDU’s goals and did their utmost to achieve them. There were many efforts made university wide by TMDU members but let me mention a few. As cases of surgery plummeted, orthopedic surgeons helped disinfect the wards for COVID-19 patients; psychiatrists, whose patient numbers drastically reduced, devoted themselves to caring for the mental health of TMDU staff; researchers conducted PCR testing of TMDU staff; the Dental Laboratory made face shields, which were difficult to obtain at the time. All of these initiatives by our TMDU family were often pursued spontaneously in the workplaces.

Meanwhile, conditions on the frontline were at times somewhat chaotic because so much of what we were doing was being done for the very first time.

That is why I repeatedly urged everyone to “support rather than blame.” Efforts to reach out to the public, including filming scenes of COVID-19 treatment to publicize TMDU’s initiatives, evoked an

overwhelmingly positive response from society. Indeed, TMDU received more than 1,400 donations totaling 180 million yen for the COVID-19 Countermeasures Fund. Support was generously forthcoming from society in many ways. We recognized anew the extent to which TMDU is woven into the fabric of society.

In October 2020, TMDU was selected as a Designated National University Corporation, thus clarifying TMDU's status as a university benefiting society through the pursuit of Goal 3, "good health and well-being" of the SDGs. This corresponds to TMDU's goal of realizing "Total Health Care for the world and humankind across the generations."

In October 2021, we decided to integrate TMDU's Medical and Dental Hospitals based on our philosophy that emphasizes "contributing to people's well-being by providing the world's highest standard of

Total Health Care." Together, during my first three year term, we accomplished much through the efforts of everyone at TMDU. I am very grateful to all of you.

From here, I would like to discuss the issues I consider the challenges of my second term.

I previously said we pursued initiatives to overcome COVID-19 in response to social needs.

Following the hospital integration, in terms of "today's medicine" or level of medical care, TMDU Hospital is providing healthcare services that are in the top tier worldwide.

In addition to its role as a medical institution, TMDU is also an educational and research institution. In other words, TMDU is dedicated to the development of consummate professionals capable of exercising leadership in the provision of health care and of conducting research whose outcomes will underpin the health care and research of tomorrow.

As for that, we are expected to offer society a compelling vision of tomorrow's medical care. Since two trends, namely, a declining birthrate and aging population, are more advanced in Japan than virtually anywhere else in the world, solutions to healthcare issues in Japan will resonate and be highly relevant globally. Hence, the significance of TMDU's positioning and official status as a medical and dental university in the top tier globally. Such world-renowned universities earn respect while illuminating a path to the future for all universities.

The attributes that merit respect are "academic freedom," "academic integrity," and "social impact." Social impact is the result of the proactive pursuit of research leading to practical applications in society, including research that initially may have no evident practical application.

It goes without saying that simultaneous cultivation of these three attributes is financially burdensome. Yet, it is difficult for TMDU to substantially increase revenue only from medical care as medical fees are set by the government, in addition revenue derived from tuition fees is constrained because TMDU is a national university.

Over the past five years, TMDU has made progress in industry-academia collaboration. And even

though the amount of funding from the private sector, such as that for commissioned research and joint research, has increased by 150%, much more is needed.

If we consider technological fields related to major products and services, biotechnology, and health care account for almost 30% of Japanese startups originating from universities, and if medical devices and materials are included, medical engineering is a particularly extensive field. Therefore, emphasizing biotechnology and healthcare as well as medical engineering is expected to lead to greater funding from external sources, which translates into a greater contribution to society.

Although the Institute of Biomaterials and Bioengineering spearheads TMDU's endeavors in medical engineering, researchers affiliated with other TMDU organizations are also fully involved. In order to broaden and deepen research in medical engineering, TMDU needs to form alliances with universities that excel in engineering and share TMDU's aspirations.

Meanwhile, Tokyo Institute of Technology (Tokyo Tech) has long aspired to be a center of excellence in science and technology and join the top tier of universities globally. Whereas Tokyo Tech traces its lineage back to the Tokyo Vocational School, TMDU's history began with Tokyo National School of Dentistry. Tokyo Tech and TMDU are both rooted in education for practical purposes in their respective fields, and each is a sole designated national university corporation.

Furthermore, they are complementary in that TMDU has more faculty and a larger budget, whereas Tokyo Tech has a larger student body and more extensive landholdings. Considering this, TMDU and Tokyo Tech were at one in believing that they could be integrated on an equal footing.

As a result, on October 14, 2022, TMDU and Tokyo Tech reached a basic agreement on integration. The new university formed through the merger will be named the "Institute of Science Tokyo" (tentative name), a name expressing the new university's commitment to raising its profile as a center of excellence encompassing medicine, dentistry, science, and engineering.

The contemplated university integration has stirred great interest in society, attesting to the high expectations focused on the new university as an institution capable of tackling the pressing issues confronting society that I mentioned earlier.

"Pursue Well-being for All" is the overarching concept of the new university. The term "well-being" also appears in TMDU's Vision, "Cultivating Professionals with Knowledge and Humanity, thereby Contributing to People's Well-being". "Pursue Well-being for All" means contributing to everyone's quality of life. "All" includes coworkers at the university. The concept of the new university reflects TMDU's policy of "protecting patients and coworkers".

The new university prioritizes the cultivation of "free and flat relationships".

It is noteworthy that the word "free" in Japanese is composed of two kanji characters, meaning "oneself" and "based on", respectively. The preconditions for achieving the "free and flat relationships" envisioned by the new university are: "the new university should be a robust and prosperous organization with a self-sustaining financial base and solid governance to provide solid support for education and research", "the new university should be inclusive of diverse values and different cultures, as everyone's freedom, not just one's own, must be respected", and "all members of the new

university should have confidence and ride in their work and be predisposed to embrace new challenges”.

“Join forces to create the future” was the slogan in my first term and will continue to be our slogan during my second term.

Since Tokyo Tech and TMDU intend to merge in the fall of 2024, we have much to do in the next 18 months. Emphasizing “speed”, “trial and error”, and “support rather than blame”, we will advance not only for today’s world and people, but also for tomorrow’s.

The masterplan for the new university is integrated into the International Outstanding Research University plan. I urge you to set your sights high and do everything you can within the framework of the masterplan to make your dreams an everyday reality.

Let’s join forces to create the future. In all these endeavors, I request your invaluable cooperation.