

Establishing an “Unparalleled Hub of Knowledge” by Refining Hokkaido University’s Strengths

【Resolution】

1. Reflections on the Past Five Years and Determination for Reappointment

Since my inauguration as President of Hokkaido University on October 1, 2020, I have devoted myself wholeheartedly to the rebuilding of the university following the dismissal of the previous president. From the very first day to the present, we have faced many challenges, but I believe we have made substantial progress on many fronts.

Through this five-year experience, I have come to deeply understand the immense responsibility that comes with leading one of Japan’s largest national universities. My decision to run for reappointment was therefore accompanied by a much heavier sense of deliberation and resolve than five years ago.

After thorough consideration, I have decided to seek reappointment for the next four years. Without doubt, the years ahead will be even more difficult. Nevertheless, I believe that managing a core comprehensive university, one that plays a key role in Japan’s future and stands as the only such institution in Hokkaido, is a task worthy of that responsibility.

2. Our University Vision and Path to Realization

The growth of an organization as large as Hokkaido University requires strong and forward-looking leadership, as well as the consistent application of unwavering management principles and strategies.

To this end, we formulated a mid-to-long-term plan, “HU VISION 2030,” which defines our purpose as the “realization of a sustainable well-being society.” The vision presented is the “Novel Japan University Model.”

This vision places “Excellence” in education and research on the vertical axis and “Extension,” in other words, the university’s ability to engage with global and local society, on the horizontal axis. This creates a framework for sustainable growth through a positive feedback loop. Rather than modeling after American universities, we have aimed to build a uniquely Japanese model of higher education, one that deepens collaboration with society including the public sector to generate social impact.

To realize this vision, we must provide researchers with an environment that enables them to focus on education and research, students with high-quality learning opportunities, and administrative staff with a workplace where they can find personal fulfillment and purpose. Central to this is strengthening the university’s financial foundation, which remains our most pressing challenge.

【Management Goals】

1. Education

(1) Entrance Examination and Undergraduate Reform

In response to the rapidly progressing decline in the youth population, we aim to become a university that attracts students from diverse backgrounds and talents. We are also considering the establishment of new faculties or departments to nurture global human resources equipped with advanced liberal arts education.

(2) Graduate School Reform

By consolidating graduate schools, we will promote interdisciplinary fusion and cultivate individuals with broad perspectives and practical societal implementation skills.

(3) Recruitment of Outstanding International Students

We will take advantage of the relaxation of admission quotas for international students to increase the intake of excellent students from abroad and further raise the proportion of international students.

2. Research

(1) Advancement of the Dual Research System

We will further refine our Dual Research System, which consists of “on-campus research” at the diverse and interdisciplinary Sapporo and Hakodate campuses, and “off-campus research” in Japan’s largest field research environment. Through this, and the J-PEAKS initiative, we aim to promote unique research that only Hokkaido University can achieve.

(2) Strengthening of World-Class and Young Emerging Research

In addition to our hallmark research areas such as ICReDD, IVReD, GX (Green Transformation), semiconductors, and Regenerative Agri-Fishery Science, we will utilize our Innovation Creation Organization to support new domains such as health sciences, interdisciplinary research, and fusion of humanities and sciences.

(3) Inter-University Collaboration

To further enhance interdisciplinary and convergent research, we will collaborate with other universities that have strengths in fields where we need reinforcement.

3. Human Resources and Finance

(1) Reform of Personnel and Compensation Management Systems

We will reform our personnel and salary systems to create an environment where faculty can concentrate on education and research, and administrative staff can work with pride and a sense of purpose.

(2) Strengthening of the Financial Foundation (FY2024–FY2029)

We aim to increase joint research funding from 3 billion yen to 5 billion yen. The investment fund will expand from 7 billion yen to 10.1 billion yen, and revenue from asset utilization (e.g., land) from 2.5 billion yen to 3.4 billion yen. As a result, we plan to raise total external funding from 31 billion yen to 41.2 billion yen.

We will work to build a stable financial structure to ensure that education and research are not hindered by external factors such as soaring prices, labor costs, and utility bills.

4. University Hospital Management

We view the redevelopment of our aging hospital as an opportunity for fundamental management reform. In collaboration with the hospital's executive team, we aim to achieve profitability and submit a feasible redevelopment plan to the Ministry of Education.

5. Toward Becoming a University for International Excellence in Research

Through (1) the creation of a fund formation plan based on strengthening our financial foundation, and (2) the enhancement of our uniquely strong Dual Research system, we will take a path that leverages Hokkaido University's distinctive qualities to fulfill the requirements for becoming a university of international research excellence.

