

JSPS Quarterly

Japan Society for the Promotion of Science



FEATURE: Toward More Attractive Graduate Education in Japan

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Interview with Dr. Hiromitsu Ishi

Regarding the Newly Established “Initiatives for Attractive Education in Graduate Schools” Program

Dr. Ishi, as chair of the program committee that oversees the “Initiatives for Attractive Education in Graduate Schools,” how would you describe the program’s objective?

The program was launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) based on a recommendation in a report on graduate education in the new era issued in September 2005 by MEXT’s Central Council for Education.

This program strengthens the role played by university graduate schools in fostering young researchers who possess the rich innovative abilities required to meet the evolving needs of contemporary society. To this end, the program places priority support on activities in graduate schools that function to develop highly motivated, creative young researchers. While advancing the systematic development and implementation of more effective curricula for graduate education, the program also acts to disseminate the fruits of supported initiatives with an eye to encouraging yet further educational enhancements in Japanese graduate schools.

What issues and challenges do Japanese graduate schools face?

About ten years ago, the Japanese government took various measures to strengthen graduate education in Japan. Having achieved at least partial success both qualitatively and quantitatively, these measures have enabled Japan to bolster its infrastructure for making the transition to

a knowledge-based society.

On the other hand, Japanese graduate schools tend to lack clearly defined objectives and educational systems for achieving them. Their educational programs are prone to be overly dependent on the discretion of individual faculty members, whose approach may differ from lab to lab. As systematic program development aimed at cultivating excellent human resources is still weak in graduate schools, they are unable to adequately respond to the various issues and challenges accompanying rapid growth in enrollment. This situation necessitates a redoubling of efforts to strengthen their function of human resource development.

Accordingly, this program, “Initiatives for Attractive Education in Graduate Schools,” was established to systematically elevate graduate education, while giving focus and clarity to graduate school programs in a way that amplifies the unique character of each.

What impact do you expect the program to have on Japanese graduate schools?

Its level of support for fostering young researchers in graduate schools distinguishes the program, making it unprecedented in Japan. The program also plays a very meaningful role in raising the awareness of graduate schools in the need to develop strategic approaches for improving graduate education. We are now at the starting line of program implementation; how successful it will be in accomplishing its goals depends on the effort universities put into it from here on out.



Dr. Hiromitsu Ishi

Professor Emeritus, Hitotsubashi University
 Currently Professor, Faculty of Policy Studies,
 Chuo University
 Chair, Japanese Government’s Tax Commission
 December 1998 - March 2004: President,
 Hitotsubashi University

What sort of functions will be expected of graduate schools in the future?

The tendency has been to appraise graduate schools by the productivity of their research within the academic system, measured by such criteria as the research achievements and the number of papers published by their faculties. We need now to shift this perspective in evaluating graduate schools to their performance in developing human resources. That is, to how well they are building systems to foster talented young people who will go on to play key roles in not only the research and education community but in all sectors of society.

With this imperative in mind, reviews of project applications under the program place emphasis on the leadership skills of their implementing faculty members. Namely, whether they are able to draft clearly articulated proposals and show they have the leadership capability to carry out their program effectively. Another important criterion is whether proposed projects are given clearly obtainable objectives and outputs, such as career-path building for the participating students.

What sort of projects were selected this time around?

In making selections, the highest points were given to those programs that were creatively designed in a way that expresses the specific attributes of their graduate school, while creating a strong infrastructure for conducting effective graduate education—one that may include such components as innovative process management with regard to course work enhancement, integrative curriculum design, and degree path piloting.

How do you envision the “Initiatives for Attractive Education in Graduate Schools” program in the future?

I believe we have been successful in selecting good programs that will give

greater substance to graduate school education—ones that are in line with the objectives of our program scheme. Being highly practicable, the selected programs should yield good results while having the potential for further development in the years ahead. They also reflect both the scale and location of relevant graduate schools.

It is said, however, that a great many of the selected programs are at universities with large-scale research facilities. In the future, I believe that grant distribution should be more diversified, with a larger number of awards going to small, local or private universities, especially those with uniquely conceived program proposals that give ample expression to their distinct institutional cultures.

Do you have a message for us about the course of Japanese graduate education in the future?

Though just beginning, efforts are now being made in earnest to improve graduate education in Japan. I believe the universities whose programs have been selected will be able to craft leading models for improving graduate education. As they work to implement their programs, the results produced can be expected to have many and various ripple effects, which will accrue to enhancing overall graduate education in Japan. As to those universities whose proposals were not selected, I hope they might emulate the good practices of others while being proactive and innovative in working to improve their own graduate programs.

1. Program Features

Strengthens the educational function of university graduate schools

Gives priority support to innovative programs that build various curriculum-driven education and research systems and that systematically develop education and research activities.

Fosters young researchers with abundant creativity

Strengthens graduate school's capacity to foster young researchers who possess the creative ability required to meet new societal needs.

Disseminates information to society

Information on successful results of selected projects is disseminated widely, and used to improve overall graduate education in Japan.

2. Framework

Application recruitment

- Eligible applicants: Graduate departments or combinations of graduate departments (doctoral courses in principle) at university graduate schools
- Funding period: Two years
- Eligible fields: All academic fields (divided into three categories: humanities and social sciences; science, engineering and agriculture; and medical sciences)
- Funding scale: Up to ¥100 million of program funding per project per fiscal year, inclusive of up to ¥50 million of annual government subsidies

Selection procedure

A screening committee and category-specific subcommittees are established under the program's steering committee; they use specialists and leading authorities in the subject fields to conduct document and panel reviews of applications.

3. Budget

¥3 billion for FY 2005

Number of FY2005 Applications and Selections

	Humanities, Social Sciences				Science, Engineering and Agriculture				Medical Sciences				Total			
	Applications		Selection results		Applications		Selection results		Applications		Selection results		Applications		Selection results	
	Universities	Applications	Universities	Applications	Universities	Applications	Universities	Applications	Universities	Applications	Universities	Applications	Universities	Applications	Universities	Applications
National universities	25	50	15	24	56	131	19	39	31	41	14	15	64	222	30	78
Public universities	8	8	0	0	4	11	1	2	7	11	1	1	14	30	2	3
Private universities	34	42	9	11	26	26	2	2	17	18	3	3	69	86	13	16
Total	67	100	24	35	86	168	22	43	55	70	18	19	147	338	45	97

As there are cases when one university applies for projects in multiple fields, the university figures in the "total" column may differ from the sum of those in the horizontal column.

