

Personal Message as a member of the President Council

We live in a time of a rapidly globalizing and changing world. As the key players in nurturing the future leaders of the global community, many leading universities are urgently attempting significant and difficult reforms, in order to meet, indeed to anticipate and surpass the increasingly challenging needs of our global society. Various reports concerning the ranking lists of universities have become extremely popular with students and their families, as they seek the best opportunities to achieve their highest educational and career aspirations. Various stakeholders of society are looking hard for the best available talents. The internet and other means of modern communication, as well as the public relations strategies of universities, have all become crucial tools for their global target audience to evaluate each college and university for services that include faculty, student activities, vibrant dynamic course contents and potential future career opportunities. Yes, the time has come for future leaders to choose the best opportunities available to them. Universities now compete to capture the best and the brightest beyond national boundaries, so that the institution can become recognized as a top university of the world; the institution where global leaders, be it business, politics, education, research, social entrepreneurs, will be more likely to come from.

The University of Tokyo has long been considered the best in Japan and it is expected to become one of the leaders of all the world's universities. Its reputation and position in the global ranking has been quite high reflecting in part, the history of Japan and excellent government support. However, in the new global world, its evaluation seems to be slipping down, not because of quality or quantity of courses, but rather due to an insular system and a lack of openness, particularly, in the undergraduate college, where future leaders of a variety of social sectors will be nurtured. In the paradigm of an information revolution that has made our world 'flat' as per Thomas Friedman, key elements of creative, innovative and strong leadership must be harnessed through heterogeneity and diversity. The undergraduate years are a great opportunity to build a multi-layered human network throughout the world and a significant portion of courses should be given in English in order to create an added value for students to use in their further studies and in their careers in the global marketplace. Such courses conducted in English would also facilitate the attraction and employment of international faculty members of the highest quality, another key element of any leading university.

I am privileged to serve the President Council with its unique membership that so well reflects the intention of President Komiyama. I sincerely hope, as other members do, that the University of Tokyo will continue to strive hard to become widely recognized, by its global peers, as a leading university of the world in the age of globalization. Systematic reform of universities does not have the luxury of time, as the global competition will become harder and harder and the University of Tokyo, as its history reflects, has to play a leadership role to other universities of Japan, consistent with being a leading economy of the world.

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