Spring 2025

LITTERAE POPULI

A news magazine presented by Hokkaido University

Recent News from Hokkaido University

Litterae Populi

Litterae Populi is a bi-annual magazine with the latest news about Hokkaido University. Its name is Latin for "letters of the poplar trees."

Contents

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Cover photo taken at School of Engineering

Courtesy of IWAYA INC.

Feature: Expand

Space Research at Hokkaido University

Hokkaido University will mark its 150th anniversary in 2026. Throughout its long history, the University has conducted research across diverse fields, and now, its space research is advancing to a new stage.

This special feature, titled "Expand," introduces three initiatives of the University's space research that are expanding beyond the framework of traditional research disciplines.

Next-Generation Rockets

Drug Discovery Research in Space

Micro-satellites

Next-Generation Rockets

The future of space exploration pioneered by Hokkaido University

Rockets have been used to transport artificial satellites, space probes, and humans from the Earth to outer space. Due to cost constraints, however, the rockets that carry small satellites for research and other purposes are launched on large rideshare rockets, making it difficult to freely choose launch timing and target observation areas. To address these challenges, Professor Harunori Nagata of the Faculty of Engineering continues to research and develop safe, low-cost, next-generation rockets for small satellites.

Feature: Expand

The snow-covered explosion-proof test facility

A 10-minute walk to the explosion-proof test facility—a rarity worldwide

A shed with a blue roof stands about a 10-minute walk from the School of Engineering in a location facing the vast farm on the Sapporo campus. This is the explosion-proof test facility, where rocket fuel combustion experiments are conducted. Having a rocket combustion experiment site within walking distance of a lab is uncommon globally, and Professor Nagata smiles as he says, “Researchers from other countries often remark how fortunate we are to have this environment.”

Mayuko Ikeda from the School of Engineering (left) and Mai Fukada from the Graduate School of Engineering prepare for an experiment in the explosion-proof test facility at -2°C

In January, Sapporo is deep in snow, with snow piled high around the shed and on top of the square silencer designed to muffle the explosive sound of combustion experiments. Mayuko Ikeda, a fourth-year student in the School of Engineering dressed in work clothes and safety boots, is exhaling white mist from exertion in the cold weather. She is carrying a self-made metal apparatus for experiments that weighs about 10 kg into the shed. Tools hang in rows on the walls of the shed, which is equipped with a workbench for students to build their own devices. Blowing into her hands to warm them up, Ikeda starts making final adjustments to the apparatus. "No matter how perfectly we think we've prepared, sometimes it doesn't ignite or doesn't work properly," she says with a shy smile. "In such cases, we return to the lab for discussions among ourselves and we get advice from Professor Nagata. When the fire finally ignites after many attempts, I'm delighted."

A CAMUI rocket (left) being launched (Courtesy of Harunori Nagata, Uematsu Electric Co.,Ltd.)

Safe, low-cost, next-generation rockets

To break free from the Earth's gravity and soar into space, a rocket needs a fuel that provides powerful thrust. Explosives and liquid hydrogen are commonly used as rocket fuels, but they have high explosion risks and require significant costs for safety management. To address this, Professor Nagata has been researching safer and more manageable small rockets fueled by petroleum-derived plastics with high energy density. He has developed the CAMUI hybrid rocket, which is equipped with solid plastic fuel and liquid oxygen to supply oxygen to the fuel in the vacuum of space. Since the first model launched in 2002, more than 50 more test launches have been conducted. The launch cost of a CAMUI rocket is less than one-tenth that of a conventional black powder-fueled small rocket. Professor Nagata explains the significance of his research: "If rockets become smaller and safety management costs fall, we can conduct space exploration more freely."

Nevertheless, hybrid rockets still face several challenges and have not yet been commercialized. One challenge is their weaker thrust than that of conventional rockets. Professor Nagata's lab is exploring ways to enhance the burning rate by optimizing the shape of the plastic fuel.

To space with perforated plastic

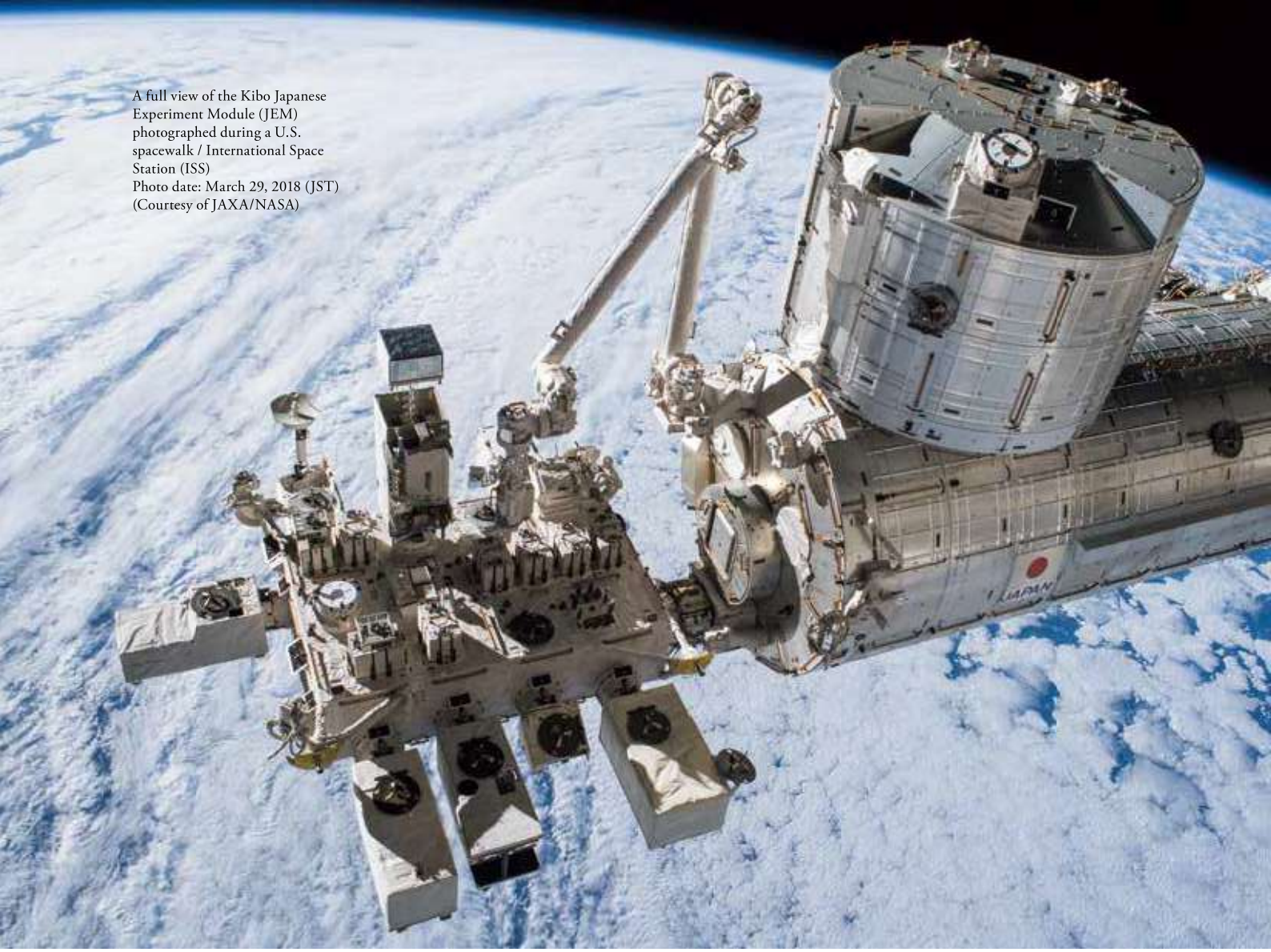
"This is the perforated plastic," says Mai Fukada, a third-year doctoral student in the Graduate School of Engineering, as she casually takes a cylindrical plastic block out of a small pouch. A close look at the end face of the palm-sized cylinder shows numerous elongated holes, each about 0.3 mm in diameter. Fukada, who studies ways to improve the combustion of plastic fuel, is investigating the optimal conditions for the stable combustion of plastic fuel, such as how much oxygen should be injected into the ultra-fine holes. By densely arranging these microscopic holes, the plastic can be made to burn uniformly from end to end axially—much like a cigarette—at high speed, making it possible for high-power rockets to be developed. "If we can develop rockets that use perforated plastic, I believe the day when space travel is safe and accessible to everyone won't just be a dream," says Fukada, her eyes shining with excitement.

