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Kobe University Newsletter "Kaze"

Vol. 11

October 2021

SPOTLIGHT

Kobe University: A Global Knowledge Base
that will Invigorate Future Society

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Students strive for Carbon Neutral University

EDUCATION

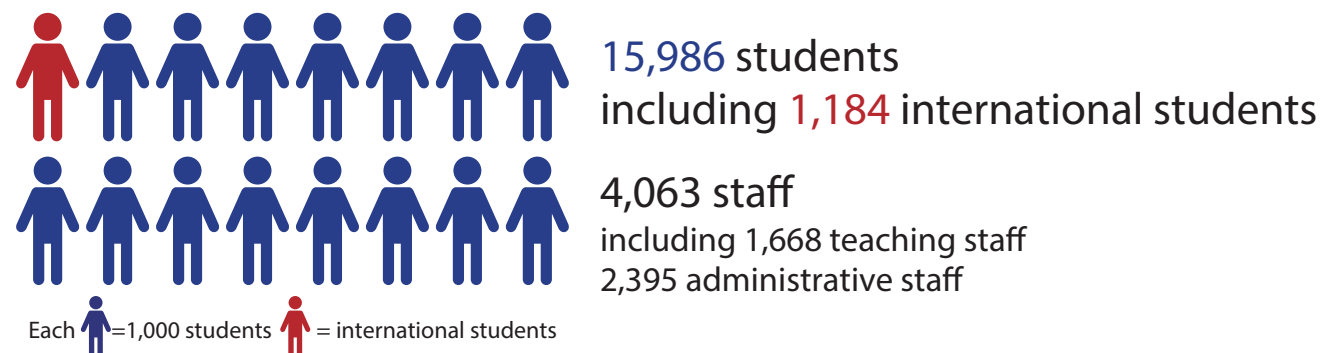
Expand your Horizons:
English-taught Degree Programs at the
Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies

Kobe University

As we get ready to celebrate Kobe University's 120th anniversary next year, here are some quick facts and figures about one of Japan's leading comprehensive universities:

Founded in **1902** (oldest school of commerce in the Kansai Area) **5** Registered Tangible Cultural Properties

10 Faculties, **15** Graduate Schools, **10** Libraries & **27** Research Centers spread across **7** Campuses

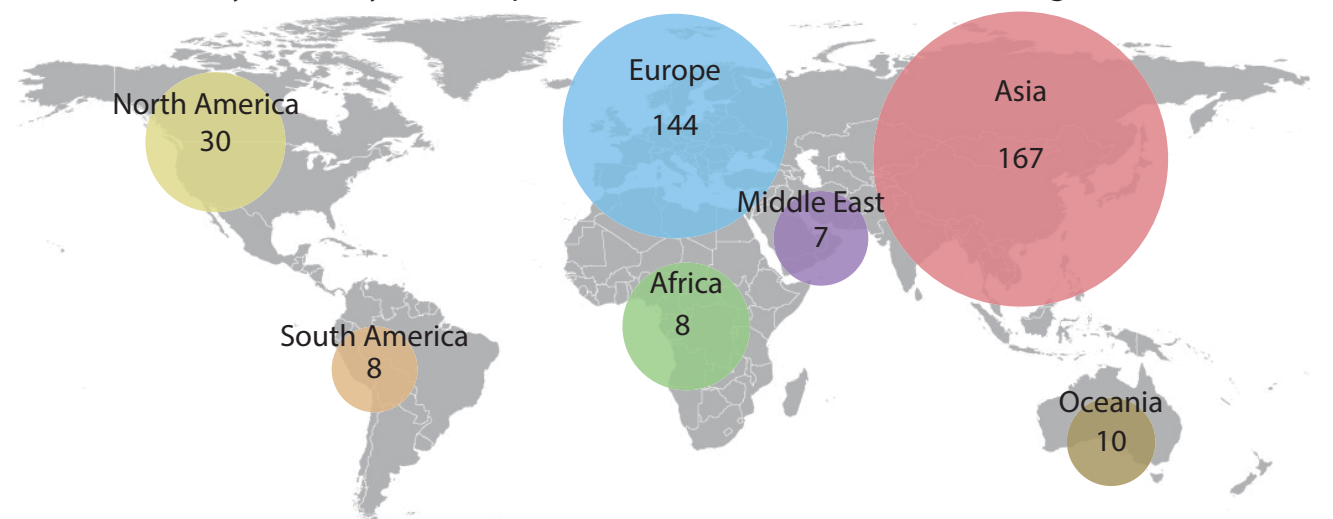


Faculties and Graduate Schools (by academic field)

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Letters / Humanities | • Economics | • System Informatics |
| • Global Human Sciences | • Business Administration | • Agriculture/Agricultural Science |
| • Intercultural Studies | • Science | • Oceanology/Maritime Sciences |
| • Human Development & Environment | • Medicine | • International Cooperation Studies |
| • Law | • Health Sciences | • Science, Technology and Innovation |
| | • Engineering | |

Partner Universities

Kobe University currently has 374 partner institutions in 64 countries/regions.



All data as of May 1, 2021

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Cover photo for Kobe University Magazine "Kaze" Issue 11: The Main Building on Rokko-dai 1st Campus.

Why "Kaze"?

There are two main concepts behind the title "Kaze", meaning "wind". Firstly, Kobe University's goal to innovate, creating a wind of change. Secondly, our location at the foot of Mt Rokkō, an area known for the invigorating wind of Rokkō-oroshi that blows down from the mountain range. The calligraphy on the cover of "Kaze" was created by Professor Emeritus UOZUMI Kazuaki, a researcher of calligraphy at Kobe University.

