

Message by Program Committee Chair

**— At the end of the screening process under World Premier International
Research Center (WPI) Initiative —**

September 12, 2007

Superb research advances are often born from many researchers vying with each other in friendly competition. Accordingly, building research centers that assemble top researchers from around the world is considered imperative to securing Japan's future science and technology advancement. It was based on this perception that the program, the "World Premier International Research Center (WPI) Initiative," was established. Over the two days of August 30th and 31st, a hearing panel was held under the auspices of the Program Committee, and selected the first five center projects to be funded under the WPI Initiative.

Altogether, 33 applications had been submitted by Japanese universities and research institutions. All were highly motivated and very attractive, making the screening process an extremely difficult task. A mail review was carried out by 155 document reviewers, of whom 46 were overseas experts. The following panel review committee comprised 15 members of whom 6 were from overseas. As a result of the panel's intense and in-depth deliberations, I can take pride in saying that five very highly promising projects were selected.

The World Premier International Research Center Initiative is a highly ambitious program, which seeks to build within Japan "highly visible" research centers that boast outstanding research levels and environments. As such, they should be able to attract and assemble a cadre of the world's best frontline researchers in their respective fields. Given the geographical and linguist barriers intrinsic to Japan, building these centers will not be an easy task. Nevertheless, the members of this Committee are convinced of the necessity to create such centers if science and technology are to be further advanced in Japan. To this end, the Committee, working in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), will monitor the progress to be made each year in the selected center projects and provide follow-up support to ensure that each ultimately becomes a true "globally visible" research center.

All of the five selected projects are very promising, as they are in fields in which Japan already excels globally. Each has also assembled a robust cadre of excellent researchers. I have very high confidence in the new centers—that they will steadfastly develop their programs toward the goal of becoming radiantly visible.

As for the proposed centers that were not selected this time around, it is my hope that they will enhance their concepts and strategies, and each continues its effort to build an outstanding research center.

Finally, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all of the document reviewers, who took valuable time out of their busy schedules to cooperate with our Committee. Our deepest respect goes to the members of the review panel, who allowed themselves to be sequestered for two full days to conduct the final selection process. Especially warm thanks goes to the members who came all the way from the US, Europe and Asia to participate in the panel.

I look forward with great confidence to this program spurring a dramatic leap forward in advancing science and technology in Japan.

Hiroo Imura
Chair

World Premier International Research Center (WPI) Initiative Program Committee