Aiming for deep space

Research and development on space has traditionally been a national enterprise requiring enormous funding. In recent years, however, private companies and startups have made forays into this field, developing new technologies that bring access to space within closer reach. Professor Nagata's hybrid rocket technology has been passed on to Hokkaido University-certified startups such as Mjolnir Spaceworks Co., Ltd., which aims to mass-produce small rockets, and Letara Ltd., which develops engines for small satellites. Both companies were established with the involvement of graduates from Professor Nagata's lab, and he hopes to collaborate with these startups to rapidly commercialize research results. The goal is to revitalize the exploration of deep space beyond the Earth's gravitational sphere of influence. "For example, the International Space Station orbits at an altitude of about 300 km, which on a flat plane would be roughly the distance between Sapporo and Kushiro. I believe that if research on deep space, where gravity is negligible, becomes more vigorous, space exploration will become even more exciting," says Professor Nagata, looking to the future.

Perforated plastic used as fuel for hybrid rockets

Hybrid rockets will continue to blaze a trail for space exploration and transportation.



A full view of the Kibo Japanese Experiment Module (JEM) photographed during a U.S. spacewalk / International Space Station (ISS)
Photo date: March 29, 2018 (JST)
(Courtesy of JAXA/NASA)

Drug Discovery Research in Space

A future guided by fruit flies

Researchers in cancer therapeutics have begun to expand their experimental horizons to space. The main subjects of these space experiments are fruit flies (*Drosophila*). With the collaboration of an astronaut, unprecedented experiments are about to begin.

Feature: **Expand**

Space-based drug discovery research inspired by a single flyer

Professor Masahiro Sonoshita of the Institute for Genetic Medicine, who uses fruit flies to research cancer therapeutics, happened to notice a flyer for experimental equipment in his lab in 2020. The flyer advertised equipment that could culture cells while reproducing microgravity conditions similar to those in space right here on Earth. Holding the flyer, Professor Sonoshita recalled how, as a child, he loved anime series like *Mobile Suit Gundam* and *Space Battleship Yamato* and was always fascinated by space. At that moment, he had a flash of inspiration—perhaps this equipment could enable him to pursue new experiments on the small fruit flies he was using in his research, in a space-like environment.

Seventy-five percent of the genes involved in the onset of human diseases are also found in fruit flies. By manipulating these genes, human disease conditions may be reproduced in flies. Generally, mice are used in cancer drug research, but fruit flies have a much shorter lifespan—two to three months, compared to two to three years for mice—allowing researchers to obtain experimental results more quickly. In fact, overseas researchers have already developed thyroid cancer drugs based on experiments using fruit flies. Focusing on these advantages, Professor Sonoshita continues his research using fruit flies to accelerate cancer drug development. “Using fruit flies for drug discovery research is already unusual,” he says, “but I’d always thought that if we could add another dimension, it would increase the uniqueness of our work. That’s where

the space element fits in, giving birth to one-of-a-kind research. The thrill of research is doing what no one else has done before."

Taking fruit flies to space

Professor Sonoshita is particularly focused on pancreatic cancer, which has a low survival rate and is difficult to treat. For his experiments, he raised fruit flies engineered to mimic the genetic mutation patterns of pancreatic cancer patients in a device that simulates microgravity for 14 days, starting from the egg stage. He fed them food containing therapeutic drugs and examined their survival rates until they emerged as adults from their pupal stage. The flies raised under simulated microgravity were found to have lower survival rates than those raised in normal gravity, whereas flies raised under double Earth gravity had higher survival rates. Aiming to investigate the relationship between gravity and drug efficacy, Professor Sonoshita decided to verify these results in space. He immediately responded to a call for proposals from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) for experiments using the Kibo Japanese Experiment Module on the International Space Station (ISS). His project, titled *Determining the effect of space flight on anticancer drugs*, was selected in fiscal year 2020. "Understanding the relationship between gravity and drug efficacy may lead to more effective therapeutic approaches on Earth," says Professor Sonoshita. "In the future, people might live in space. My goal is to conduct experiments using flies in both ground-based and microgravity environments to help cancer patients on Earth and in space."