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(International Affairs Planning Division)

神戸大学



Kobe University:

A Global Knowledge Base that will Invigorate Future Society

–‘Co-creation’ and ‘Collaboration’ are key–



On April 1 2021, Professor FUJISAWA Masato was appointed president of Kobe University for the next 4 years. Formerly the dean of the Graduate School of Medicine, President Fujisawa is known in Japan for his pioneering work in robot-assisted surgery for prostate cancer and kidney cancer. In addition to collaborating on numerous joint research projects, he was also involved in the development of a surgical robot made in Japan and performed the first surgery in the world that used it. We asked President Fujisawa about the responsibilities of his new position and the future image that Kobe University is aiming for.

Towards an internationally outstanding center for education and research

My specialization is urology in Graduate School of Medicine. Even though I wished that I could have contributed to the development of the graduate school and advanced medical care for a little longer as the dean of the Graduate School of Medicine, I was determined to devote myself to Kobe University as a whole should I have the opportunity to become president. Kobe University is my alma mater and I have an especially strong attachment to and pride in the university. I will utilize my background in research and education, as well as my experiences as director of Kobe University Hospital and dean of the Graduate School of Medicine to firmly take the lead as president in managing university operations, while considering both the university's heritage and opportunities for innovation.

Kobe University is a comprehensive university consisting of 10 faculties and 15 graduate schools. The coexistence and mutual cooperation between the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, life and biomedical sciences has given rise to a rich environment for education and research. I believe that it is our duty as a university to contribute to society by utilizing and applying our continuously renowned education and research resources, conducting fundamental scientific research to seek the truth through intellectual activity and creativity, and propagating

innovation through applied scientific joint research with local society, in addition to fostering human resources through our outstanding education.

To achieve this, we will keep an eye out for opportunities for collaboration and co-creation with other universities, investors, industries and government bodies, revolutionize creativity in research, education and business, and attract top-level researchers from around the world. Through these efforts, Kobe University will become a world-class co-creation hub for outstanding research and education.

Collaborating on research and education projects through multidisciplinary co-creation

Upon becoming president I drew up a new long-term version for Kobe University, which is to advance and develop the university as a 'global hub for the multidisciplinary co-creation of research and education.'

Drawing upon the existing strengths and distinctive characteristics of the university's various fields of research and education, we will develop Kobe University into a hub for the multidisciplinary co-creation of research and education that is capable of promoting high level collaborations and joint projects.

We will also tackle new challenges cultivating the new knowledge and invaluable human resources necessary to resolve current and future societal issues. This will enable Kobe University to meet the needs of a post-pandemic, knowledge-based digital society with a rapidly aging population.

As for research, Kobe University will become an eminent research hub by being open to joint ventures with industries, government bodies and other universities, and of course collaborations within the university. We also aim to resolve the global issues specified in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by cultivating the knowledge and innovation required to excel in cutting-edge research and returning the fruits of these efforts to society. In addition, we will establish a resilient innovation ecosystem. This will strengthen our ability to adapt to the diverse, complex and fluid structure of post-corona society and shifts in academic direction, improve our resilience by flexibly drawing upon our persistent, continued successes, and bolster our research strengths.

Furthermore, we will take measures to provide career support and a welcoming research environment for young researchers and women researchers in order to cultivate human resources who will contribute towards research and education. In particular, we will strengthen the systems that enable outstanding students and young researchers to increase their career potential on-campus, and those that provide financial support to PhD. students and young researchers.

Education that meets the demands of globalization and digitalization

In our education, we place great importance upon fostering the diversity, internationality, excellence and adaptability that are necessary to thrive in a new sustainable society. Kobe University will maximize its knowledge resources using AI, IoT, big data analysis and fundamental information technology, producing graduates who are able to create new values and implement them into society. To this aim, Kobe University shall defy the boundaries between academic fields, collaborate with society, and promote practical learning, value creation, entrepreneurial and data science education that incorporates the knowledge, skills and techniques required for industry-government-academia co-creation.

In addition, vital aspects for improving our global outlook include strengthening our support for international education and our study abroad environment, as well as developing international exchange and joint education with prestigious universities overseas.

To foster outstanding innovators who can play an active role in digital society, we will fully realize our concept of a 'global & inclusive campus'. This involves combining a safe study environment (not only for international students but for students of all ages and backgrounds including disabled and working students) with high-quality programmes and AI/data science education.

Profile:

FUJISAWA Masato,
Kobe University President



Born in Hyogo Prefecture, President Fujisawa graduated from Kobe University Graduate School of Medicine. In 2005, he became a professor at the Graduate School, subsequently going on to be director of Kobe University Hospital and an executive assistant to the university president. In 2019, he was appointed dean of the Graduate School of Medicine.

Robot-assisted surgery on prostate cancer was the first of its kind to be approved in Japan. Following on from this success, President Fujisawa also played a leading role in getting robot-assisted surgery for removing a portion of kidney cancer to be covered by health insurance in April 2016.

As Japan's leader in this field, Professor Fujisawa has a forward-thinking outlook. He is constantly striving to educate the next generation and to make robot-assisted surgery more widespread.

He co-developed the first Japanese-made surgical robot 'hinotori™' with the Kobe-based Mediaroid Corporation, which was approved for medical use in August 2020 (see page 6).

Establishing an innovation ecosystem by creating the 'knowledge', talented 'human resources' and outstanding 'environment' required for value creation

Kobe University endeavours to offer a diverse and inclusive environment in which every single member can fully contribute their respective strengths in research, education and administration. My ideal is the creation of an open university with an environment that is welcoming and comfortable for everyone.

As for initiatives for a post-corona oriented educational environment, I would like to aim towards becoming a university that transcends the boundaries of time and space to achieve harmony between real and virtual spaces. We will achieve this by establishing the infrastructure for next generation ICT education and revolutionizing digital education; including remote learning through online classes for on-campus, working and overseas students, and blended learning styles such as the 'flipped classroom' that incorporate e-learning.

