

Message from JSPS President Prof. Motoyuki Ono



Having embarked on a new start as an "independent administrative institution" in October 2003, the Japan Society for Promotion of Science (JSPS) has become Japan's core agency for supporting scientific advancement. In executing this mandate, JSPS carries out a multi-pronged program, including funding research, fostering researchers, and furthering international scientific exchange. In all these facets, JSPS respects the autonomy and creativity of the researchers themselves.

As an independent funding agency, it is imperative for JSPS to conduct its application screening and project assessment with strict impartiality and full transparency. Such is especially the case if JSPS is to fulfill its mission of providing stable and sustained support for the freely conceived ideas of researchers and their pursuant activities. To better achieve this end, JSPS has enhanced the function of its Research Center for Science Systems, staffed to provide a high level of scientific expertise with program officers and directors. The knowledge and experience of these frontline researchers has been applied to substantially improving the examiner selection process of the Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research, making programmatic enhancements to JSPS's pre- and postdoctoral fellowships, and establishing an International Program Committee within JSPS, among a number of other innovative system reforms.

At the same time, JSPS is playing an important role in supporting the reform of Japanese universities. These efforts include conducting the evaluation and assessment processes of the "21st Century COE Program," aimed at establishing world-standard research hubs within these universities, and of the "Initiatives for Attractive Graduate Education Program"; and also carrying forward the program "Strategic Fund for Establishing International Headquarters in Universities."

Moreover, JSPS has from FY 2006 taken concrete steps to facilitate and expand the participation of women in the field of scientific research. These include a system of maternity leave, which allows female researchers to suspend their activities for purposes of childbearing and infant nurturing, and then to make a smooth transition back into the workplace. Applicable also to male researchers with a childbearing spouse, this system supports an environment in which talented young researchers can continue their work and take on new challenges while going about starting a family.

The 21st century promises to spawn a knowledge-based society. For Japan, with its limited natural resources, to maintain its place as a world leader in this transition, the key will lie in its ability to advance science and technology. To this end, it will be of vital importance for Japan to pursue, from a germination stage, the advancement of diverse genres of research and the acquisition of universal knowledge. Imperative to this process will be initiatives to generate kernels of knowledge and compile them into seedbeds for growing new branches of science.

In this context, JSPS's role as a funding agency in advancing richly creative, highly diversified scientific research becomes all the more essential.

JSPS will take optimum advantage of the merits derived from its new status as an independent administrative institution in more flexibly, efficiently and transparently carrying out its operations and programs. By accelerating reforms in this direction, JSPS is striving to develop itself into an organization that enjoys the trust and confidence of researchers both in and outside Japan and of the scientific community at large.

As JSPS works in these ways to make its contributions to scientific progress, I ask for your greatly appreciated support and cooperation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Motoyuki Ono". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.