An experiment entrusted to Astronaut Onishi

In August 2024, JAXA Astronaut Takuya Onishi visited Professor Sonoshita's lab. Entering the lab, which was filled with the sweet-sour aroma of the feeding mixture for fruit flies, Onishi was guided into a white mosquito net enclosure where he examined fruit flies under a microscope. "Seeing them up close like that was fascinating," Onishi said with a smile. "It changed my perspective on flies."

Onishi, who is scheduled for a long-term stay on the ISS starting in March 2025, will conduct Professor Sonoshita's fruit fly experiment as one of his missions. The experiment involves breeding fruit flies in rearing cases inside the Kibo module, feeding space-born larvae with drug-containing food, and examining their survival rates and the mechanisms behind differences in drug efficacy. According to JAXA, this will be the first attempt to breed living organisms in space and administer medication to them. Onishi asked how to use the palm-sized transparent rearing cases with dividers that will be used for the experiment, and inquired earnestly about precautions to take during the procedure. "I'll be the eyes and hands of the researchers, carrying out the tasks they want accomplished in space," said Onishi, showing his enthusiasm. "I'm really glad I was able to hear directly from the researchers about the experiment, and I want to meet their expectations."

Top: The microscope used to observe fruit flies for cancer drug research
Right: A fruit fly used in the research (Courtesy of Masahiro Sonoshita)

Astronaut Takuya Onishi is guided into a white mosquito net enclosure in the lab of Professor Masahiro Sonoshita (left)

Countdown to space begins

With the launch of experimental equipment separately scheduled for June 2025 or later, preparations for the experiment are entering their final stage. Taiga Hirata, a second-year doctoral student responsible for ground-based experiments in Professor Sonoshita's lab, said enthusiastically, "When I chose this lab to study cancer, I never imagined I'd be involved in space experiments. Space experiments come with many constraints and demanding preparations, but the opportunity to collaborate with people from different fields has been truly exciting." Professor Sonoshita shared his outlook: "Astronaut Onishi's visit has reinforced our sense of unity as a team working toward a common goal. While cancer is difficult to eradicate, controlling it effectively could improve patient quality of life, and developing strategies to achieve this is our mission. I hope our space experiments will contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms of this disease."

The DIWATA-1 micro-satellite, which was jointly developed by Hokkaido University, Tohoku University, and the Government of the Philippines, stowed in the Space Station Test Building of the Tsukuba Space Center (TKSC)
Photo date: January 13, 2016 (JST)
(Courtesy of JAXA)

Micro-satellites

Hokkaido University technologies for watching over the Earth

Researchers at Hokkaido University have been continuing their efforts to observe the Earth from space using micro-satellites to address global societal challenges. The University's space research expands beyond national and disciplinary boundaries.

Feature: **Expand**

Using micro-satellites to save banana plantations

Professor Yukihiro Takahashi of the Faculty of Science specializes in remote sensing technologies deployed on micro-satellites. The micro-satellites developed by Hokkaido University weigh about 50 kg and are distinguished by their small size, light weight, and low cost. Their ability to conduct observations optimized for specific needs makes them promising tools for agriculture, environmental conservation, and disaster management. The micro-satellites are equipped with instruments that can separate and detect light of various wavelengths. Professor Takahashi aims to develop high-precision 'eyes' that can observe the Earth from space and to use them to help solve global issues.

One global issue being addressed using micro-satellites is related to bananas. In recent years, banana farmers around the world have been plagued by a new strain of Fusarium wilt, a fungal infection that causes trees to wither and die. In the Philippines, a major banana-producing region, the annual economic damage is said to amount to tens of billions of yen. The Fusarium wilt disease can be diagnosed from the discoloration of banana leaves, but there are limitations to thoroughly inspecting vast plantations by humans alone. Therefore, with the cooperation of banana farmers in the Philippines, researchers investigated the specific wavelengths that can identify infected leaves and devised a system that uses these wavelengths to observe plantations from micro-satellites to detect incipient disease outbreaks. In 2016, Hokkaido University, Tohoku University, and the Philippine government began jointly operating micro-satellite Diwata-1. While conventional satellites typically

Micro-satellite data on banana leaf reflectance at different wavelengths is analyzed for early disease detection.
(C) Magallon, PhD thesis, Hokkaido University

Professor Yukihiro Takahashi in the lab where micro-satellites are built

DIWATA-1, the first satellite developed by the Philippines, just after release from the Kibo module
Photo date: April 27, 2016 (JST) (Courtesy of JAXA/NASA)

allow observations once every several days or a few weeks, this micro-satellite can make observations more often: every few days, or even more frequently. Following the successful development of this satellite, the Philippine government established the Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA) in 2019. Data acquired by the satellite is also expected to be useful for other large-scale agricultural operations, such as those of oil palm plantations, and for disaster prevention. Recently, Diwata-2 successfully captured three-dimensional cloud structures in the eye of a typhoon. Understanding the structure of a typhoon's eye could enable more accurate estimations of typhoon intensities.

Hokkaido University international cooperation projects that use micro-satellites are being conducted not only in the Philippines, but also in Indonesia and Myanmar. Professor Takahashi explains the significance of international cooperation using satellites: "Until now, space development has been monopolized by the space agencies of developed countries. With micro-satellites, however, developing countries can acquire their own data and apply it to agriculture and disaster prevention."

Utilizing satellites for Hokkaido University fieldwork

Professor Takahashi established the Space Mission Center in 2012 at the Hokkaido University Creative Research Institution (now the Institute for Integrated Innovations). Faculty members from 14 faculties and research centers at the university participate, with researchers involved in space and those engaged in agricultural and environmental fieldwork collaborating across the boundaries between humanities and sciences to tackle various challenges. Professor Takahashi, who serves as director of the center, emphasizes its significance: "For example, a professor from the Faculty of Humanities and Human Sciences has been studying the relationship between humans and wildlife by using satellites to capture vegetation and waterside conditions to estimate reindeer migration routes. Since Hokkaido University has numerous researchers engaged in fieldwork, we likely have more researchers than any other institution in Japan who are interested in Earth observation from space—in other words, those willing to use satellite technology. Another strength of Hokkaido University is the low barrier between researchers of different disciplines, making it easy to establish collaborative systems."