FY2005 Selection Results by University

National universities	Selections			
	(Total)	HSS	SEA	MS
Hokkaido University	5	2	2	1
Tohoku University	4	1	3	0
University of Tsukuba	2	1	0	1
Gunma University	1	0	0	1
Chiba University	3	0	2	1
The University of Tokyo	7	1	5	1
Tokyo Medical and Dental University	2	0	1	1
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies	1	1	0	0
Tokyo Institute of Technology	3	0	3	0
Ochanomizu University	2	1	1	0
The University of Electro-Communications	1	0	1	0
Hitotsubashi University	1	1	0	0
Yokohama National University	2	1	1	0
The Graduate University for Advanced Studies	1	1	0	0
Niigata University	1	0	0	1
Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology	1	0	1	0
Nagoya University	4	3	1	0
Kyoto University	6	1	3	2
Osaka University	10	3	7	0
Kobe University	6	5	0	1
Nara Women's University	1	1	0	0
Nara Institute of Science and Technology	2	0	2	0
Okayama University	1	0	1	0
Hiroshima University	2	1	1	0
Yamaguchi University	1	0	0	1
The University of Tokushima	1	0	0	1
Kyushu University	3	0	2	1
Nagasaki University	2	0	1	1
Kumamoto University	1	0	0	1
University of Miyazaki	1	0	1	0
Selections	78	24	39	15
Universities	30	15	19	14

Public universities	Selections			
	(Total)	HSS	SEA	MS
Tokyo Metropolitan University	2	0	2	0
Osaka Prefecture University	1	0	0	1
Selections	3	0	2	1
Universities	2	0	1	1

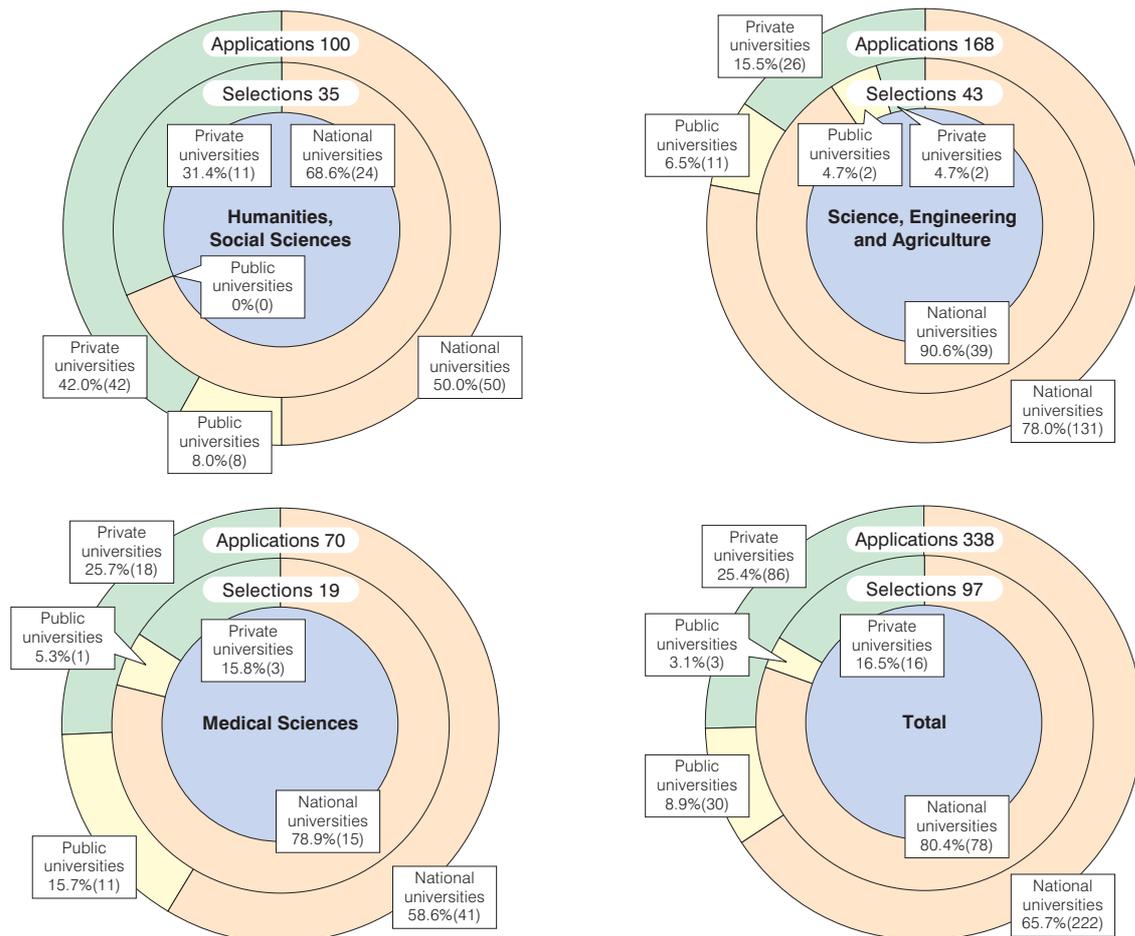
Private universities	Selections			
	(Total)	HSS	SEA	MS
Jichi Medical School	1	0	0	1
Keio University	2	2	0	0
International Christian University	1	1	0	0
Sophia University	1	1	0	0
Tokai University	1	0	0	1
Tokyo University of Pharmacy and Life Science	1	0	0	1
Meiji University	1	0	1	0
Rikkyo University	1	1	0	0
Waseda University	3	2	1	0
Nihon Fukushi University	1	1	0	0
Doshisha University	1	1	0	0
Ritsumeikan University	1	1	0	0
Kwansei Gakuin University	1	1	0	0
Selections	16	11	2	3
Universities	13	9	2	3

【Total】

	(Total)	HSS	SEA	MS
Selections	97	35	43	19
Universities	45	24	22	18

Note: HSS: Humanities, Social Sciences
SEA: Science, Engineering and Agriculture
MS: Medical Sciences

Ratio of FY2005 Applications and Selections by Field



— Carried out by the University-Industry Cooperation and Research Program Division

Presentation Ceremony Held for 2005 International Prize for Biology

On 5 December, the 21st annual ceremony for awarding the International Prize for Biology was held in the presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan at The Japan Academy, located in Ueno Park, Tokyo. The ceremony was organized by the Committee on the International Prize for Biology, chaired by Dr. Saburo Nagakura, president of The Japan Academy.