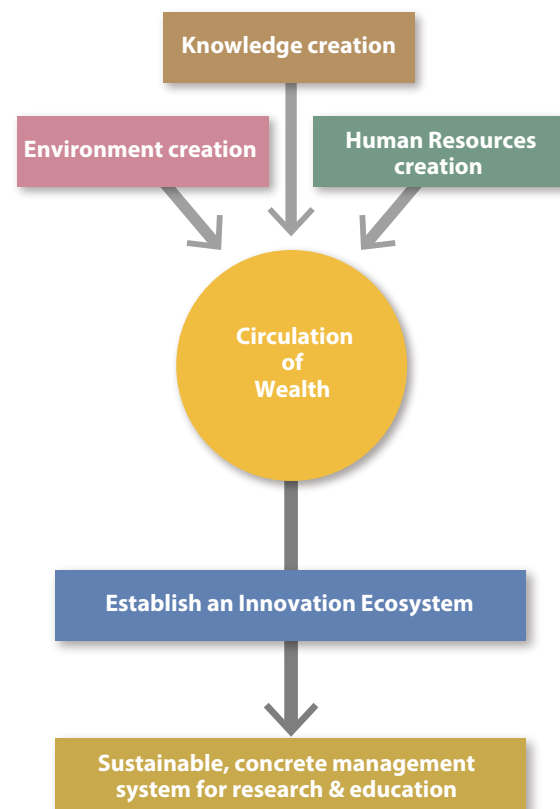
Bolstering Kobe University's prestige by contributing towards international society

In order to promote this kind of research and education, it is vital to create a pipeline through which rich research and education can flow organically, facilitating multilateral collaborations between Kobe University and its surroundings, including Kobe City, Hyogo Prefecture, the Kansai region and local industries. We will continue to make efforts towards establishing a 'Kobe platform for industry-government-academia collaborations in research and education', and promote outstanding research and education projects centred on multidisciplinary co-creation. In addition, I would like to bolster Kobe University's prestige and increase its contributions to global society by realizing the 3 pillars of development; cultivating the 'knowledge', efficient 'human resources' and outstanding 'environment' necessary for value creation and its implementation.



Kobe University is an institution that gives every student opportunities for self-development and to realize their aims and dreams. I would like for all young researchers and students to have a dream, passion and a little greed. A small amount of greed can be considered a positive thing. I would like our students turn this greed into the energy, so that when they are at a loss, they can keep moving forward without missing opportunities and triumph over adversity. I think students should challenge themselves and not impose limits on their own success. I hope that all the outstanding students admitted to Kobe University will push themselves to see how far they can go. I would like them to keep walking down their own path while receiving optimum support from the university.

Next year in 2022, Kobe University will celebrate the 120th anniversary of its establishment. Mirroring the slogan of 'knowledge, people, co-creation and cooperation', all of our staff will pool their strength in order to bring about creative improvements and invigorate Kobe University's core image as a global knowledge hub that will enliven the bright societies of the future. In a changing society affected by the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic, Kobe University will become a regional center aiding local revitalization, while doing our utmost to transmit information throughout Japan and the world in order to benefit global society.



Kobe University co-develops the first Japan-made surgical robot 'hinotori™'

World-first! -Verification testing for remote surgery-



On December 14 2020, the inaugural surgery was successfully performed using the first Japanese-made surgical robot 'hinotori™'. The radical prostatectomy took place at Kobe University Hospital's International Clinical Cancer Research Center (ICCRC). The surgeons were President FUJISAWA Masato (who at the time was the Dean of the School and Graduate School of Medicine, and a professor of urology) and Project Associate Professor HINATA Nobuyuki.

Hinotori™ was developed through a collaboration between Kobe University and Medcaroid Corporation. It was approved for medical use in August 2020.

In the cockpit, which is situated away from the robotic arms, the surgeon can view clear 3D footage of the surgical site while operating the arms. This enables more detailed surgery to be performed than was previously possible.

In the field of robotic-assisted surgery the American-made Da Vinci Surgical System is well-known, with over 6000 units currently in operation worldwide. Although there is little difference in their basic functions, one merit of hinotori™ is that there is a greater degree of freedom to move the arms, making it easy to maintain the space during surgery. Currently, systems are being developed that use AI analysis to visualize surgical movements; these include a training system that allows young doctors to learn from operations performed by experienced surgeons and a remote system for assisted surgery that uses 5G (fifth generation cellular networks). Kobe University has established a verification testing facility, the Precision and Tele Surgery Center, in the ICCRC. This facility is carrying out the world's first verification testing for the remote operation of a surgical robot (hinotori™) using a proprietary 5G network.

From Kobe to the World: Photoimmunotherapy for Cancer

Trilateral collaboration between Kobe City, Rakuten Medical Japan, and Kobe University



On February 10th 2021, Kobe University's Graduate School of Medicine signed a collaborative agreement for the research and development of new cancer treatments with Kobe City and Rakuten Medical Japan Inc.

At Kobe Biomedical Innovation Cluster, various initiatives related to photoimmunotherapy are being conducted. These include research into developing ways to apply this therapy to a wider range of cancers, as well as surgical training for the doctors who carry out this treatment.

Photoimmunotherapy was developed by KOBAYASHI Hisataka, a senior investigator at America's National Cancer Institute (NCI). It is a minimally invasive therapy where a specialized agent (Akalux) that binds to cancer cells is administered and then a laser is used to target and destroy the cancer cells. Kobe University has already started using this method to treat patients with head and neck cancers. Next, they will conduct research into the application of this therapy to the field of urology, including prostate and bladder cancers, while contributing towards photoimmunotherapy-related education and the technique's widespread adoption.

President Fujisawa hopes that photoimmunotherapy will spread from Kobe to the world: "First of all, we will use this therapy to advance head and neck cancer treatment and then focus on cancers affecting other areas of the body. We have several ideas as to how we can apply photoimmunotherapy to urological cancers."