【Current Assessment】

1. University Management and Organizational Reform

At the root of the challenges faced by national universities lies a delayed response in management and organizational reform following the corporatization of universities, despite significant expansion in finances and operations. At Hokkaido University, the financial scale has grown by a factor of 1.45 since corporatization. In particular, external funding has increased 4.5-fold, one of the highest growth rates among large universities. Comparing FY2019, before my inauguration, with FY2024, we see a 1.7-fold increase. The Frontier Fund also grew from 370 million yen to 2 billion yen (projected for 2025), marking a fivefold increase in five years. The university has significantly strengthened its external funding acquisition. Additionally, the activities of the Institute for the Advancement of Sustainability have become a major strength over the past five years. However, due to the impact of the previous president's dismissal, reforms in management systems to cope with this expanded financial scale have been insufficient.

2. Executive Structure

As the scope of university management rapidly expanded, the president's diplomatic and public-facing responsibilities increased. While this led to great successes in social collaboration and external funding acquisition, delays in strengthening the executive structure, including the establishment of a Chief Operating Officer system, left issues unresolved in the area of academic affairs reform.

3. Response to Societal Changes

In education, we have not adequately addressed major shifts in higher education, such as the sharp decline in the 18-year-old population and the resulting decrease in both the quantity and quality of applicants. Reforms to the admissions, undergraduate, and graduate school systems have been insufficient. In research, delays in creating an environment that secures sufficient research time and a lack of bold initiatives to promote interdisciplinary or emergent research also have posed significant issues.

4. Efficiency and Earning Power

Since corporatization, national universities have expanded their operations by offsetting the reduction in management subsidies with increased external funding. However, recent sharp rises in utility costs, personnel expenses, and electronic journal subscription fees have severely pressured education and research activities. To ensure that gains from societal outreach (Extension) translate into revenue that can be reinvested into new academic excellence (Excellence), it is imperative to improve both operational efficiency and earning power.

5. University Hospital Management

The financial condition of our hospital, which had long maintained a financial surplus, has recently deteriorated rapidly. This is due in part to structural issues in Japan's healthcare system, making it difficult to overcome the challenges through symptomatic measures alone. The situation is now having a serious impact on overall university management.

【Implementation Strategy】

1. Strengthening Governance

We will build a next-generation executive structure that combines speed and execution power. To fulfill the requirements for becoming a university of international research excellence, we will establish a “Management Policy Council” and introduce a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) system to strengthen our financial base.

2. Growth Strategy

To accelerate financial and governance reforms under HU VISION 2030, we will make full use of digital technologies and implement the following action plans:

- **First**, we will reform personnel and compensation management. By transforming the conventional vertically segmented work structure and promoting faculty–staff collaboration, we will streamline university operations and expenditures while creating an environment where faculty can focus more fully on education and research.
- **Second**, we will break away from a conventional break-even financial model. By maximizing opportunities presented by deregulation and leveraging the university’s strengths, we will expand self-generated revenue and strategically reinvest it into education and research. To this end, we will implement the following five initiatives:

① Strategic Development of Fund Operations

Secure capital for investments and implement diversified, long-term investment strategies.

② Establishment of the Hokkaido University-Style Industry-Academia Collaboration Model

Transition from conventional intellectual property monetization to a business model leveraging IP assets.

③ Creation of Endowment-Based Research Organizations

Establish mechanisms for research units funded by returns from donations.

④ Organization for Securing Large-Scale Government Grants

Strengthen a centrally led structure for grant acquisition and strategic proposals to government ministries.

⑤ Establishment of a Public Engagement Division

Launch a powerful and integrated division focused on “marketing” and enhancing the university’s revenue-generating capacity.

3. D-SQUARE

We will position D-SQUARE as a crucial hub for fostering the virtuous cycle between Excellence and Extension. It will serve as an innovation commons where students, faculty and staff, regional communities, and industry partners co-create. It will form one of the foundational platforms for the university’s future leap forward.

4. Reform of University Hospital Management

We will proceed with bold reforms aimed at transforming our hospital into a national model for university hospital management in the new era. This includes optimizing the number of hospital beds, strengthening cooperation with regional hospital corporations, and working in close consultation with both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

5. Upholding the University as a Public Good

Globally, even science and technology are facing increasing headwinds against globalization and diversity. Hokkaido University will stand firm in

the face of such trends, advocating for sound DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), academic freedom, and democracy.

6. As Vice President of the Japan Association of National Universities

National university corporations, including Hokkaido University, are now financially approaching a “breaking point.” I have been elected twice to the executive board of the Japan Association of National Universities and am in a position to contribute to policy formulation. I intend to fulfill this responsibility and contribute to resolving challenges faced not only by Hokkaido University but also by all national universities through the Association’s activities.

【Challenge】

The coming four years will be a critical period that will determine the future of our university. In pursuit of our vision, I will maintain transparent governance, engage in open dialogue with both internal and external stakeholders, and, with courage, continue to take on the challenges necessary to move forward. Together with our faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders, I will devote myself fully to fulfilling the responsibilities of the presidency to realize Hokkaido University’s rise—from Hokkaido to the world—as a truly core comprehensive university.