At the ceremony, an opening message was delivered by Dr. Nagakura and a report on the selection process was provided by Dr. Kiyoshi Aoki, chair of

this year's Selection Committee, after which the prize and an Imperial gift were presented to this year's awardee, Prof. Nam-Hai Chua, Laboratory of Plant Molecular Biology, The Rockefeller University, USA. A message was then delivered by His Majesty, followed by congratulatory remarks from the Prime Minister (read by Mr. Jinen Nagase, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary) and from Mr. Kenji Kosaka, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). The ceremony concluded with an acceptance address from Prof. Chua.

At the reception following the ceremony, a congenial atmosphere prevailed with Their Majesties and Prof. Chua engaging in amicable conversation with each other and with the guests who included MEXT minister Mr. Kosaka, embassy representatives and the Prize Committee members.

Very gratefully, Prof. Chua had JSPS contribute the ¥10 million in prize money to The Japanese Society of Plant Physiologists and the International Prize for Biology Endowment.

— General Affairs Division



Prof. Chua receives Prize in presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress

Meeting of A-HORCs Held in Korea

On 22 November, the third meeting of the Heads of Research Councils of Asian Countries (A-HORCs) was held Gyeongju, South Korea. It brought together Prof. Yiyu Chen, president, National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC), Dr. Oh-Kab Kwon, chairman & CEO, Korea Science and Engineering Foundation (KOSEF), and Prof. Motoyuki Ono, president, JSPS. This time, each was accompanied by a delegation of three members.

Two sessions were convened. The first, titled "Project Evaluation Systems,"

featured presentations by each organization on their respective research-support programs. It was learned through these presentations and discussions that each organization is working to develop application screening systems that are at once efficient while yielding high-quality selection results.

In the second session, a discussion was held on the state of cooperation among the three organizations. Prof. Ono proposed a new program entitled "Science Fest Pacific Rim," through which young



From left: Prof. Chen (NSFC), Dr. Kwon (KOSEF), Prof. Ono (JSPS)

researchers from Pacific-rim countries would gather in conferences addressed by invited Nobel laureates. The Chi-

nese and Korean sides agreed to the concept. JSPS is now devising a detailed framework for the program.

At the meeting, the three organizational heads signed a memorandum of

understanding initiating the A3 Foresight Program, which is designed to advance trilateral cooperation with an aim to building a world-class research hub in East Asia. This being JSPS's first multilateral science-promotion

agreement with China and Korea, the program is believed to have very significant potential in strengthening S&T collaboration within East Asia.

— Asian Program Division

Frontiers of Science Symposia Held in Japan

Held in a series, Frontiers of Science (FoS) Symposia are organized to bring talented young researchers from Japan and counterpart countries together in cross-disciplinary discussions on cutting-edge fields of science. In doing so, these symposia seek to encourage the young participants to re-conceptualize the borders separating their fields with an eye to creating new academic disciplines. Ultimately, they aim to foster the next generation of leaders, researchers with broad interdisciplinary perspectives and capable of merging into new research initiatives colleagues across a spectrum of fields.

Two FoS symposia have been held in the 2005 fiscal year. The "Second Annual Japanese-German Frontiers of Science (JGFoS) Symposium" was held in cooperation with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) on 3-5 November, and the "Eighth Annual Japanese-American Frontiers of Science (JAFoS) Symposium" was held together with the National Academy of Sciences on 10-12 December. The venue for both was Shonan Village Center near the ocean south of Tokyo.

Second Japanese-German Frontiers of Science (JGFoS) Symposium

This program stems from an agreement made in August 2003 between Japan's prime minister and Germany's chancellor to strengthen exchange between



Q&A at JGFoS session

young researchers of the two countries. This second symposium in the series was organized as a commemorative event of the "Germany in Japan Year." It began with messages from JSPS president Prof. Motoyuki Ono and former AvH secretary general Dr. Manfred Osten, followed by discussions among the participants on six topics, including "Earthquake, Submarine Landslides and Tsunamis—Their Causes and Effects," "Randomness in Computation," and "Emerging Approaches for Real-time Molecular and Cellular Imaging." On the second day, an after-dinner lecture was given by Dr. Yoji Totsuka, director general, High Energy Accelerator Research Organization (KEK). He spoke on the theme "World Year of Physics," while also talking about his experiences in Germany where he had spent a long research stint. The participants asked lots of questions, and the ensuing discussions spun on into the evening.

Eighth Japanese-American Frontiers of Science (JAFoS) Symposium

The Japanese-American symposia were the first to be held under the FoS format. As such, they have provided a model for similar symposia with Germany and other countries. This eighth symposium in the JAFoS series was attended by 75 young researchers from the two countries. It covered the eight fields and featured discussions on such topics as "Regulatory Trafficking and Degradation of Proteins/A Life of Protein," "The Ribosome," and "Data Mining and Biological Applications." In the foyer, a poster session was held displaying the research results of individual members. Rotating, they each described their work in one-minute "flash talks," after which the participants gathered around the various

posters and engaged in free discussions with the presenters, many so animatedly as to carry over into the break. The after-dinner lecture on the second day was delivered by Dr. Akira Tonomura, fellow, Advanced Research Laboratory, Hitachi, Ltd., who is also a foreign associate of the symposium's cosponsoring National Academy of Sciences. He spoke on the subject "Quantum World Observed Using Electron Waves." Commenting also on contributions to scientific advancement by corporate research, his talk struck a cord of particularly high interest with the participants.



JAFoS poster session

Both symposia had the participants lodge together and engage in cross-disciplinary discussions. Many of the young researchers remarked that this arrangement, which allowed peer interaction without time constraints, gave them an opportunity to rethink the parameters of their work from a macroscopic perspective. Reports have also been received of joint research initiatives started later among some of the participants.

For list of JGFoS presentations, see: http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-jgfos/2005_01.html

For list of JAFoS presentations, see: http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-jafos/2005_01.html

— Research Cooperation Division II

Symposium Held Under “Strategic Fund for Establishing International Headquarters in Universities” Program

On 30 January, an open symposium, entitled “International Strategies for Universities—Toward Strategic, Systematic Initiatives,” was held at Shinjuku Sumitomo Hall, Tokyo. Universities with endowed projects under the program reported on their international strategies and new initiatives to implement them. Examples of good practices were introduced, and an exchange of views held among experts in related fields. The subject was addressed from a wide perspective that not only included the endowed universities but also the strategic and systematic internationalization undertakings of other universities and institutions throughout Japan.



The keynote speech was delivered by Prof. Tsutomu Kimura, president, National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation, followed by three sessions: “Universities’ International Strategies—Building Organizations, Setting Goals,” “Advancing

Research Internationally—Obtaining External Funding, Establishing Overseas Bases,” and “Internal Internationalization—Campus Internationalization and Faculty Training.”