This year, Hokkaido University is spearheading efforts to establish the tentatively named Highly Integrated Space Center (HISPEC) to accelerate collaboration on space utilization among universities, research institutions, and companies. Professor Takahashi expressed his vision: "We'll continue to develop technologies and collaborative systems for space utilization to address societal challenges."

Balloon flights in Near Space: A Hokkaido University-Certified Startup Rises to a Challenge

IWAYA Keisuke
CEO, IWAYA INC.

The view from the window upon reaching the stratosphere (Courtesy of IWAYA INC.)

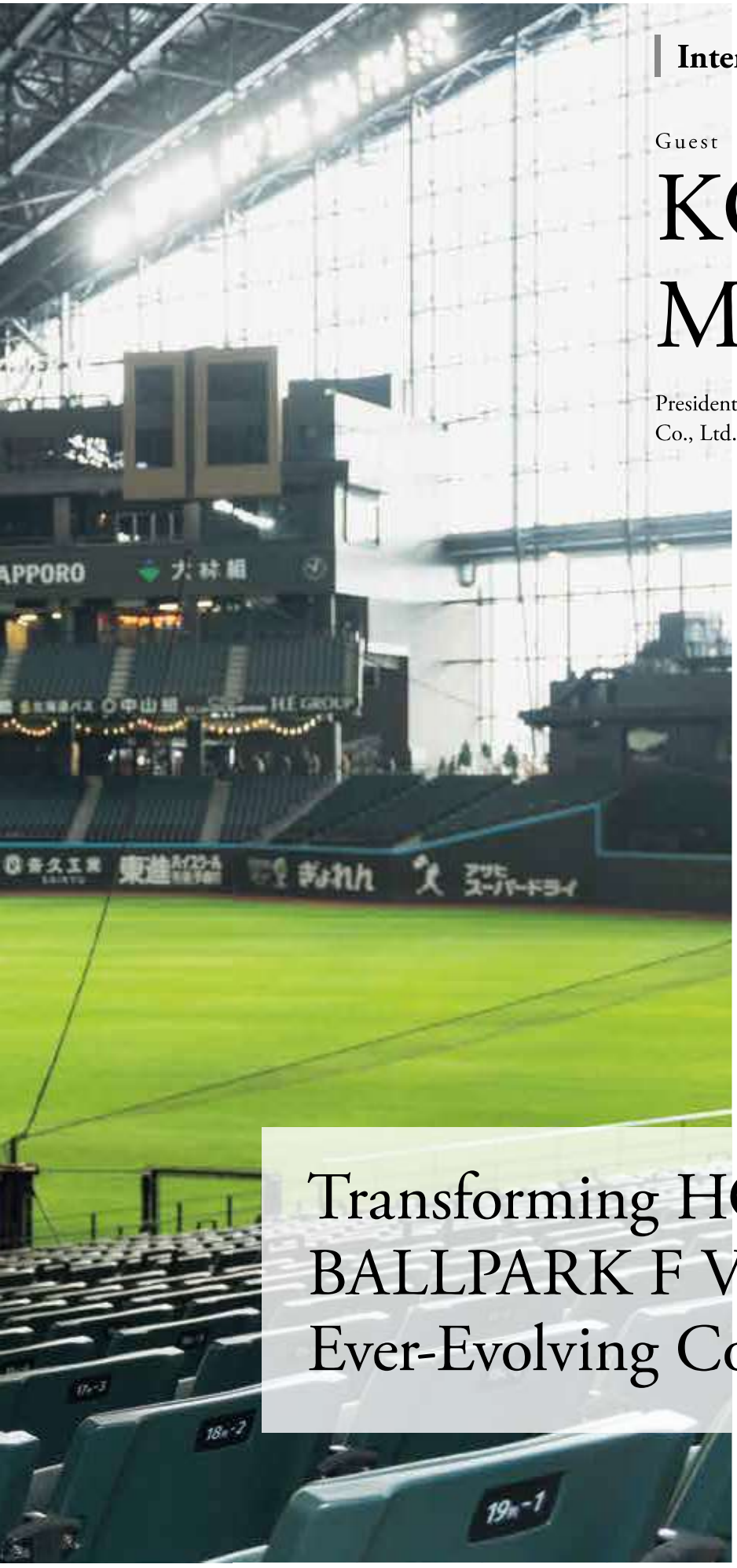
Space has been accessible to only a limited few. Working to change this by making space more accessible is Iwaya Inc. (headquartered in Ebetsu City, Hokkaido), a Hokkaido University-certified startup. Iwaya plans to offer the world's first balloon flights to 'near space' for general passengers as early as 2025. Such tours require no training, and people of all ages can ascend to an altitude of more than 20 km — a region also known as near space — where they can view the Earth from above. CEO Keisuke Iwaya says, "Since childhood, my dream has been to invent technology that fulfills many people's dreams and benefits society."

In the summer of 2011, while still attending Hokkaido University's School of Engineering, Iwaya saw news about overseas university students successfully filming space using regular balloons and decided to try it himself. He bought balloon materials at 100-yen shops or DIY stores, made numerous balloons, and began attempting to launch them with cameras from a farm on Hokkaido University's Sapporo campus. After establishing his own company, IWAYA INC., in 2016, he improved the balloons so that humans could enjoy viewing space from them. After numerous test flights, IWAYA INC. successfully completed the first manned balloon flight in Japan to reach an altitude of 20 km in 2024.

The balloon is made of plastic filled with helium gas, which is lighter than air, and the altitude is adjusted by opening and closing a control valve. The highly airtight spherical cabin currently seats two people and features sports car-style seats, offering exceptional comfort.

While private space travel in the U.S. costs billions of yen per person, Iwaya's current price for a 'near space flight' in the stratosphere by balloon is 24 million yen. In the future, he aims to enlarge the cabin to increase the passenger capacity and to lower the cost of participation per passenger. Iwaya says, "Despite numerous failures and setbacks, I've come this far by building on one achievement at a time. I plan to continue this journey of exploration with Hokkaido University's frontier spirit."


ES CON FIELD
HOKKAIDO
TOPPAN
TOTO
HOKUO



Interview with the president

Guest

KOMURA Masaru

President and CEO, Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters Co., Ltd./ Fighters Sports & Entertainment Co., Ltd.

The Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters were established in Hokkaido in 2004. Mr. Masaru Komura has served as president and representative director of the Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters Baseball Club Company and the Fighters Sports & Entertainment Company since HOKKAIDO BALLPARK F VILLAGE and ES CON FIELD HOKKAIDO opened in 2023. He has been promoting various entertainment ventures alongside baseball. The facility is also attracting significant attention as a new tourist destination.

President Kiyohiro Houkin, who is driving reforms to make Hokkaido University an unparalleled institution, interviewed Mr. Komura, who returned to work after overcoming a serious illness last year, about the popular ballpark, Hokkaido attractions, and future prospects.

Transforming HOKKAIDO BALLPARK F VILLAGE into an Ever-Evolving Co-Creation Space

Joining Nippon-Ham as a sales professional

Houkin: I understand you're from Osaka. Did you play baseball as a child?

Komura: Yes, I joined a little league baseball team while in elementary school and played shortstop. Born in Osaka, I was a Hanshin Tigers fan.

Houkin: I liked the Hanshin Tigers too. Back then in Hokkaido, we hardly had any opportunities to watch games other than the Yomiuri Giants, and I never imagined we'd have a local team.

Komura: I continued playing baseball as a working adult, but looking back, not being able to choose the best path or team for myself is a bitter memory. My parents never gave their opinion when I had to make choices. Later, I learned they believed that if things didn't work out, I wouldn't blame them and could come to terms with my own decisions.

Houkin: Did you aspire to become a professional player?

Komura: When you switch from metal to wooden bats, only players with genuine ability can remain competitive. Based on my performance with wooden bats, I realized I didn't have the right stuff to become a professional baseball player, including the necessary physical build.

Houkin: So your decision to join Nippon-Ham had nothing to do with baseball then?

Komura: I quit baseball and joined the company as a mid-career hire in sales. I started with retail sales and really enjoyed it. The person who interviewed me during the hiring process became my boss, and I worked in the same department for about 15 years. Since I always worked in the Kansai region, I had no involvement with the company's pro baseball team.

Houkin: How did your connection with Hokkaido and the Fighters begin?

Komura: Four years ago, when Nobuhisa Ikawa (the current President of NH Foods Ltd.), with whom I had worked for many years, became vice president, I went on an inspection tour to Hokkaido. I noticed that Hokkaido had farms for raising livestock and facilities for processing livestock products, but lacked a headquarters. Even looking at the entire Nippon-Ham Group, despite Hokkaido's importance to the company, there was no department coordinating activities there. So, the following year (2022), I established the Hokkaido Project Promotion Office within the Corporate Planning Division, became its director, and began working based in Hokkaido.

Houkin: After leaving Kansai and experiencing life in Hokkaido, what impressions do you have?

The welcoming nature of Hokkaido people seems to have been one factor in the stadium's success.

– Dr. Houkin

Komura: First and foremost, what strikes me most is how kind the people of Hokkaido are. I speak with a Kansai dialect. In some other regions, people might be put off by that, but in Hokkaido, everyone welcomes me warmly. I really sense their open-mindedness. There used to be a catchphrase for

I feel the kindness of the people of Hokkaido.
I sense their open-mindedness in accepting me.
– Mr. Komura

Hokkaido: "the land of challenge." But I feel like I'm the one being challenged.

A one-of-a-kind new ballpark

Houkin: You became the president and representative director of the baseball club when ES CON FIELD HOKKAIDO opened in 2023. The Fighters have many young players. Universities are also places with many young people. What are your thoughts on the contributions and potential of young people?

Komura: I believe Nippon-Ham as a company originally had a culture of taking on challenges, but as the organization grew, I felt that this atmosphere gradually faded. I think the Fighters still strongly carry on and embody the DNA of rising to challenges today. All players, whether they're in the games or not, share this spirit. Within the Nippon-Ham Group, which is based on a food company, only the Fighters are involved in entertainment. That's why not everyone was in favor of building the new stadium, which required a significant investment. With this in mind, I hope to nurture that spirit of taking on challenges, particularly among our younger team members.

Houkin: By the way, ES CON FIELD HOKKAIDO, where we are, faces south, doesn't it?

Komura: Light is essential for maintaining the natural grass, so it's designed to face south to allow sunlight in. In this stadium, players can see the fans' faces very well during games. The batter's box is slightly farther from the bench than in a typical stadium. When I asked a player, "Why do you look down after being struck out?" He said, "Because I can see the disappointed looks on the fans' faces during that long walk back."

Penhallow Dining mentioned in the interview. It was named after D.P. Penhallow, a professor at Sapporo Agricultural College who was invited from the US. He was the first to popularize baseball in Hokkaido, during the Meiji era (the late 19th century).

Houkin: If the players are clearly visible from the stands, then the fans must be equally visible to the players. As this is such a magnificent stadium, other teams must be interested in creating something similar, mustn't they?

Komura: Indeed, we have many visitors coming to see it. Some teams might be planning to build new

stadiums in the future.

Houkin: That said, securing such a large plot of land is never easy. As you mentioned earlier, the welcoming nature of Hokkaido people seems to have been one factor in the stadium's success.

Komura: That's exactly right. And I believe it's the great appeal of Hokkaido that attracts so many visitors. This is truly one of a kind. It's also close to the international airport—a really attractive location.

Collaboration with Hokkaido University

Houkin: You also serve as president and representative director of the Fighters Sports & Entertainment Company, which operates the HOKKAIDO BALLPARK F VILLAGE and ES CON FIELD HOKKAIDO. I believe the ballpark complex is already a business success, including as a tourist destination, and is drawing attention from across Japan. Could you share your vision for the future?

Komura: Our goal is to make F VILLAGE a place people want to visit and want to return to. For this, human resources are essential. Fighters Sports & Entertainment has employees with clear purposes, and this is our great strength. I'm truly amazed by their energy. In fact, about 10% of our employees are Hokkaido University graduates. I hope more talented graduates from Hokkaido University will join us in the future.

Houkin: In October 2021, Fighters Sports & Entertainment, Kubota, and Hokkaido University signed a three-party collaboration agreement.

