



Laboratory Update

Enhancing Interpersonal Relations through State-of-the-art Communications Technology

Interview

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Round-Table Discussion

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Topics

- International Exchange Agreement Forged with Helwan University in Egypt
- International Researchers to Focus on Neo-Fiber Technology and Textile Science
- KIT Donates Custom Devices for the Dual-Sensory Disabled



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Enhancing Interpersonal Relations through State-of-the-art Communications Technology

WAKASUGI, Koichiro

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Department of Information Science
Graduate School of Science and Technology
Director, Center for Information Science

The Center for Information Science, where I serve as Director, was founded in 1967. Since its beginnings, the center has been administered as a computer-focused entity engaged in widely varied information processing initiatives. The role of the center has kept pace with the remarkable advances in performance of computers and the spread of the Internet and the campus LAN. Today, in keeping with our core task of managing KITnet, our campus information infrastructure, we are continuing to develop the university-wide intelligence infrastructure.

The campus LAN was first developed around 1990 as a "grassroots network." In 1995, we named it KITnet. Since that time, we have been increasing the network speed by upgrading the system every few years. The campus LAN has now been established as a multi-campus-wide network that incorporates Saga Campus. This network has proved essential to KIT's research activities.

As a professor of the Department of Information Science, I am also engaged in research on information and communications. My research focus is "*space-time coding to support broadband wireless communications*"; this technology makes broadband communication possible even in a poor communication environment. In addition, I am engaged in research on "ad hoc networks," a wireless communications technology that enables terminals to autonomously form a network without a base station. In other words, a plurality of terminals can convey data in the manner of a bucket brigade. I have conducted research on this project jointly with a new business venture.

Because my research projects involve such topical themes as communications and networks, I find one or two international students in my master's program every year. A number of international students also attend my regular lectures at the undergraduate level, and I enjoy having the opportunity to communicate with them on a daily basis. When teaching, the key issue I must keep in mind is that their Japanese language skills vary. While



some students can reach a high level of Japanese ability within a short time, others have slight problems with conversational Japanese even through they are about to graduate from the master's program, still others have difficulties writing their master's theses in Japanese; such differences pose difficulties for me as a teacher. In spite of this, however, all students have been able to find employment with reliable companies after graduation and are playing vital roles in society; leaving no doubt that they have acquired the necessary professional skills.

International students are highly motivated and their attitudes certainly stimulate Japanese students. Moreover, outside the realm of academia, Japanese students clearly undergo growth when they encounter the culture gaps that can exist when interacting with students from South Korea and Vietnam, countries that have widely adopted a Confucian philosophy. From this perspective, it is clear that we also benefit from the presence of international students.

Again, outside of academia, international students in turn have contact with Japanese culture in Kyoto and come to understand cultural differences. I look forward to building on the good relationships I have developed with my international students.

In gratitude, I look back on a frantic 25 years and remain committed to promoting true globalization.

YOSHII, Tsutomu

Director, International Affairs

At the age of 35, while working as a Senior Administrative Assistant of welfare, I found myself entrusted with the responsibility of finding accommodations for international students. I set out to call upon local boardinghouses and negotiate with landlords, but I encountered an unexpected problem: many simply refused to accept such students. I was shocked to experience this level of prejudice and discrimination against international students. From this experience, I became deeply involved in the work of representing international students and in the effort to understand different cultures.

The following year, I became Chief Officer in charge of students; at the same time, I was assigned to look after international students. In those days, the number of international students in our university was increasing in response to the national goal of accepting 100,000 international students. The more I became involved, the greater became my awareness of the issues. I faced a mountain of tasks and I was overwhelmed by the volume of work. I therefore submitted a budget request to create the position of Chief Officer in charge of international students. Fortunately, this request was accepted and I became the first Chief Officer in charge of international students in KIT. We uncovered one problem after another and tackled them with absolute concentration and with an ardent desire to help international students in some way. Every single endeavor started from scratch. Consequently, I served as Chief Officer for a surprising term of ten years, even though our system usually reassigns personnel to other sections every two or three years.