Attending the symposium were some 220 people, including the international exchange officers of universities and research institutes from around the country. Their active participation combined with the insightful presentations made the symposium a notable success.

For program outline see:

http://www.u-kokusen.jp/index_e.html

— Overseas Fellowship Division

Strasbourg Office Holds Fourth JSPS Forum in France

On 18 November, the JSPS Strasbourg Office held its fourth JSPS Forum, this time on the theme “Oceanography.” Venued at University Louis Pasteur, cosponsored by the University and French Ministry of Higher Education and Research, and supported by Conseil Général du Bas-Rhin and Maison Universitaire France-Japon, the forum attracted over 250 participants.

Opening addresses were delivered by Prof. Hubert Whitechurch, professor, Institute of Earth Physics, University Louis Pasteur and Prof. Yoichi Nakatani, director, JSPS Strasbourg Office, followed by remarks from Prof. Alain Beretz, vice president, University Louis Pasteur, speaking on behalf of the University’s president, Mr. Ryuichi Shoji, consul general of Japan in Strasbourg, and Prof. Jean-Paul Montagner, deputy director of research, French Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

Moving into the body of the forum, Dr. John Ludden, director, Earth Sciences Department, CNRS-INSU/SDU, introduced Europe’s Deep Sea Floor Frontier Program. His presentation

was followed by those of Dr. Masataka Kinoshita, group leader, Ocean Bottom Observation Research Group, JAMSTEC; Dr. Jean Mascle, director, Marine Geodynamic Lab, CNRS-Geosciences Azur, Villefranche-sur-Mer; Dr. Shigenobu Takeda, associate professor, Graduate School of Agricultural and Life Sciences, The University of Tokyo; Dr. Philippe Gros, director, Fishery Resources Lab, French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea; Dr. Ichiro Yasuda, professor, Ocean Research Institute, The University of Tokyo; and Dr. Bernard Barnier, director, Ocean Current Lab, CNRS-LEGI, Grenoble. They reported on leading-edge research being conducted in Japan and France across a wide cross-section of fields including seismology, sea-bottom mapping, marine biology, oceanography and sea-ice circulation.

During the lunch break, a highly interactive poster session was held by eight young Japanese and French researchers, whose participation was funded by the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research. After the break, Ms. Yoshie Araki of JSPS’s



Strasbourg Office gave a presentation of JSPS’s fellowship and other programs.

Discussions on the above-listed research presentations were chaired respectively by Prof. Jean-Paul Montagner, Dr. Anne-Marie Karpoff, Prof. Jose Honnorez, Prof. Chiaki Mukai, Prof. Hubert Whitechurch, and Prof. Tetsuichi Ito. They were so animated as to flow over into the breaks.

The forum’s proceedings were carried over the multimedia Canal-U, providing real-time coverage worldwide. The presentations can be viewed at <http://www.canalc2.tv/>.

— JSPS Strasbourg Office

French Alumni Meeting Held in Parallel with Workshop on Japanese-French Research Cooperation

On 1-2 December, the JSPS Strasbourg Office and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) co-sponsored a workshop on "Japanese-French Research Cooperation," which was held in cooperation with ten leading French research organizations and the French Ministries of Higher Education and Research and of Foreign Affairs. Venued at CNRS's headquarters, the workshop was attended by about 150 researchers and other interested people. This is the first time for a meeting involving virtually all of France's major research organizations to be held on the subject of Franco-Japanese research exchange.

The workshop started with remarks by Mr. Hiroshi Hirabayashi, Ambassador of Japan in France, and messages from ministry officials and other dignitaries. Nine sessions followed, in each of which reports were presented by representatives of the French organizations on the

current state of Franco-Japanese cooperation in the subject fields of research.

A half-day program by JSPS was included in the workshop. At it, JSPS executive director Mr. Isao Kiso briefed the audience on JSPS international programs, while JSPS Strasbourg Office director Prof. Yoichi Nakatani reported on the Office's activities. Following them, Prof. Pierre-Gilles de Gennes, 1991 Nobel Laureate in Physics and member of the French JSPS alumni association delivered a spell-binding presentation titled "The Hard Life of Inventors."

A general assembly of the alumni association was held in parallel with the workshop. It was chaired by association president Prof. Marie-Claire Lett, professor at University Louis Pasteur, and attended by about 30 members. At it, six additional board members were elected and an activity



plan was adopted that included strengthening the role of the association's local branches. It was a spirited meeting with each member introducing him/herself and voicing opinions on future alumni activities.

The workshop itself concluded with a roundtable discussion among JSPS International Program Department director Mr. Hiroshi Fukai and representatives of the French and Japanese research organizations on the prospects and vistas of research cooperation between the two countries.

— JSPS Strasbourg Office

Education and Science Minister Visits JSPS's London Office

On 9 January, Mr. Kenji Kosaka, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, visited the JSPS London Office. He was in the UK to attend the World Ministerial Seminar on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Schools. During his visit to the Office, Mr. Kosaka received a briefing from its director Prof. Masaru Osanai on JSPS's activities in the UK. He also met with UK JSPS Alumni Association chairman Prof. Peter Sammonds, vice chairman

Dr. Martyn Kingsbury, and three former recipients of the Japanese government scholarship for foreign gradu-



ate students. In their brainstorming session, they discussed why, except for among some British researchers, it is not generally known in the UK that a very high level of research is conducted in Japan, and agreed that measures such as a web portal should be taken to introduce Japanese universities and research institutes to British researchers and students while letting them know that living in Japan is not so expensive.

— JSPS London Office

Events

Bonn Office

The 11th Japanese-German Symposium
"Frontiers of Cancer Research"
Ringhotel Munte am Stadtwald, Bremen, 21-22 April 2006

San Francisco Office

APRU/AEARU Research Symposium 2006
"Earthquake Hazards around the Pacific Rim – Global Watch and Environmental Impact"
Westin St. Francis Hotel, San Francisco, 21-22 April 2006

Washington Office

The 11th "Science in Japan" Forum
"Supercomputer and its Applications"
Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington DC, 16 June 2006

Recruitments

For FY 2006

JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship (Short-term) for North American and European Researchers

For 3rd recruitment, application deadline from host institution: 3-7 April 2006

For 4th recruitment, application deadline from host institution: 8-12 May 2006

JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship for Foreign Researchers (Standard)

JSPS Invitation Fellowship for Research in Japan (Short-term)

Application deadline from host institution to JSPS: 8-12 May 2006

For details, ask a prospective host researcher or visit our website.