Komura: Kubota Agri Front, built in F VILLAGE based on the three-party collaboration agreement, is a facility that's very popular with children. We hope to create a space for co-creation where everyone contributes ideas from the bottom up. We want it to continue evolving without ever being complete. In that sense, we're far from satisfied. By creating a movement, we believe city development can grow into industry development, giving us glimpses of what lies beyond entertainment.

Houkin: Long before we signed the agreement, when I was the director of Hokkaido University Hospital, the then-manager of Hokkaido Nippon Ham Fighters, Hideki Kuriyama, and the players visited the

I believe the stadium is already a business success, including as a tourist destination, and is drawing attention from across Japan.

– Dr. Houkin

HOUKIN Kiyohiro

President, Hokkaido University

Born in Hokkaido in 1954. Graduated from Hokkaido University School of Medicine. Doctor (medicine) (Hokkaido University). Worked for Hokkaido University Hospital and other facilities since 1979. After working as a visiting researcher at the University of California, Davis, became an assistant professor at the Hokkaido University Graduate School of Medicine in 2000, professor of Sapporo Medical University School of Medicine in 2001 and professor of the Hokkaido University Graduate School of Medicine in 2010. After becoming the director of Hokkaido University Hospital and vice executive president of Hokkaido University in 2013, and the director of Hokkaido University Hospital and vice president of Hokkaido University in 2017, assumed the present position in October 2020.

Himawari Branch School (an in-hospital school), which made the children very happy. I'm delighted that Penhallow Dining in this stadium, the players' dining facility, is named after D.P. Penhallow, who taught at Sapporo Agricultural College (the predecessor of Hokkaido University).

Komura: I understand that Penhallow teaching baseball to Sapporo Agricultural College students is considered the beginning of baseball in Hokkaido. I wonder if his descendants know about this. I'm sure they're out there somewhere, and I'd like to invite them to the stadium.

Houkin: I heard that you overcame a serious illness last year. Has your mindset changed in any way?

Komura: In June last year, I collapsed at the team office while working and was diagnosed with a subarachnoid hemorrhage. I underwent a 14-hour surgery, was unconscious for four days, and when I woke up, I had tubes all over my body. I now realize that I'd been overconfident about my physical strength in some ways. After my initial recovery, I devoted myself to rehabilitation every day. My parents told me, "Your life was saved, so you should live as if you've been given a second chance and give back to others," and I feel exactly the same way. When I returned to work, Fighters fans warmly welcomed me at the stadium, and I'm deeply grateful to everyone who supported me.

Houkin: Returning to work about six months after surgery—I think you're truly fortunate. Finally, how's the atmosphere of the Fighters this season?

Komura: Go Matsumoto, the head of the team's players' association, has clearly stated, "This year, our goal is to win the championship." I feel that last year's second-place finish has become a source of strength for the team. What I always emphasize when signing contracts with players is to value fan engagement. The team truly exists only because of fan support. I hope they never forget that. I certainly want to win the championship and go on a commemorative trip, and above all, it'd be wonderful to have a victory parade in front of Hokkaido fans.

Houkin: As a fan, I'm looking forward to it. Thank you for your time today.

We want to achieve a co-creation space where everyone contributes ideas. We want it to continue evolving without ever reaching a complete state.

– Mr. Komura

KOMURA Masaru

President and CEO, Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters Co., Ltd./ Fighters Sports & Entertainment Co., Ltd.

Born in Osaka Prefecture in 1966. Joined Nippon Meat Packers, Inc. (now NH Foods Ltd., commonly known as Nippon-Ham) in 1988. Built his career in sales and marketing, serving as general manager of the Kansai Food Service Department in the Food Service Division of the Processed Foods Business Division in 2015, and as general manager of the Marketing Promotion Department of the Processed Foods Business Division in 2018. Relocated to Hokkaido in 2022 as general manager of the Hokkaido Project Promotion Office in the Corporate Planning Division. Has held his current positions since March 2023.

Creating stories I want to read

Novelist

IWAI Keiya

School of Agriculture – Graduate School of Agriculture Graduate

The novelist Keiya Iwai, who was nominated for the Naoki Prize (officially, the Naoki Sanjugo Prize) in the first half of 2024, graduated from the Hokkaido University Graduate School of Agriculture and became a researcher. While working, he continued to write novels and made his debut in 2018 with *Eien ni tsuite no shomei (Proof of Eternity)*. We spoke with Mr. Iwai, who continues to produce one work after another, about his memories as a student, his journey to becoming a novelist, and his current activities.

—What was your childhood like?
I grew up in Osaka. According to my mother, although I was late in starting to walk, I learned to read at an early age. I wrote my first story when I was five, creating a picture-story show. I was more of an indoor person and read many different books.

—Did you want to be a novelist from an early age?
When I was in the third grade, I was sad when a serial story in a children's magazine I loved to read ended, so I tried to write a continuation myself. Though I never finished it, the desire to become a writer has been with me since then. Actually, I still have that feeling of wanting to read something myself today. If I want to read something, then at least one reader exists: me. And if one person is interested, there must be others. This feeling becomes the driving force behind creating stories.

—What was your student life like at Hokkaido University?
I liked biology, so I wanted to enter an agricultural school. When my father suggested Hokkaido as a potential place to study, I chose Hokkaido University almost instinctively—which turned out to be completely the right decision. After enrolling, I joined the kendo club. We practiced six days a week, so I spent most of my time with my fellow club members. The club also held talent shows where I performed *manzai* comedy with a friend. I took the role of the *tsukkomi* (the straight man). The excitement of getting laughs from the audience during my first *manzai* performance was so unforgettable that I continued performing for all four years—it was incredibly fun. The kendo club back then was strong, making my university days truly fulfilling.

—Please tell us what motivated you to seriously pursue a career as a novelist.
Although I had thoughts of becoming a novelist from elementary school, there were periods when I drifted away from books because I was so absorbed in other things. When I stopped by a bookstore while on a kendo club trip during my second year at university, however, I suddenly remembered my desire to write novels. From then on, I made sure to read extensively and devoted myself to absorbing as much as possible. When I entered the master's program, I read many books while conducting research in applied mycology. After graduating, I got a research position at a company, and the long training period that gave me personal time led me to start writing novels in earnest. I made my debut in 2018. For a while, I balanced my research career and novel writing, but with my family's support, I now devote myself entirely to writing novels.