Medical care was another issue that became as serious as the accommodation issue. In those days, international students were not eligible for National Health Insurance, and in many cases they were unable to pay the high medical costs typical of Japan; therefore, I would visit medical institutions in the neighborhood to seek out doctors who were willing to be flexible about providing medical care at lower costs. Eventually, international students became eligible for National Health Insurance and were actually required to obtain insurance. In order to reduce the burden of premium payments, members of the municipal assembly and I approached Kyoto City and requested that they subsidize this cost. I was very pleased that, as a result, our request was granted.

When I became Chief Officer in charge of international students, I soon became fully aware of the inadequacy of my language skills. At the same time, I developed a sense of crisis concerning the Japanese system for ac-

cepting international students; our system was far behind that of Western countries. Accordingly, I made up my mind to become conversant in English

by secretly attending an English language school on weekday evenings and on holidays. I then applied for a Fulbright scholarship and, fortunately, passed the screening. At the age of 40, I took up studies in the United States for a short period. In a country across the sea, I observed the actual conditions under which international students were accepted, and I expressed my own views at a workshop held by the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs. Clearly, studying abroad provided me with experiences that I would not have traded for anything. After returning to Japan, I shared what I had learned of the situation in the U.S., an advanced nation in its acceptance of international students. Moreover, I made every effort to introduce a Teaching Assistant System, in which students assist teachers. I am grateful for my experience in the Fulbright program and, through the mass media and the Japan Network for International Education — the former Japan Association for Foreign Student Affairs (JAFSA) — I was given opportunities in which I could express my opinions at forums and in publications.

After this valuable learning experience, I was transferred to Kyoto University and then Kyoto University of Education. Simultaneously with the incorporation of the national universities, I returned to KIT and was appointed Director of International Affairs. The staff here have enabled me to deal with such pending issues, as the conclusion of agreements with overseas universities, establishment of a network among former international students, and the establishment of follow-up work. I would therefore like to express my heartfelt thanks to the staff of International Affairs and others concerned. In addition, I am delighted that international students whom I once looked after are now playing important roles in their native countries and are forming a global network. This spring, I will reach retirement age; but I hope to continue to be of use in the globalization of KIT. I will eagerly cooperate to the best of my ability. In the interest of true globalization, I wish all our students, former students and supporters much success in their endeavors.



The Mission of the KIT International Communication Organization is to provide opportunities for enjoyable student interaction.

Lively student events are changing the atmosphere of our campus.

▶ Participants in the Round-Table Discussion ◀

HASHIMOTO, Reina

Part-time Researcher, Venture Laboratory
Former Tutor at KIT International House (Marikouji Kaikan)

SHIMABUKURO, Satoshi

Sophomore, Master's Program of Mechanical and System Engineering
International Student Tutor

ZHANG, Hui

Sophomore, Master's Program of Mechanical and System Engineering
Chairman of the Chinese International Students Association

KIT International Communication Organization (KITICO)

Initially KITICO was formed for students and alumni as a part of the KIT International Exchange Center. It was established to promote greater openness in international communication events at KIT and to better meet the needs of students. Through a variety of events, KITICO aims to encourage socializing between Japanese students and international students and to create a university-wide cosmopolitan atmosphere. Active membership includes interested international students, Japanese students interested in international exchange and volunteers who assist international students, such as tutors and students who have studied abroad. A total of eight preparatory meetings have been held since June 2007. The organization began operation on October 1 of the same year.



Background to the KITICO

Hashimoto: As a KIT doctoral student, I was eager to take advantage of the chance to meet students from all over the world and learn about their backgrounds and experiences. I observed that interpersonal relationships on campus seemed voluntarily segregated; the Japanese students socialized with Japanese students, while the international students tended to hang out with each



▲ HASHIMOTO, Reina

other. I felt they were missing a valuable chance to learn about each other's values and ways of looking at the world. My hopes for increased interaction between these groups were realized with the first KITICO preparatory meeting in June of last year. I was pleased to be involved with the organization from its start and to attend the events.

Shimabukuro: Because I have always enjoyed speaking with the people of the countries I visited, I looked forward to socializing with international students at KIT. For some reason, however, this didn't happen. Time passed but I only knew the names and faces of the international stu-

dents on campus and lacked opportunities for easy and meaningful interaction. I have enjoyed my activities as a member of KITICO. Although it may appear that I am giving my time to this group, I feel I am receiving much more.