US JSPS Alumni Fellows Association Holds General Meeting

On 10-11 December, the first general meeting of the US JSPS Alumni Fellows Association was held in Chicago. Approximately 30 former JSPS fellows came from around the country to participate in it.

The meeting started on the first day with self-introductions by each of the participants. Then, Dr. Akira MASAIE, director, JSPS Washington Office, and Dr. Seishi TAKEDA, director, JSPS San Francisco Office, delivered welcome addresses.

Dr. Blanca CHATTIN-KACOURIS, chair of the alumni association, explained the system of scientific groups that had

been established within the association. They comprise the following five groups, which the members were asked to join based on their research fields: Social Science & Humanities, Math & Physics, Chemistry, Engineering, and Biomedicine. At this point, the participants split up into their respective groups, where they elected coordinators and discussed the group's future activities.

On the second day, Dr. Rezwanaul WAHID, a member of the executive committee, presented an overview of the association's activities, and Dr. CHATTIN-KACOURIS explained the procedure for electing the next group of execu-



tive committee members. An intense and earnest discussion followed on these two topics.

Throughout this 2-day meeting, the participants shared an atmosphere of enthusiasm over alumni association's activities and initiatives, while extending their friendship ties across research fields and regions of the US.

— JSPS Washington Office

Nanoscience Symposium Held at University of California, Berkeley

The JSPS San Francisco Office supported a symposium titled "Nanoscience and Quantum Physics," which was held on the Berkeley Campus of the University of California on 5-6 January. Co-organized by UCB and Tokyo Institute of Technology, this interdepartmental symposium was held as a component of the Institute's project "Nanometer-Scale Quantum Physics" implemented under Japan's 21st Century COE Program.

The symposium began with an introduction by San Francisco Office director Dr. Seishi TAKEDA of JSPS and the



21st Century COE Program, and was followed by eight sessions over the two days. On the first evening, a reception was held by the Office for the speakers and participants at the university's Faculty Club.

Both day's sessions were well-attended by doctoral students and postdoc researchers whose numbers always exceeded 40 and sometimes approached 70. Given the quantity of the participants and the quality of their discussions, the symposium was carried out very successfully. Besides offering a venue for reporting the fruits of Japanese research in the nanoscience field, the symposium was also very meaningful in terms of the opportunity it gave Japanese and American researchers in this field to form networks and step up collaboration among themselves.

— JSPS San Francisco Office

Recent Visitors to JSPS (November 2005-January 2006)

Joint Staff Meeting Held with DOST

On 14 November, a joint staff meeting was held between JSPS and its counterpart agency in the Philippines, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). Coming to Japan for the meeting was a 4-member delegation including DOST's undersecretary for S&T Services Prof. Fortunato dela Pena and its assistant secretary for R&D & Technology Transfer cum DOST-JSPS Program director Ms. Lourdes

P. Orijola, who first paid a courtesy call on JSPS president Prof. Motoyuki Ono. At the meeting, the two sides discussed the status of the Core University Program carried out between JSPS and DOST and held a constructive exchange of views on the support system for a new framework of joint research to be implemented in the current fiscal year.

— Asian Program Division



Message from Former JSPS Fellow (3)

Reminiscences of My Visits in Japan

In 2004 I was invited to speak at the inaugural pan-European Scientific Meeting, the EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF2004). There the organizers of the symposium on mobility found my experiences in Japan appropriate to their theme, and encouraged me to share them with others. I was pleased to have the opportunity to revisit Japan in memory, not least because it quickened my appreciation of my time in Japan, and my indebtedness to JSPS as well as to other organizations and individuals.

My first visit to Japan was in 1993 to attend an international conference in Kyoto. I was captivated by the beauty of this former capital, and fascinated with Japanese culture. But I could scarcely imagine then that I should return to Japan so many times, to gain numerous Japanese friends, and to grow so fond of varied aspects of the country—people, culture, language, cuisine, tea, and a lot more.

On receiving my doctorate in mathematics in 1994, there were few positions. But I had the good fortune to be offered some post-doctoral fellowships. Rather than staying on in Cambridge, I felt it would be discourteous to turn down an award for going to Kyoto, where my prospective host was so enthusiastic about welcoming me. A supervisor and another distinguished scholar endorsed that choice.

I had no regrets. Prof. Michio Yano not only took my professional guidance in hand personally, but also introduced me to a wide circle of colleagues. The working environment—the office, computer facilities, library, as well as accommodations—was most congenial. I was especially touched by being included early on as one of two

key-note speakers at an annual conference. My only disappointment was that I could not stay on after the meeting to learn from some of the Japanese experts.

Mrs. Yano, too, ensured that I was inducted fully into life in Japan outside the university, inviting me to stay with her family, and sharing with me her social friends from outside the academic world, with their different styles and ways of talking. At the New Year, she arrayed me in a kimono for the traditional visit to a shrine.

My host and his colleagues whetted my appetite to learn more, and to return. My appointment as a university lecturer in Sweden took me away. But thanks to JSPS and the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, I have been back to Japan working on different projects with a variety of hosts. Colleagues and friends have always made my time in Japan rewarding; and I am glad, in return, to have been welcoming visitors from Japan to Sweden. Not long ago, I was delighted to hear that a colleague in Japan was applying for grants to invite me for collaboration. Besides mathematics and its history, I am also interested in talent education and the Suzuki approach to playing the piano.



With host's family (Dr. Svensson next to Prof. Yano on left)



Dr. Ma-Li Svensson

Associate Professor in Mathematics,
Institute of Science and Technology,
Linköping University

Chair, JSPS Alumni Club in Sweden

JSPS Bilateral Exchange Programs with
the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences
(multiple visits to Japan during 1999-2002)

In my experience, Japanese people are hospitable and considerate; Japanese colleagues are open-minded and eager to communicate; the Japanese language is gentle, its basics not so difficult; Japanese food is delicious to the eye and taste alike; Japanese tea is healthy and refreshing; Japanese culture is endlessly fascinating to explore.



Alumni club board members, with Dr. Svensson in the middle

To Past and Present JSPS Fellows:

We are in the process of updating our mailing list. If you have changed your address or would like to add your name to the *JSPS Quarterly* mailing list, please mail your full name and address (including country) to JSPS Fellows Plaza, 6 Ichibancho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8471 or fax it to us at +81-3-3263-1854. Please indicate whether you are a current or former JSPS fellow.