—You've written a novel combined with a town-walking project. Please share your thoughts on such activities.
This was a project with Keio Corporation that combined mystery-solving with town-walking. Participants read novels that are distributed for free, and explore areas along train lines while solving the mysteries written in the novels. I saw this as an opportunity for people to discover novels through a completely new channel, so I participated in the project and wrote a novel. Going forward, I hope more people will pick up novels without being constrained by traditional book formats and distribution methods. It would be interesting to write a story set in Hokkaido University someday. I could write about that without needing to do research [laughs].

—Lastly, do you have a message for students at Hokkaido University?
I recently visited the Sapporo campus after a long absence. It made me nostalgic to the point of tears, and I realized again that this is where my youth took root. The Hokkaido University campus is a truly exceptional setting. Despite being in the heart of the city, its grounds are expansive. There's space for *jinpa* (Mongolian barbecue parties). The Sakushukotoni River flows through campus. In addition to club activities and studies, I think the campus is full of possibilities for enjoying various ways of campus life. I encourage you to craft a university life that's uniquely your own.

With his fellow kendo club members at Hirota Kendo Dojo

PROFILE

Born in Osaka Prefecture. Graduated from the School of Agriculture at Hokkaido University in 2010 and received his master's degree from the Graduate School of Agriculture at Hokkaido University in 2012. Made his literary debut in 2018 by winning the 9th Yasei Jidai Frontier Literary Award for his work *Eien ni tsuite no shomei (Proof of Eternity)*. His recent work *Ware wa kumagusu (I am Kumagusu)* was nominated for the Naoki Prize (officially the Naoki Sanjugo Prize) in the first half of 2024.

Carving a path to professional baseball through deliberate thought and decisive action

Pitcher, Saitama Seibu Lions

MIYAZAWA Taisei

School of Law Graduate

In the 2023 Nippon Professional Baseball Draft, Taisei Miyazawa was selected in the fifth round by the Saitama Seibu Lions. This historic achievement—the first time a Hokkaido University student was selected in the draft while still enrolled—created tremendous excitement on campus. Currently under a developmental player contract with the team, he is working hard to earn a spot on the first team. We spoke with Miyazawa, who successfully balanced academics and baseball while pursuing a career as a professional baseball player, about his experiences at Hokkaido University and his aspirations for the future.

—What was your childhood like?
I was born and raised in Nagano Prefecture. I loved playing outdoors and frequently went skiing as a child. I became interested in baseball after my father took me to Tokyo Dome to watch a Giants game, which led me to join a little league baseball team in my hometown. I began playing baseball formally in junior high school and became a pitcher in my second year of high school.

—What led you to Hokkaido University, and what was your approach to balancing baseball and academics?
Thanks to my parents' guidance, I grew up believing in the importance of a well-rounded life rather than just focusing on what I enjoy. That's why I've taken my studies seriously from an early age. While researching universities to attend, I discovered that the Hokkaido University Baseball Club had placed among the national top eight in 2010. I chose Hokkaido University because I felt I could genuinely pursue both baseball and academics there. After starting university, baseball became the center of my life, but I made sure to switch gears when necessary—like holing up in the library all day before exams.

During his time with the Baseball Club at the Daiwa House Premist Dome

—What baseball skills or qualities did you develop specifically from your time at Hokkaido University?
The Hokkaido University Baseball Club emphasizes self-discipline and autonomy, with students setting each year's goals and designing their own training programs. Because we had to determine what was necessary for the team's success and diligently implement those strategies rather than approaching them halfheartedly, I developed the ability to think independently and take action. When serving as captain, I made sure to respect individual opinions while working to align everyone toward a common goal. It was challenging but rewarding.

—When did you decide to pursue professional baseball as a career?
When job hunting season arrived, I realized I wanted to turn my passion for baseball into a career. I'd devoted myself to it for so long, and I thought how incredible it'd be to have baseball as my profession. My plan was to play in an independent league for a year and then take a job in private business if that didn't pan out, so I did some job hunting just in case.

—How did you feel when you were selected in the draft?
Honestly, I couldn't believe it at first. I was so surprised that I wondered if they'd really selected me. After that, as people around me offered their congratulations and I began being interviewed by reporters, it finally hit me that I'd become a professional baseball player.

—What are your reflections on this season, and what are your aspirations for the coming season?
The most memorable moment was pitching in a preseason game for the first team. Pitching at Belluna Dome with fans in the stands truly gave me the sense that I was playing professional baseball. Next season, I'll be under a developmental player contract, but I'll use the experiences from this year to drive my efforts to earn a spot on the first team.

—Lastly, do you have a message for students at Hokkaido University?
As university students, you have many opportunities to make your own decisions, from living independently to hunting for jobs. You'll probably face moments of uncertainty when making decisions, but if there's something you truly want to do deep down, I hope you'll take the plunge and try it. I too had doubts about whether I could really become a professional baseball player, but I'm glad I took on that challenge. And now, I'm right in the middle of pursuing that challenge as I aim for the first team. It's an extremely competitive world, but I'm working with the firm conviction that I'll make it through and thrive. I hope that seeing my journey might inspire you all to take bold steps of your own.

PROFILE

Born in Nagano Prefecture. Graduated from the Hokkaido University School of Law in 2024. After pitching for the Hokkaido University Baseball Club, joined the Tokushima Indigo Socks, a Shikoku Island League Plus team, in 2023, while still enrolled at the university. Selected by the Saitama Seibu Lions in the draft the same year. A pitcher known for a fastball that exceeds 150 km/h and for his forkball.

Current student Interview

Better to try than regret not trying

HAYASAKA Chinatsu

2nd year, Department of Health Sciences, School of Medicine

Chinatsu Hayasaka is the first female member in the 100-plus-year history of the Hokkaido University *Oendan* (cheerleading squad). Captivated by the squad's performances, she jumped into this unknown world out of curiosity. We spoke with Hayasaka, who continues to challenge herself daily while valuing her connections with others.

—What made you aspire to enter Hokkaido University?
I was born and raised in Kanagawa Prefecture. I was an energetic child who always ran outside to play during breaks. A career experience program in junior high school inspired my dream of becoming a nurse, a dream I still hold today. I was eager to live independently once I started university. After considering these personal wishes along with my academic abilities and future plans, I decided to attend Hokkaido University.