Zhang: Since entering KIT six years ago, I have tended to socialize only with my Chinese friends. I did want to socialize with Japanese students as well as international students who come from countries other than China. As chair of the Chinese International Students Association, naturally, I wanted to take part in KITICO. I am now working to provide the kinds of activities that I myself would have wanted when I first entered the university.

Stirring Up Enthusiasm with a Variety of Events

Hashimoto: KITICO's first big event was the Freshman Orientation Camp in October of last year. About 20 international students and more than a dozen Japanese tutors participated while lodged at the KIT Kyotango campus. In this event, everyone took on the challenge of sausage making, which proved to be a memorable occasion. By engaging in this group task, we were able to open up to each other in a short time.

Shimabukuro: When I performed aikido, a Japanese martial art, and gave a demonstration to the international students in the boardinghouse, I was happy that they were amused and showed a lot of interest. After that, four



▲ Freshman Orientation Camp (October 6 & 7, 2007)

This two-day camp for international students who entered university in October was held at KIT's Kyotango campus. Japanese tutors also participated, and the students socialized through group activities such as sausage making and signature stamp carving. The orientation also included information on disaster response and crime prevention for international students who were about to start new lives in Japan.



students joined my aikido circle. Opportunities to get to know other Japanese students have increased for international students through these circle activities. Aikido presented a good opportunity for breaking through the barriers of shyness and language difference to increase student familiarity with Japan.

Zhang: By participating in the orientation, I enjoyed the opportunity to communicate with international students from other countries as well as Japanese tutors. It was fun to make sausage while everyone was jabbering away.

Shimabukuro: I was surprised to see more than 50 students gathered at the KITICO Cup held in November. As we were about to play futsal, we picked players for the teams randomly, so everybody played together as a team regardless of nationality. It turned out to be a very competitive game.



▲ SHIMABUKURO, Satoshi

Hashimoto: We baked sweet potatoes that had been harvested from the KIT farm and served them to participants. They were a little dry and tended to stick in our throats, so they don't make a very suitable snack after sports. (*Laughs.*) It was interesting that some international students weren't familiar with sweet potatoes, so they became quite curious. At the year-end Mochi Rice-pounding and World Food Fair events held at the end of last year, the international students brought along their own national foods and desserts, and the tables were decorated for an international atmosphere.

Shimabukuro: Although we Japanese students were in charge of the mochi rice-pounding, few of us had had any experience pounding mochi, so we pretended that our way was "the Japanese way" (*laughs*), and we went at it with enthusiasm. We also made Japanese soba noodles.

Zhang: The Chinese team made steamed dumplings.



▲ ZHANG, Hui



▲ KITICO Cup (November 11, 2007)

International students and Japanese students alike enjoyed playing futsal, badminton, and table tennis at the KIT gymnasium. Sweet potatoes harvested at the KIT farm were baked and served to participants. The handmade KITICO Cup — a special mug — was presented to the champion futsal team.



This was not the first time we did so, as the Chinese International Students Association serves steamed dumplings from a booth at the annual school festival. It's ironic that I had to come to Japan to become a proficient steamed dumpling chef! (*Laughs.*)

Accomplishments and Future Prospects

Hashimoto: When I see international students and Japanese students happily chatting and walking together on campus, I am glad we have been able to make difference. At this past year's KITICO activities, I realized that we share most effectively with each other when communicating through various types of group efforts. Our worldview expands when we socialize with people of diverse backgrounds. It makes us proud to realize that our alma mater nurtures the ability to look at things from various perspectives in students. In the future, we should work to further improve on past KITICO events.

Shimabukuro: Since I started working as a member of KITICO, my international student friends on campus call out to me daily whenever our paths cross. My college life has completely changed for the better. I think it is important to begin to cultivate successors to insure the continuation of this program once the members of the foundation have graduated.

Zhang: By nature, I'm not the type to actively call out to people, but participating in KITICO activities has enabled me to socialize with non-Chinese international students as well as Japanese students. The number of people I call friends has increased, and my daily life has been enriched.



▲ Year-end Mochi Rice-pounding Gathering and World Food Fair (December 26, 2007)

A customary *mochitsuki* (rice-pounding) gathering was held at "Ars," the KIT cafeteria, with a year-end theme. *Mochitsuki* is a year-end tradition in Japan, and both international and Japanese students boldly took on the challenge to pound out a batch of tasty *mochi*, a sticky rice treat. More than 100 visitors enjoyed an abundant variety of delicacies made by international students from China, Italy, South Korea, Vietnam, Russia, the Philippines, and France. This gathering successfully enabled students of all nationalities to become better acquainted.