Introducing JSPS Overseas Offices: Stockholm



Currently directed by Prof. Tsuneko Okazaki, the JSPS Stockholm Office was established on the premises of the Karolinska Institute in May 2001. The Office's science exchange and cooperation programs cover not only its host country of Sweden but also the Nordic nations of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Iceland and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The Office's program gives special focus to the following three areas.

Holding fora and colloquia

The centerpiece of these meetings is the Office's "JSPS Science Fora." Held once a year on cutting-edge scientific themes, they assemble excellent researchers from Japan and countries of Northern Europe. The fifth in this series of fora was

held this year on the mutually high-interest theme of material sciences. In carrying out these fora, emphasis is placed on giving the participants a deep understanding of work being carried out by pioneering researchers on both sides in the subject field, while introducing researchers who are doing outstanding work but are yet not well known internationally.

Gathering and disseminating information

The Office gathers information on the higher education and science promotion policies of Nordic and Baltic countries, while disseminating similar information on Japan through its newsletter, webpage and other means. The staff, for example, visit universities and research institutions in the region to give briefings on JSPS's fellowship and

other programs.

Supporting the JSPS Alumni Club in Sweden

An alumni association of former JSPS fellows was officially established through a ceremony at the group's first general meeting held in February 2005. In April and October, the 8-member executive committee was held along with a seminar open to general participants. The association comprises both regular and associate members. To expand the ranks of both while working to invigorate scientific exchange between Sweden and Japan, the Club holds seminars and other meetings, disseminates information via its webpage, and publishes a newsletter.

— JSPS Stockholm Office

Minister Kosaka Visits Sweden; Dr. Erling Norrby Receives High Honor

From 9-12 December, Mr. Kenji Kosaka, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, was in Sweden to attend an informal ministerial meeting. On the 10th, he joined ministers in charge of science and technology from Sweden, the US, India, Korea and Pakistan in discussions on two topics: "Science Policy and Strategy" and "Challenges of the 21st Century." Their exchange of views was



Third from left: Minister Kosaka

conducted in a free and candid atmosphere.

On the 11th, Mr. Kosaka visited the JSPS Stockholm Office, where he observed the office's operations and held a discussion with its director Prof. Tsuneko Okazaki and JSPS executive director Mr. Isao Kiso, who was in Stockholm on mission, about post-genome, nanotechnology and other areas of research with high future promise.

On the 12th, a ceremony was held to present the Japanese government's Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star to Dr. Erling Norrby, former secretary general of The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. Held at the Japanese ambassador's residence, it was attended by Dr. Norrby's relatives, Mr. Kiso and Prof. Okazaki. Mr. Seiichiro Otsuka, Japanese Ambassador to Sweden, presented the medal to Dr. Norrby,



Dr. Norrby receiving award

stating that he was eminently deserving of it for his superb record of achievement in promoting bilateral scientific exchange between Japan and Sweden, including his valued support in establishing the JSPS Stockholm Office. In his acceptance speech, Dr. Norrby spoke on the range of his involvement with Japan from his very first visit to his participation as a member of JSPS's external review committee.

— JSPS Stockholm Office

Dr. Norrby Visits JSPS and Gives Lecture

On 30 January, Dr. Erling Norrby, former secretary general, The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, paid a courtesy visit to JSPS president Prof. Motoyuki Ono. Dr. Norrby had been invited to give a lecture on the following day in Tokyo.

Titled "Japanese-Swedish Scientific Collaborations and Nobel Prizes," Dr. Norrby's lecture drew upon his vast experience as a virologist with Japanese colleagues and his past membership on the Nobel Committee to delve into the two subjects while offering

insightful suggestions. All in attendance, both researchers and administrators, were profoundly impressed with the rich content of his presentation. Asking probing questions, they engaged Dr. Norrby in vigorous discussion. Following his lecture was a reception that began with a toast proposed Dr. Hiroyuki Yoshikawa, chair, JSPS's Academic Advisory Board. In a relaxed atmosphere, the participants and Dr. Norrby conversed at good length with each other, quickening a sense of collegiality between Japan and Sweden.



In the fall of last year, Dr. Norrby had received the "The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star" from the Japanese government.

— Research Cooperation Division I

Spotlighting the Work of Two Gifted Japanese Research Fellows

About the Fellowship Category “Superlative Postdoctoral Researchers (SPD)”

JSPS's “Research Fellowships for Young Scientists” constitute Japan's core program for fostering young researchers. The fellowship provides a monthly stipend and research grant to talented young Japanese researchers so that they can dedicate themselves to their research on a topic and at a university of their own choosing. From among the applicants for the Postdoc (PD) fellowship, a number are

chosen for the Superlative Postdoc (SPD) fellowship. These selections are made from the viewpoint of fostering and maintaining young researchers who are capable of performing at the world's highest level. In FY 2005, there were 48 SPD fellows and 1,364 PD fellows.

— Carried out by the Research Fellowship Division

Solving the Puzzle of Past Climate Change from an Interdisciplinary Perspective of Climatology and History

In recent years, considerable effort has been put into forecasting future global warming. Obtaining a grasp of past weather fluctuations is an important key to forecasting future climate change. However, up to now instrumental meteorological records on Japan and East Asia have been thought to only date back about 100 years, so that little research on past climate change in the region has been conducted using older observation data.

In collaboration with historians and other climatologists, I have made an extensive search of archives and historical records both in Japan and Europe looking for early instrumental data that predate those of the Japan Meteorological Agency, which started making its observations in the 1880s. In the process, I found earlier 19th

century records that contain daily temperature and barometric pressure readings taken by the Dutch in Dejima (Nagasaki) and Dutch study Japanese scholars who used modern instruments to make meteorological observations in Edo (Tokyo) and Osaka. Correcting and homogenizing these data, I created a database of average monthly temperatures and pressures that functions to correlate and compare past and present climate data. In this way, I was able to analyze climate change in Japan's late Edo Period using objective numerical data. Discussions on climate in that period had theretofore been based on estimated values.

My interest has now expanded to include long-term meteorological data on China. I am attempting to reconstruct East Asia climate using 19th century or earlier weather



Dr. Masumi Zaiki

Present: JSPS Superlative Postdoc Fellow, Faculty of Cross-Cultural Studies, Kobe University

2004-2005: Lecturer, School of Education, Waseda University

2004: Received Ph.D. from Tokyo Metropolitan University

2001-2004: JSPS Doctoral Course Fellow

observations. As my research integrates the fields of climatology and history, it constitutes a unique approach, one which I find both challenging and fun to pursue.