Striving for Diversity & an Inclusive University

Kobe University Gender Equality Office- promoting a diverse research environment

Kobe University Diversity Statement (summary)

● Kobe University will create an environment for study, education, research and work where each person is treated with respect and can express her/his/their individuality and talents regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, background, age, educational background, physical or mental characteristics and/or other affiliation and/or identity.

● Through the promotion of this kind of diversity, we aim to create new knowledge.

For more information, please see the Kobe University Gender Equality Office website:
<https://www.office.kobe-u.ac.jp/opge-kyodo-sankaku/en/index.html>



HASHINO Tomoko

(Professor, Graduate School of Economics)

Professor Hashino graduated from the Department of International and Cultural Studies at Tsuda University in 1990. She then went on to study economics at International Christian University's Graduate School and quantitative economic history at Hitotsubashi University. She subsequently decided to become a researcher, receiving a PhD. in economics from Hitotsubashi University. She worked as a Research Associate at Tokyo Metropolitan University and as a Lecturer at Komazawa University before joining Kobe University's Graduate School of Economics in 2004 as an Associate Professor, becoming a full professor in 2013. Professor Hashino specializes in the Economic History and Economic Development of Modern Japan. Bridging development economics and economic history, she aims to develop a comparative history of weaving districts in Japan.

Her work has been published in numerous journals including Economic History Review, Australian Economic History Review, Business History Review and Journal of the Japanese and International Economies.

What is diversity?

Professor Alexander: I think that in Japan, 'diversity' is commonly used to refer to equality between women and men and sometimes in the context of respecting individuality. However the true definition is much broader and, with regard to gender, it includes not only men and women but all sexualities and genders. I believe that respecting and accepting diversity brings us one step closer towards becoming an inclusive society.

Professor Hashino: As Professor Alexander said, this is exactly the goal that we must aim to achieve. The university should focus on what it can do now to gradually work towards reaching this destination.

In February 2020, I was dispatched to Lumière University Lyon 2 in France as part of my work to promote diversity at Kobe University. At the time, it was the leading university for gender studies and diversity-related research. I really felt how different it was to Japan; first-year students learn about gender history in their required courses, and HR committees aim to consist of a 50:50 ratio of men and women. The aspect that most surprised me was the toilets. In the building where I worked, there was only one toilet on each floor and this could be used by either men or women. This may pose difficulties regarding building security but at that time, Kobe University had not yet considered the idea.

I got the impression that the faculty at the university in France were proud of this education and research. Furthermore, it left a deep impression on me when the Vice President said that this gender and diversity-related education and research was not special consideration but obvious one. I gained a fresh perspective from observing these pioneering aspects at the French university with my own eyes.

"At Kobe University, I would like for everyone to continue to value themselves as individuals while acquiring the magnanimity to understand other people."

Professor Alexander: Compared to Lyon and other universities abroad, there are still very few women professors at Kobe University. Although some of the Executive Advisors to the President are women (including me), the Executive Vice Presidents and Vice Presidents are all men. Universities cultivate society's leaders and they also enable young people to follow their dreams. Therefore, it is important for there to be people with diverse qualities and characteristics on campus, and that the staff and faculty are passionate about their work. In particular, I think that good role models are necessary to inspire women to become leaders. With this in mind, Kobe University published its Diversity Statement in 2018.

Vision for an Inclusive Campus

Professor Alexander: We are currently striving towards the 'Vision for an Inclusive Campus' in order to improve Kobe University's diversity and inclusion. We are working out what facilities would be good to have and what role the university should play in order to create a campus where everyone can fully engage in their educational activities, research or work.

For example, as Professor Hashino mentioned earlier, this includes gender neutral toilets, facilities that wheelchair users can access easily, and figuring out how to create a comfortable environment for people with diverse religions. It would be wonderful if we could become not only a highly diverse university, but an inclusive one that can serve as a leading example for society.

Professor Hashino: In my classes, I am often telling my students that 'There are many kinds of people, each with their own individual backgrounds and histories.' Especially in the case of Kobe University students, there are many who go on to climb the corporate ladder and end up holding high-up positions. I would like these people in particular to study history and understand diversity. It would be good if we had classes for first-year students and above where students could learn and think about diversity, similar to those offered at Lyon. This would provide an important foundation for students regardless of their major.

What individuals can do

Professor Alexander: Respecting and accepting others is important, however it is not easy. Sometimes there are misunderstandings and opposition. How can we overcome these issues? I think that having mutual discussions is important. People's thoughts and feelings vary widely even on a single topic. People do not need to like each other's opinions nor do they have to agree. It is merely necessary to understand each other's different points of view. This is not something we can leave to someone else; to be meaningful, it is something that everyone needs to do.

Professor Hashino: I agree with Professor Alexander. In addition, it is necessary to value yourself first of all. Even though you may be different from others in many ways, you are one part of the world, and if you improve then the world will surely improve slightly as well. It is important to understand the differences of others while making use of your own experiences at the same time. This will enable you to relate to the other person's feelings if you come across someone who is having difficulties. It is important for people to work together to find solutions. At Kobe University, I would like for everyone to continue to value themselves as individuals while acquiring the magnanimity to understand other people.



Ronni Alexander

(Executive Advisor to the President for Diversity/Director, Kobe University Gender Equality Office, Professor, Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies)

Professor Alexander came to Japan in 1977 after graduating from Yale University (BA: Psychology), and began working in Hiroshima. She subsequently graduated from International Christian University with an MA in public administration and obtained a PhD. in international relations from Sophia University. She came to Kobe University in 1989, first as a research associate and then an associate professor in the Faculty of Law. She became a professor in the Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies (cross-appointed in the Faculty of Law) in 1993. She specializes in Peace Studies (focusing on gender, militarization, narrative and art). Her work includes peace research, education and activism relating to the overall theme of finding how all living things can be and feel safe, and live in peace. Her publications include numerous scholarly articles as well as picture books related to peace.