International Exchange Agreement Forged with Helwan University in Egypt

On January 23, 2008, we concluded a General Agreement for Academic Cooperation and entered into a Memorandum on Academic Faculty Exchange with Helwan University in Egypt (photo opposite page). The signing ceremony took place at Helwan University with the attendance of Dr. Abdallah Barakat, the President of Helwan University, and the deans of the faculties of that university. KIT was represented at the ceremony by President Yoshimichi EJIMA and Vice President Shigeru KUNUGI, who participated in a seminar held at Helwan University. KIT is seeking to engage in joint research and development with the university in the area of new fiber materials with reduced environmental impact, an important field for a country with abundant natural resources such as Egypt.

Prior to the conclusion of the agreement, in October 2007, President Ejima spoke with H. E. Dr. Hany Helal, Egypt's Minister of Higher Education (photo left). Moreover, in cooperation with the Embassy of Egypt in Japan, KIT hosted an "Egypt Day" to highlight Egyptian culture. Productive academic exchange with Egypt is already under way.

International Researchers to Focus on Neo-Fiber Technology and Textile Science

As part of the series on the Establishment of Collaboration Research for "Neo-Fiber Technology" in Asia and Africa, which was endorsed by the Asia and Africa Science Platform Program of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), the first seminar was held at KIT (photo opposite page) on October 24 and 25, 2007. A second seminar was held at Helwan University in Egypt (photo left) from January 21 to 25, 2008. The seminars were headed by KIT's Center for Fiber and Textile Science and are intended to promote joint research with universities from participating nations and to strengthen inter-university cooperation. Researchers from China, South Korea, Vietnam, Egypt, and Japan exchanged ideas and opinions about trends and future development of the joint research initiated in April 2007. Their goals are to reduce the environmental impact of the fiber and textile industry and to develop fiber with high added value and new features.

KIT Donates Custom Devices for the Dual-Sensory Disabled

KIT presented a timer, an alarm clock, and a set of bathroom scales — all specially designed for persons with visual and aural disabilities — to Associate Professor Satoshi FUKUSHIMA of the University of Tokyo's Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology.

As part of the celebration to commemorate KIT Foundation Day in May 2007, Associate Professor Fukushima gave a special lecture entitled "Universal Communication: What does it mean that we laugh and cry together?" (photo opposite page). In his talk, Associate Professor Fukushima expressed disappointment that several appliances — such as alarm clocks and bathroom scales — specially designed for persons with dual sensory disabilities are no longer being produced. Upon learning this, KIT President Yoshimichi EJIMA promised to have these devices produced on a trial basis at KIT. Recently, these new products were completed and delivered by Vice President Mutsuo TAKENAGA. Associate Professor Fukushima eagerly demonstrated the operation of these devices by weighing himself. He seemed quite satisfied with the workmanship (photo left).

We plan to build on this success by collaborating with Associate Professor Fukushima's lab and private enterprise in developing an electronic device capable of real-time transcription of speech to Braille.



◆◆ Notice on the Renaming of the Chinese Key Station of the International Academic Exchange Club ◆◆

Former name: Shanghai Nandasoft Information Technology Ltd.

New name: Radixsoft Co., Ltd.

▶ Join the KIT International Academic Exchange Club!

This club provides a global network for international academic exchange. Its members include current and alumni international students, researchers, and members of partner institutions involved in academic exchange with KIT. The club was founded to enable KIT to contribute to academic development and promote science and technology internationally. For detailed membership information, please visit the KIT website:

http://www.kit.ac.jp/english/01/01_080000.html

▶ We welcome your feedback.

Thank you for reading *KIT International Journal*. We welcome your comments, questions and suggestions. Please email us at: ab7128@jim.kit.ac.jp

▶ International Affairs

This KIT division handles all the administrative tasks of the International Exchange Center. Please feel free to contact us.

▶ Cover photo by Joong Gook KIM, a research student in Applied Biology from Pusan University, South Korea (Nov. 2007 - Jan. 2008)