Evolution and Diversity As Seen in Bird's Ability to Learn Songs

In unlocking the mysteries of the human brain, it is important to learn how brain functions have developed through the process of evolution. In seeking answers to such questions as what mechanisms allow the brain to take on new functions, it is effective to compare species that are closely related in terms of their phylogenetic evolution but have markedly different behavioral characteristics. Birds, for example, use various calls in association with their social behavior such as courtship and territory marking. Differing from other avian species, songbirds learn their songs by imitating their parents at a fledgling stage. Within their brains exists a neural network called a “vocal pathway” that gives them the ability to learn and produce songs. Among songbirds, however, it is found that the complexity of the songs they are able to learn differs by species.

In my doctoral studies and postdoctoral

research, which I did in France, I investigated neural development. I am now applying that experience to research that seeks to elucidate the molecular mechanisms of vocal pathway formation, while comparing bird species that don't have the ability to learn songs with species that do to varying extents have such learning ability. In so doing, my aim is to, from a developmental biology perspective, trace how these birds acquire the ability to learn songs through an evolutionary process and to



With French colleagues



Dr. Eiji Matsunaga

Present: JSPS Superlative Postdoc Fellow, Brain Science Institute, RIKEN

2002-2005: HFSP Long term Fellow, University Paris 6

2002: Researcher, French National Institute for Health and Medical Research (INSERM)

2002: Received Ph.D. from Tohoku University

elucidate the molecular basis for this development. Through this research, I ultimately wish to learn more about the universal principles underscoring brain function evolution.

CHIBA

Chiba Prefectural Chosei Senior High School

Date: 23 January 2006

Dr. Xiaotao Hao (China)

Host institute: Chiba University
"Novel Soft Materials: Organic Semiconductors"



KANAGAWA

Senior High School Affiliated With Japan Women's University

Date: 12 January 2006

Dr. Francois D'Hooge (France)

Host institute: The University of Tokyo
"Research in Organic Chemistry & Total Synthesis in Japan"



YAMANASHI

Yamanashi Prefectural Tsuru High School

Date: 22 November 2005

Dr. Kieran J. Lee (UK)

Host institute: Tokyo University of Agriculture
"Plant Genetics"



Date: 13 December 2005

Dr. Juergen Weichselgartner (Germany)

Host institute: The University of Tokyo
"Shaping Our Planet—Impacts of Global Change"

Date: 17 January 2006

Dr. Cheng H. Tan (Singapore)

Host institute: Tokyo Metropolitan University
"Hardware Versus Heartware"



SHIZUOKA

Shimizu Higashi High School

Date: 28 November 2005

Dr. Helene Kiefer (France)

Host institute: The University of Tokyo
"Two Aspects of the Regulation of Gene Expression: Transcription and mRNA Polyadenylation"



NARA

Tezukayama High School

Date: 10 November 2005

Dr. Yee-Chin Tang (Malaysia)

Host institute: Osaka University
"Malaysia and Materials Scientists"



Date: 17 November 2005

Dr. Bogdan D. Enescu (Romania)

Host institute: Kyoto University
"Earthquake Activity In and Around Japan"

Nara High School

Date: 2 December 2005

Dr. Tarakanadha Bollineni (India)

Host institute: Kyoto University
"Use of Wood Preservatives and Their Implications on the Environment"



OKAYAMA

Kurashiki-Amaki High School

Date: 4 November 2005

Mr. Jan Solberg (Denmark)

Host institute: Kobe University
"Why Should I Learn Science?"



NAGASAKI

Nagasaki Nishi High School

Date: 21 December 2005

Dr. Jessi E. Johnson (USA)

Host institute: Nagasaki University
"Microwaves and Medicine"



OKINAWA

Kaiho Senior High School

Date: 26 November 2005

Dr. Prosper L. Mfilinge (Tanzania)

Host institute: University of the Ryukyus
"Mangrove Ecology: Application of Fatty Acid Biomarkers as Trophic Tracers in the Ecosystem"



Hailing from United Kingdom, Dr. Kieran Lee started his JSPS postdoctoral fellowship at Tokyo University of Agriculture (Nodai) in September 2004. Dr. Lee met his lab colleague Dr. Yoichi Sakata when the latter was doing research in the US under a JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research Abroad. Dr. Sakata told us, "Dr. Lee is very attentive of the people around him and has adapted quickly to the Japanese environment. His coming to our lab has exposed the students to English culture and stimulated them through contact with ways of thinking that differ from ours as Japanese."

What are you currently researching under the JSPS fellowship?

I work in the field of Plant Cell Biology; my research uses a moss called *Physcomitrella patens*. I am currently investigating a group of proteoglycans known as arabinogalactan proteins (AGPs), which are found in plant cell walls and associated with plasma membranes. AGPs belong to a large and heterogeneous gene family and are thought to function in many aspects of plant development.

How did you become interested in your research field?

My interest in plants began at the end of my undergraduate degree course at the University of Leeds. I found the dynamic nature of the cell wall and its importance in controlling plant development to be intriguing. In the last 20 years a major breakthrough was made in elucidating the proteins responsible for the construction and modification of the cell wall. In fact, up until about 100 years ago scientists had a fairly static view of plant cells with rigid walls. We now know that plants possess a huge amount of cell wall-related genes, reflecting the importance of cell wall assembly and regulation. I decided that I wanted to go into this research field because it would be a real challenge.



Performing an experiment

What do you think of the state of research and the research environment in Japan, and what do you consider to be the merits of conducting your research in Japan?

I think Japan is well respected globally for its quality of science in many different fields. There are more research groups working with *Physcomitrella* in Japan than in the UK, so from my point of view this is an excellent environment for me to work in. Japanese labs are always well equipped, and to a high standard. The lab here at Nodai is always busy, but it is a friendly working environment and well organised with rotas and booking systems so everything runs smoothly.

As I just mentioned, there are many labs here in Japan working with *Physcomitrella*. Being in this kind of intensive environment is a good thing for all concerned because it stimulates scientific discourse between the groups. Furthermore, residing in Japan not only puts me in one of the leading countries for science, it allows me to have contact with some very talented and experienced plant scientists who I can always turn to for advice or suggestions regarding my research.

By the way, you gave a lecture under JSPS's Science Dialogue Program at Yamanashi Prefectural Tsuru High School, didn't you? What do you think of that experience?

I think it is good for academics to get out of the lab from time to time and explain what they are doing to the public. Raising public awareness about science is something that all people involved in the field should be concerned with. In fact, one of the most challenging aspects of being a scientist is being able to translate difficult concepts into readily understandable language in explaining one's research to the public. Giving a lecture to Japanese high school students therefore gave me a unique and incredibly useful experience in this technique. I was particularly happy to be so warmly received by the high school, both teachers and students alike. I had a great day, which was made more enjoyable by the fact that the students seemed genuinely happy to have met me and also seemed to understand my lecture. Overall, I felt the day was a great success.