Students strive for Carbon Neutral University

Kobe University students develop carbon neutral proposal & establish student-led Environmental Council

In a world where sustainable society-focused measures are being promoted in many places, Kobe University students have been making efforts of their own. A group of undergraduate and graduate students, enrolled in Kobe University's joint law and economy programme, devised a series of necessary steps for a carbon neutral university and submitted them in the form of a proposal. Kobe University subsequently adopted this proposal, which has resulted in students, faculty and staff members collaborating on activities aimed at reducing carbon emissions, as well as the establishment of a new organization called the 'Environmental Council' in April 2021 to serve as a discussion space. Law major SUGITOMO Yu (Faculty of Law) is one of the students who developed the proposal that led to the establishment of the 'Environmental Council'. We asked him about the efforts to realize a carbon neutral university.



SUGITOMO Yu
Environmental Council Member
(4 year majoring in Law at the Faculty of Law)

How was the 'Environmental Council' established?

Kobe University offers Econo-Legal Studies (ELS), which is an interdisciplinary program. In the classes, students from the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Economics utilize their respective knowledge and perspectives to analyze contemporary social issues. Last year, there was a class on 'The quest for a carbon neutral society', which I took. It was given by a visiting lecturer who was an expert from the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), which is a specialized SDGs-related research institute. We were taught specialized knowledge regarding environmental issues with a focus on climate change.

However, this class did not end with the students simply learning about the topic; it gave us a goal that inspired our subsequent actions. Four of us who took the class; MONDEN Shogo (Faculty of Economics), MORIYAMA Masatoshi (Graduate School of Economics), ICHIMURA Maki (Graduate School of Law) and I, decided to submit a proposal to Kobe University. Together we compiled the 'Proposal to promote carbon reduction at Kobe University' and submitted it on February 22, 2021, which led to the establishment of the Environmental Council.

What are the contents of the proposal?

To compile the proposal, we reflected on the activities that Kobe University conducts based on the Environmental Reports that they release every year and identified problems with them. Firstly, there are no mid- to long-term goals for reducing carbon emissions. Secondly, the structure of the PDCA cycle-based system for achieving goals was

inadequate. We submitted a three-point proposal to overcome these issues.

The 1st point is to 'Become the first comprehensive university in Japan with a carbon neutral statement'. In order to make a statement focussed on the future realization of a carbon neutral university, we set a similar short term goal to the Japanese government, which is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 46% of 2013's emissions before 2030, and decided upon a plan of action to achieve this aim. The 2nd point is 'The creation of an Environmental Council that university stakeholders, including students, can participate in' and the 3rd is 'The enhancement of practical research and educational programmes on the theme of carbon neutrality'.

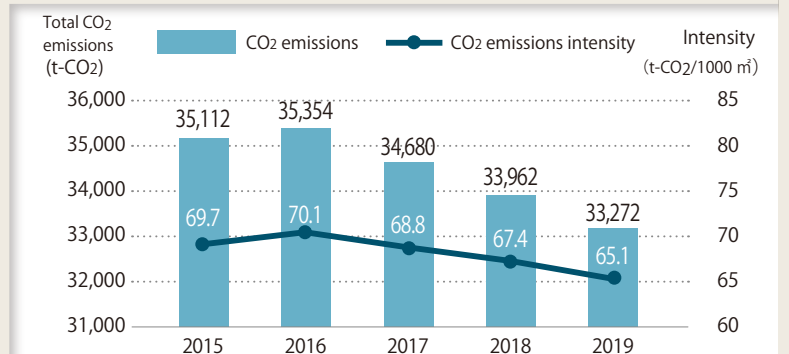
What is the role of the Environmental Council?

It provides a space for us to discuss methods of working towards becoming carbon neutral. By including students among the council members, discussion results from the different viewpoints of students and staff and I think this enables us to formulate a highly effective roadmap.

Recently, such efforts have been promoted even in Japan. In Europe there are citizens' assemblies on climate change, whereby



Kobe University's Environmental Performance (based on the 2020 Environmental Report)



Kobe University has been decreasing its CO₂ emissions year by year. Now, we are establishing mid- to long-term goals and measures towards a carbon neutral university.



Above: Opinion exchange on SDGs with AIESEC's Kobe University Committee
Below: Mr. Sugitomo handing the proposal to Professor Kita Takashi (right).

citizens are selected at random to join meetings where they discuss matters such as energy usage and carbon neutral initiatives with support from experts. A similar kind of event took place in Sapporo City on Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido at the end of last year. A 20 person citizens' meeting was held online with support from Hokkaido University. It would be good if the Environmental Council could become the Kobe University version of this.

What has been the response from the University side?

We received a forward-looking response from Vice President KITA Takashi (the director of the SDGs Promotion Office) and this enabled us to set up the Environmental Council. As the council was established fairly recently in April, we have only just started our regular activities. Thanks to the support that we received from the SDGs Promotion Office, we have been able to have opinion exchanges regarding SDGs with the Kobe University Committee of the student NPO organization AIESEC and members of Osaka City University. In addition, we also had the opportunity to participate in the panel discussion of Kobe University's online 'SDG Forum' event, which Vice President Kita invited us to.

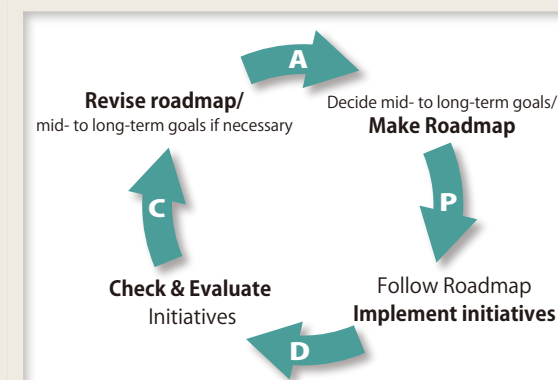
Tell us about your future activities.

