



# JAPAN SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF SCIENCE

科学振興会 日本学術振興会

## Message from New JSPS President

The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) was established with an imperial endowment in 1932. It is now Japan's sole independent funding agency with a mission of advancing science, which it undertakes through a wide spectrum of programs. These include funding scientific research, fostering talented researchers, promoting science-related international exchange, and supporting the reform and globalization of universities. Overall, JSPS provides stable and sustainable support for the activities of researchers.

### Science as a force for pioneering the future

Scientific research spearheads the cultivation of new frontiers of human knowledge. Systems of knowledge created through research across a variety of scientific fields are valuable assets of human culture. While this knowledge must be passed down to future generations, doing so poses new challenges. Emerging from the relentless pursuit of scientific research have been new technologies that contribute to the improvement of human welfare and to the solution to global issues, coupled with new concepts that work to enhance society. This history of scientific pursuit has taught us the importance of "knowledge circulation." Knowledge generated through scientific research advanced upon researchers' own free ideas is the wellspring of innovation and the driving force behind future national and societal development.

In Japan, Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (KAKENHI) support research in all fields of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. A rigorous procedure of screening is used in this program to select and support highly creative and path-breaking research driven by the researchers' own free ideas. Currently, an extensive reform of the KAKENHI system is being carried out in pursuit of identifying research themes that will excel within a competitive research environment. Under the reformed system, applicants are given a wider field of vision (more leeway and options) within which to position their research, while reviewers make selections from wider angles and points of view. In the KAKENHI program, researchers are both the applicants and reviewers; the system is both made up of and supported by all of Japan's researchers. While inviting and listening to the voices of researchers on the ground, JSPS is working to further improve and strengthen the KAKENHI program.

### Comprehensive support for challenges undertaken by each researcher

Curiosity-driven research also provides a platform for fostering talented researchers who will shoulder scientific advancement across a wide range of research fields including those responding to societal needs and others based on government policy strategy. Despite the importance of this platform, the basic operating budgets of universities in Japan are being continually decreased amidst a stringent national fiscal situation over recent years. This is having a striking effect on employment in education and research posts, which are suffering significant cutbacks.



Young researchers especially are being caused to wander from short-term post to post, only being able to find employment through such means as project funding. As there are many fields that do not lend themselves to short-term posts, a serious situation has arisen in which the next generation of young people who would aspire to become researchers are now hesitating.

As the path to fostering aspiring researchers has become increasingly opaque, I feel a strong sense of impending crisis in the light of my career at the university. Against this backdrop, JSPS provides "Research Fellowships for Young Scientists," which cover all fields across the spectrum of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Through this and other programs, JSPS provides comprehensive support to researchers who challenge the creation of new knowledge, while advancing initiatives designed to form a creative environment in which excellent young researchers can give ample expression to their abilities and concepts.

### Strengthening international research networks and advancing researcher circulation

Globalization accompanying rapid advances in IT and other technologies is exerting a forceful impact on scientific research. While increasing opportunities for researchers to play active roles in both Japan and overseas, this trend is also causing intensive international competition in search of superlative knowledge and personnel. Amidst this shift, for Japanese researchers to play a leading role in advancing scientific research on a global level, they will need to insert themselves within global research networks and compete with others in an atmosphere of friendly rivalry amidst the international circulation of the world's finest brains. This sort of international engagement will elevate the global visibility of Japan's researchers and research institutions while attracting excellent researchers to Japan from around the world. It will also accrue to strengthening international research networks that generate superlative knowledge. Creating this kind of good research and knowledge circulation will be critical to Japan's future. JSPS is working to advance this mission through a variety of programs that operate in cooperation with the funding agencies and researcher communities of countries around the world.

World-leading scientific research derives from the flow of free ideas by individual researchers in ways that hurdle existing partitions and from the undaunted challenge of things thought impossible to realize. Knowledge generated through scientific research is the crystallization of the relentless effort exerted by researchers. As JSPS strives to provide comprehensive support for researchers who boldly take on challenges that spur the pioneering of knowledge across the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, I ask for your greatly appreciated understanding and support.

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Susumu Satomi, Ph.D.