I think that one aspect of having a fellowship here in Japan is of course to conduct research, but I also feel my role here is to inspire the people I encounter, to be enthusiastic about science, and to help forge new collaborations between scientists



Dr. Kieran Lee

Ph.D. (Plant Cell Biology), University of Leeds, UK, 2004

B.Sc. (Biochemistry and Medical Microbiology), University of Leeds, UK, 2000

around the globe. To JSPS fellows considering participating in the Science Dialogue Program, I would strongly recommend that they take part. I feel that it is a thoroughly rewarding experience for both the JSPS fellow and the students alike!

What do you usually do outside of your research activities?

I have an active social life outside of my research. I am a musician and spend a lot of time composing electronic music in my studio, which I brought with me from the UK. I have played a couple of gigs at nightclubs and have also done some DJing at cafes and bars. Whenever I have the opportunity I also love to get out and see more of Japan. I feel that there is so much to see in this wonderful country, and relatively speaking, so little time for me to do it all. Actually, recently I have taken up a new hobby; I have embarked on a quest to find the best *ramen* shop in the Kanto district! Although, I may have to start doing more exercise to counteract the deleterious calorific consequences associated with this pastime.

Before coming to Japan, what kind of image did you have of the country? Has your perception changed after coming here?

Yes, my image of Japan has changed since I got here. Before I arrived my only images of Japan came from tourist guides or movies. When you say "Tokyo" to a westerner, they tend to think of big buildings and neon lights. Of course, this isn't an accurate portrayal of life in Tokyo. I live and work in Setagaya-ku, which feels more like a suburb. It is a very peaceful place to work and live—not at all like the hectic scenes

from Shibuya or Shinjuku for which Tokyo is renowned.

What advice would you give someone about to begin a JSPS fellowship?

If you are about to begin a fellowship my advice would be: try to dispel your preconceptions of Japan before you arrive

and be ready to experience a rich culture and stimulating work environment in an amazing country! You may miss your friends and family at first, but the people you will meet here are very friendly, kind and always willing to help if you have a problem.

Interview by JSPS Fellows Plaza



With lab colleagues

Introducing Japan: Tokyo

JSPS fellow Dr. Kieran Lee has favored us with an article on his impressions of the neighborhood where he lives in Tokyo.

Pick up any tourist guide about Japan, turn to the section describing Tokyo and you will most probably see pictures of downtown Shinjuku, archetypal images of Japan's most affluent metropolis. Densely packed with both people and skyscrapers, come nightfall each building burns with neon while sense-assaulting video billboards proclaim their messages to the masses. It is a powerful image. But is it truly representative of Tokyo?

What makes Tokyo fascinating is the juxtaposition of colossal scale and meticulous detail. It is not uncommon to see archaic noodle shops with shoji-screen doors selling their wares from the shadows of a modernist architects dream of steel and glass.

Tokyo has 23 wards, or "ku's" each with their own personality. Jump aboard one of the exquisitely timed trains then step off into another city. I live in Setagaya-ku, a sprawling suburban district southwest of Shinjuku. Life here is a sharp contrast to that observed on postcards of Tokyo. Here people are free to experience Japanese culture at their own pace.



Growing vegetables in Tokyo



The best sushi in Setagaya-ku

Abundant parks and tree-lined avenues minimise the feelings of confinement people often experience when living in a big city. Near my apartment people grow their own vegetables, a sight that I found both surprising and also enchanting.

I am by no means a connoisseur; however, in my humble opinion the best sushi in Tokyo is available at Midorizushi in Umeagaoka. That is, if you can endure the long queues whilst catching the occasional glimpse of the gastronomic delights from within when the doors slide open and a customer leaves.

For people with a penchant for kitsch, or an interest in the counterculture styling of the Tokyo new-wave bohemia, a visit to Shimokitazawa should be top of

your list. A super-trendy area in Setagaya-ku, Shimokitazawa offers everything from bars, cafes, second-hand clothes and antiques all from aged shops in labyrinthine streets.

Tokyo is a city with many facets and, if you know where to look, a wealth of culture is waiting to be found amongst its hidden depths. I found a lot more here than I imagined existed. I feel an affinity to the people of Setagaya-ku who have managed to fashion a life of peace and harmony with nature whilst living 20 minutes away from the unflinching beat of the heart of Tokyo.



Shopping in Shimokitazawa

Pictures taken by Dr. Lee



JSPS Fellows Plaza Website

JSPS Fellows Plaza is continually in the process of updating its website, which provides information for present, past and prospective JSPS fellows. Please give us a visit at:

<http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-plaza/>

You'll find pages on "How to Apply," "Experiences and Messages from JSPS Fellows," "Program Guidelines," "e-Orientation," and "Find Nearby Fellows." The site also carries current and back copies of our newsletter "JSPS Quarterly" and the booklet *Life in Japan for Foreign Researchers*.

If you have any opinions or impressions you wish to share regarding our website, please contact us at the JSPS Fellows Plaza.

— JSPS Fellows Plaza





Cover photo:

Cherry blossoms in full bloom with still snow-adorn Mt. Fuji soaring 3,776 meters in the background.

About JSPS

The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) was established as an independent administrative institution to perform the following main functions: fund scientific research, foster researchers, and promote international scientific exchange.



Crowing Rooster, Emblem of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

From days of old in Japan, it has been the belief that the vigorous cry of the rooster in the gray of the morning augurs the coming of a new and bright day. As the crowing rooster can therefore be thought of as a harbinger of the kind of new knowledge that promises a brilliant future for humankind, it was chosen as the emblem of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. This emblem was designed in 1938 by Professor Sanzo Wada of Tokyo Fine Arts School to depict the rooster that symbolizes the breaking dawn in a verse composed by Emperor Showa.



Request for Reader Comments

We are taking a survey with an eye to reflecting reader interests in the *JSPS Quarterly*. If you have an opinion of our newsletters, we would like to hear from you. We would also like to know your impressions of the JSPS Fellows Plaza webpage. Please e-mail your comments to the JSPS Fellows Plaza at

fellowspiazza@jps.go.jp

or fax them to us at

+81-3-3263-1854.

For further information on JSPS's organization and programs, please visit our website [www.jps.go.jp/english/], or mail or fax inquiries to JSPS Fellows Plaza using the address or fax number given below. JSPS Quarterly and our brochure may also be downloaded.

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