I think that low energy initiatives make up a large portion of the university's internal efforts. However, it is difficult to reduce the amount of energy used by medical and research facilities in a comprehensive university. I would like to submit a new proposal for this by looking at existing examples, such as

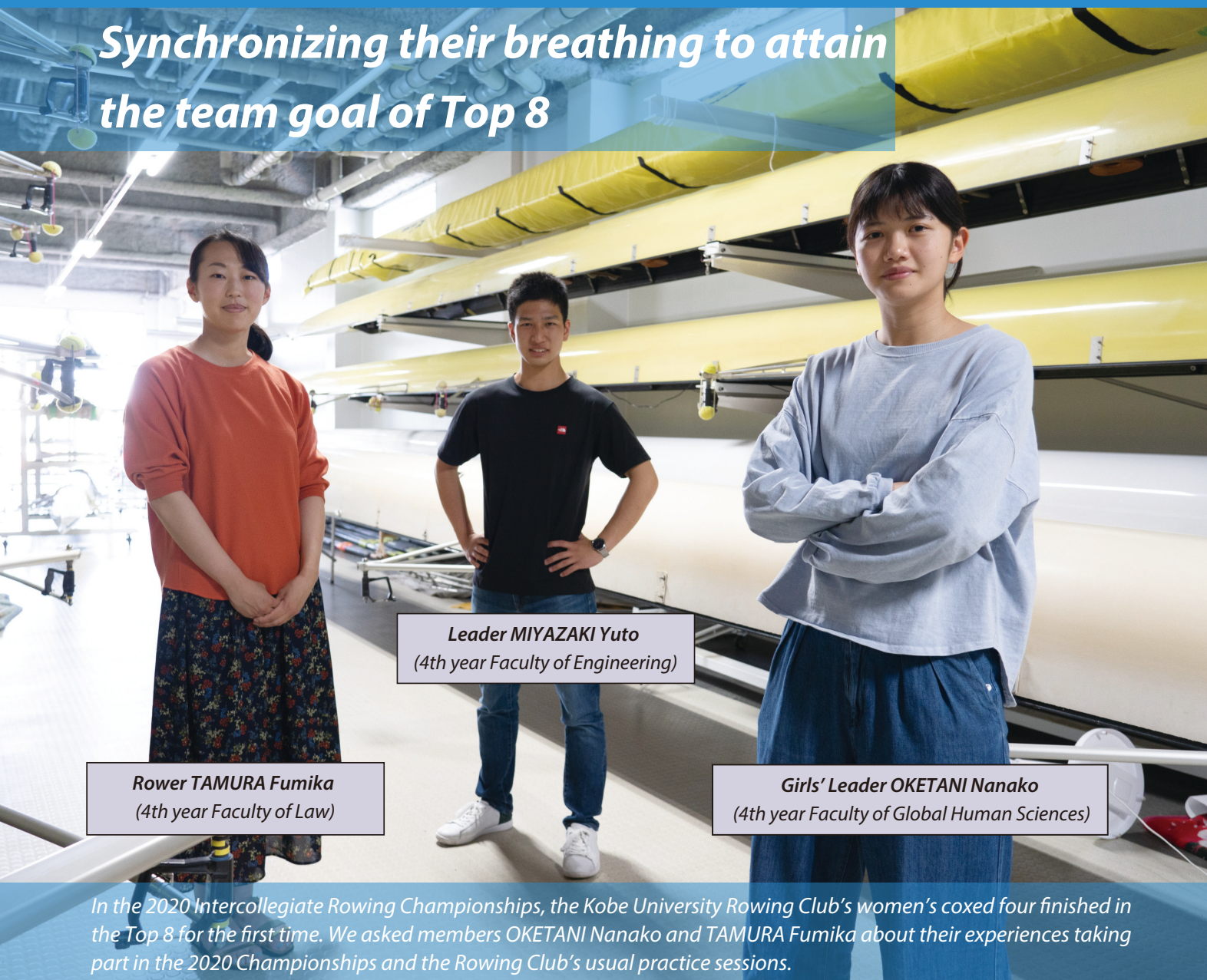
hospitals that are working towards using only renewable energy sources. This may seem like an ambitious plan, but to work towards carbon neutrality it is necessary to earnestly tackle issues on a large scale.

In the short-term, I would like to create a space for discussion at least 4 to 5 times a year in order to inspire individuals to work towards carbon neutrality. We are also planning to give guest lectures at nearby junior high and high schools, which will help us to achieve a carbon neutral Kobe University and make waves in the local community. Before I was a second year university student, I had no interest in problems facing the environment. However as I learned more about this topic, I realized that it is vital for young people to use their strength to tackle environmental issues. I hope that the Environmental Council can change young people's minds about these issues.

The Environmental Council's PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) Cycle



Synchronizing their breathing to attain the team goal of Top 8



Rower TAMURA Fumika
(4th year Faculty of Law)

Leader MIYAZAKI Yuto
(4th year Faculty of Engineering)

Girls' Leader OKETANI Nanako
(4th year Faculty of Global Human Sciences)

In the 2020 Intercollegiate Rowing Championships, the Kobe University Rowing Club's women's coxed four finished in the Top 8 for the first time. We asked members OKETANI Nanako and TAMURA Fumika about their experiences taking part in the 2020 Championships and the Rowing Club's usual practice sessions.

Competitive Rowing

What kind of competitions are there?

Oketani: First of all, there are four categories based on the number of rowers (1, 2, 4 and 8). Competition classes are also divided depending on the number of oars- in sculling, each rower has two oars, whereas in sweep rowing each rower only has one oar.

Tamura: In addition to the number of rowers, competition classes are divided as to whether or not there is a coxswain, the member who sits in the boat facing the bow. It has been said that when rowing at top speed, it feels like you are going over 100 kilometers per hour. In the 2020 Intercollegiate, we ranked in the Top 8 in the coxed four sweep boat class (a coxswain, and four rowers with one oar each).

What kind of training do you do?

Tamura: We practise 5 times in both the morning and the evening, for a total of 10 times a week. The length of time we train varies depending on what we are practising but we usually spend about 2 hours rowing the boat on water and around 1 hour and a half doing on-land training.

Oketani: Our manager takes video of us rowing so after training we have a meeting and look at the footage.

Tamura: Rowing is a sport that requires a lot of perception. When rowing the boat, each member perceives things differently. However, we cannot move forward unless everyone synchronizes their movements. I think that in order to row the boat even faster, it is necessary for the whole team to make an effort to unify their perceptions. Therefore, we value the meetings where we can ask each other questions like 'I feel like we should do this at that point, what does everyone else think?' and compare and adjust our opinions.

Oketani: The place where we train has lodgings so before the coronavirus pandemic we would stay overnight and train. Now, we commute from our homes to the training facilities as part of the measures against infection.

What have your club activities been like during the coronavirus pandemic?

Tamura: We still train 10 times a week and when we can't use the boat, we find other things to practice.

Oketani: For about 3 months from April last year, we couldn't go to the training facilities. During that time, I maintained my physical strength by doing core training at home and going running around the neighbourhood. Also, we had frequent online meetings so that all club members could communicate with each other.

The Intercollegiate Championship

What were you conscious of during the training for the 2020 Intercollegiate?

Oketani: We recommenced regular training using the boat in August 2020 but with the Intercollegiate Championships being in October, we really had to push ourselves during this short training period. I was very anxious about all the things we hadn't been able to do during socially distanced training.

Tamura: Only one of the members of the 2020 Intercollegiate team had experience competing in a four, so I was anxious as to whether we could manage to reach the finish line. However, we can only move forward if the four of us synchronize our breathing, so we were conscious of that while training.

How did you feel when you ranked in the Top 8?

Tamura: The race that placed us in the Top 8 was to decide which teams would come in 6th to 9th. We had been in last place for the whole race right up until 200 meters before the finish line. With a last spurt of energy, we increased our speed to finish in the Top 8 by 0.4 seconds. As the race was so close I didn't realise that we had done it until I saw how happy those around me were.

What enabled you to win?

Oketani: This was the last race for one of our members before they graduated. We wanted to win the race for her and rowed our hardest even in the last 200 meters of the race. I think it is important to have the mentality of never giving up right until the very end.

Tamura: There is a big difference between 8th and 9th place. If we finished in 8th place we would get an award and become one of the Top 8. Therefore we were able to continue rowing without giving up because we really wanted to get that position.

Future Aims

What are your future goals?

Oketani: Our goal is to finish in the Top 6 in the four event in mid-September's intercollegiate.

Finally, do you have anything you would like to say to the readers of this article?

Tamura: At first I was unsure about whether to join the rowing club because I didn't want to do something tough or tiring. However, making a decision and taking that first step can transform people. So I would like to tell everyone who is hesitating about doing something to make the decision and then channel all your effort into it.

Oketani: There is a free atmosphere at university where you can try taking on all kinds of challenges. I chose to do so through this club but I think there are many other ways that you can challenge yourself at university. I would like everyone to broaden their interests and find something they want to do.



Interviewer NAKAO Marina
of the Student PR Team
(3rd year Faculty of Law)



Seeta Baral

PhD. student,
Graduate School of Health Sciences



What were you doing before you came to Kobe University?

Right after completing my undergraduate studies, I started working in a hospital in Nepal. A year later I came to Japan with my family and spent some time learning about Japanese culture and lifestyle. I travelled many places in Japan and tried so many Japanese foods. I was using this time to experience new things in life. Around this time I started to look into universities' postgraduate programs and decided that I wanted to continue my education in Japan. Fortunately, I was accepted by Kobe University.

Why did you decide to come to Kobe/Japan?

I was looking for a country which is comfortable and safe, and Japan is known as one of the safest countries in the world so that aspect attracted me the most. After travelling in Japan, I decided that Kobe city was best for me as I prefer clean, uncrowded places. I found Kobe University while I was searching for universities in Kobe that offer graduate programs in English. I decided to apply due to its good reputation and beautiful surroundings.

What kind of research are you doing at Kobe University?

Malnutrition is one of the biggest global issues, especially in lower and middle income countries. I was also curious about the effect of disasters on malnutrition. When a disaster occurs, children are highly vulnerable, so I was interested in finding association between disasters and malnutrition. I conducted research on the effects of disasters (floods) on malnutrition in children in rural areas of Nepal. Lately, I am researching about the effectiveness of nutritional packages in improving feeding practices and minimizing the occurrence of malnutrition.

What surprised you when you first came to Japan?

First of all the cleanliness surprised me when I first came here, as well as the sophisticated technology that makes everything easier. Also people's kindness, punctuality and sincerity, which are on the next level here. The excellent service provided everywhere in Japan always surprises me.

What are your future goals and dreams?

I would like to conduct further research related to malnutrition. After graduation I will return to my home country and utilize the knowledge I learnt here to help make decisions in favour of malnourished and malnutrition-prone children. I am looking forward to working on projects that are helping developing countries to improve their health sectors.



On a field trip to rural Nepal for her research.



As a food lover, Seeta's hobby is cooking and perfecting recipes- check out the photo below! She also loves travelling to peaceful places where she can appreciate the beauty of nature.



Hometown: Katari, Nepal



Sitting in the lap of the Himalayas, Katari in Nepal's north-eastern Udayapur district is known as the gateway to Mt. Everest. It is surrounded by beautiful scenery and abundant nature. The city also serves as a transit point for goods from India to Nepal's mountainous regions.

Approximately 1,200 international students from countries around the world are currently studying at Kobe University. In this corner, our international students introduce their native countries and offer some insights on studying abroad in Japan.

Mariya Byvakina

PhD. student,
Graduate School of Law



What were you doing before you came to Kobe University?

I started studying Japanese when I was 12, and I liked it so much that I ended up doing a degree in Asian studies at the Novosibirsk State University. After that I worked for a couple of years as a Japanese-Russian translator/interpreter as well as a Japanese language teacher.

Why did you decide to come to Kobe/Japan?

I wanted to continue my education and study more about international relations in Northeast Asia. Since my major was Japanese language and Japanese history, I decided to go to Japan for my master's and applied for the MEXT scholarship.

What kind of research are you doing at Kobe University?

I am researching Russia's foreign policy towards Japan in 2010s. I am mostly interested in the narratives Russia creates around its relations with Japan and the ways said narratives are used for the legitimization of the existing political regime. In Russian foreign policy the Japanese direction doesn't play such a big role as policy towards the USA, China or even the European Union. However, since Japan is one of the global economic and cultural leaders, all high-level meetings with its leaders can be used by Russian government through all the media it controls as 'prestige boosters', because prestige and international recognition are as important for Russia as security. So in my research I mostly look at how major events in Russia-Japan relations are represented in Russian media, how the narratives directed to the domestic audience differ from those directed to the international one, and how all the above mentioned corresponds with the real policy.

What surprised you when you first came to Japan?

Well, that was so long ago I don't really remember. I was 14, and I was participating in an exchange program with Iyo, Ehime prefecture. It was my first time abroad, so I guess everything was surprising. The green of the trees was incredibly vivid; the smells were unfamiliar (Japan smells mostly of incense, laundry detergent and an empty train car if you ask me); even buying drinks from a vending machine was exciting (we didn't have those in Russia back then). I have taken many study and work related trips to Japan since then, so when I finally came here to study at Kobe University, Japan felt familiar and even a little bit like home. Or at least that's what I thought until my first encounter with a wild boar. I guess this is the most surprising thing about Kobe – the sheer amount of wildlife you can see on the city streets, especially in the Rokko area. Even though I spent half of my childhood camping in the mountains with my parents, the biggest animal I ever saw in the wild back in Siberia was a ground squirrel.

What are your future goals and dreams?

My biggest goal and dream is to finish my PhD, graduate and find a job in academia or in an NGO.



Mariya enjoys travelling, visiting historical sites and going to art exhibitions. Although she is busy working towards her PhD, right now, she also likes reading books that are not related to her studies when she has time.

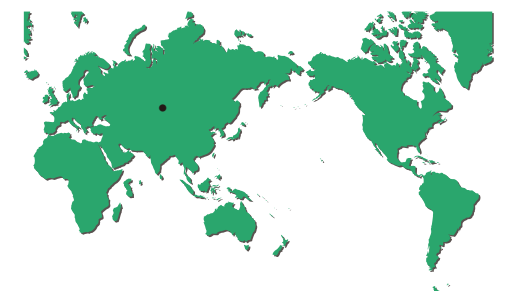


Left: Hiking in the Altai Mountains, south central Siberia.



Right: Mariya with Kusama Yayoi's pumpkin on Naoshima Art Island.

Hometown: Novosibirsk, Russia



Novosibirsk is the third biggest city in Russia and the most populous one in Siberia. This industrial city is located halfway along the Trans-Siberian Railway, right where it crosses the great river Ob. Despite what people usually tend to think when they hear "Siberia", the summers there are hot and can reach 30-35°C.

Expand your Horizons:

English-taught Degree Programs at the Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies

The world is facing a range of transnational issues, including poverty, armed conflicts, global warming, and the spread of infectious diseases. The Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies (GSICS) aims to contribute towards the development of the international community by cultivating highly motivated and well-rounded students equipped with the tools to deal with these issues. New approaches to international cooperation are necessary to adapt to an ever-changing world, and GSICS' versatile, multidisciplinary curriculum reflects this. Students specialize in one of the following methodologies while acquiring wide-ranging knowledge of the other fields: Economics, Laws, Political Science, International Relations, Educational Development, International Health, and Disaster Risk Management. In addition to mastering basic methodologies and conducting research, students are encouraged to take a practical and applied approach to international issues.

In an effort to better meet the requirements of a changing world and to make their unique multidisciplinary environment accessible to as many students as possible, GSICS offers courses and full programs in English at both Master's and Doctoral levels. The school has a truly global atmosphere with international students making up around 50% of those currently enrolled, the majority of whom come from developing countries. This makes for an enriching learning environment that broadens students' minds and contributes to their understanding of diverse cultures and ways of thinking.

The range of courses available in English at the Master's level includes subjects such as Human Capital Development, Polar law, Japanese Politics, Medical Anthropology, and International Pandemic Policy (for a full, up-to-date list, please see the GSICS website). Successful graduates of the Master's Program in English will obtain one of the following degrees: Master of International Studies, Master of Economics, Master of Laws, or Master of Political Science.

The doctoral program in English aims to cultivate talented individuals who can carry out highly specialized research in an autonomous and independent manner, and by so doing, make significant contributions to the international community. Students receive guidance from their academic supervisor as well as instruction in advanced research techniques. Those who pass the final examination and have their thesis approved will be granted one of the following qualifications: Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy in Economics, Doctor of Laws, or Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

GSICS also offers various internships and training opportunities with governmental and international organizations, including OECD, UNICEF, UNESCO, and World Bank. This enables students to experience first-hand how government policies are implemented locally and internationally in developing countries and learn situational methods of interviewing and data collection. Graduates often go on to work in many different fields and countries, using the invaluable skills and varied experience they have acquired at GSICS to contribute towards international cooperation and development.

More about GSICS:

GSICS website:

<http://www.gsics.kobe-u.ac.jp/index.html>

GSICS 2021 Brochure:

http://www.gsics.kobe-u.ac.jp/en/files/GSICS_brochure_en.pdf



Students gaining valuable fieldwork experience in Cambodia (top & bottom) and Uganda (middle)