—Please tell us how you came to join the cheerleading squad.
I was drawn to the coolness of the cheerleading squad's performance when I first saw it at the entrance ceremony. I decided to join the squad about three days after hearing students who were senior to me talk about it during their event to welcome new students. I strongly felt I'd regret it if I didn't give it a try. Looking back now, however, I'm a bit surprised at myself for jumping into a group of students wearing tattered ceremonial coats all by myself [laughs]. I heard later that the squad had always been all-male, so they'd discussed whether to accept women. But when I approached them, they never let me see any of those concerns. Now I participate in all the activities just like the other members, with the only difference being the attire.

—Please tell us about the squad's activities. Are there any activities that particularly stand out in your memory?
Basically, we practice three times a week and cheer at athletic competitions on weekends. During practice, we build muscle strength and core strength, and we practice marching, singing cheering songs, and 'captain walking' in tall wooden clogs. We also perform at annual events such as the formal face-off ceremony with the cheerleading squad of Otaru University of Commerce, a stage event encouraging university entrance-exam takers, and the mass singing of the dormitory song *Miyakozo Yayoi*. For the 2024 face-off ceremony, I was responsible for creating the day's program and coordinating with various parties, including obtaining permission to use Odori Park as the venue. I was very anxious about whether the ceremony would proceed smoothly, so I felt truly relieved when it was over. That said, I was really happy that so many people came to watch. The Seven Universities Athletic Meet, commonly known as 7-Univ., also left a strong impression. It created fun memories full of exciting inter-university exchanges, including moments when we ventured into other universities' territories to cheer for our team's victory.

—In 2025, the Seven Universities Athletic Meet will be hosted by Hokkaido University.
I'm on the Seven Universities Athletic Meet Executive Committee, primarily working on preparations for the opening ceremony. With many competitions scheduled for Hokkaido in 2025, we'll have more chances to cheer at events. I'm fired up by the prospect of being even busier.

—What are the benefits of joining the cheerleading squad?
The connections I've made with others. There's joy in seeing people appreciate our cheering, and it's equally rewarding when members from sports clubs that we usually cheer for come to watch our performances. I really value this kind of reciprocal relationship.

—Conversely, are there any aspects you find challenging?
Performances sometimes require physical strength. That said, with research into techniques and presentation, you can perform well. I think it's important to consider what you can do rather than worrying about what you can't do or what you lack. Through my interactions with those in the squad who are senior to me, I've developed the mindset that there's no point in only focusing on what you can't do.

Hayasaka performs dynamic cheers

—Finally, do you have a message for current Hokkaido University students?
I value taking on challenges rather than regretting not trying. Hokkaido University is attractive for its beautiful seasonal scenery and for the feeling of traditions that have been passed down through generations. If something catches your interest, take on the challenge and make your student life at Hokkaido University fulfilling.

PROFILE

Born in Kanagawa Prefecture. Entered the Department of Health Sciences, School of Medicine at Hokkaido University in 2023. Joined the Hokkaido University *Oendan* (cheerleading squad) in April of the same year as the first female member in the squad's 100-plus-year history. Currently active as a sub-leader of the squad. Diligently pursuing studies to realize her dream of becoming a nurse.

Topics

01 Overall victory at the 63rd Seven Universities Athletic Meet

On October 2, 2024, students serving as officials of the Hokkaido University Athletic Union and who were responsible for the Seven Universities Athletic Meet visited the Office of the President, to report to President Kiyohiro Houkin their overall victory in the 63rd Meet and share their aspirations for the 64th Meet.

The Seven Universities Athletic Meet, commonly known as 7-Univ., is a traditional competition hosted in rotation by the seven former imperial universities, with a history dating back to the first meet hosted by Hokkaido University in 1962. At the 63rd meet, held in 2024, Hokkaido University achieved its first overall victory in 20 years, by defeating the host university—a first in our university's history—with three consecutive championships in judo, sumo, and women's *kyudo* (Japanese archery), as well as back-to-back championships in women's tennis, men's badminton, and men's volleyball.

During a casual discussion

Commemorative photo taken at the Office of the President (from left: Yusuke Sugiyama, 78th Athletic Committee Chairperson; Aya Takahashi, Executive Vice-President; Kotaro Kayanuma, 77th Athletic Committee Chairperson; President Houkin; Yukari Kondo, 64th Seven Universities Athletic Meet Chairperson)

President Houkin offered praise for the overall victory and encouragement for the 64th meet. The students expressed their determination to ensure the success of the meet as the host university. Hokkaido University will host the next meet. We ask for your continued support as we aim for consecutive overall victories—something we have yet to achieve.

02 Opening ceremony held for the Institute for Integrated Innovations

On January 20, 2025, an opening ceremony was held to commemorate the launch of the Institute for Integrated Innovations (nicknamed I^3, pronounced 'I-cube'). The Institute for Integrated Innovations was established on January 1, 2025 as a reorganization to develop its predecessor, the Creative Research Institution. It is an agile management organization that operates through the concentrated allocation of university resources, including resources secured from research support organizations across the university that collaborate to provide assistance. Its goals include supporting the development of new research fields through interdisciplinary research, fostering innovation, resolving societal issues through collaboration with private companies and local governments, and pursuing international research partnerships that contribute to the resolution of global issues.

The ceremony was attended by President Kiyohiro Houkin, Institute Director and Executive Vice President Tsuyoshi Setoguchi, and other stakeholders. President Houkin declared that through the Institute's activities, Hokkaido University will contribute to the resolution of global challenges by building an ecosystem that fosters a sustainable well-being in society—an ecosystem where two elements mutually enhance each other: world-class excellence on par with that of universities selected for the Universities for International Research Excellence program and extension that leverages the University's unique advantages in field sciences centered on agriculture and fisheries to solve regional issues.

The attendees with the new plaqueceremony

A bridge between Hokkaido University and the world

This issue features contributions from Dr. Riikka Länsisalmi, who is active as a Hokkaido University Partner in Finland, and Dr. Maria D.P.T. Gunawan Puteri, who is active as a Hokkaido University Partner in Indonesia.

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Dr. Riikka Länsisalmi
Senior Lecturer in Japanese, Title of Docent in Japanese Studies, University of Helsinki

As I had been collaborating with colleagues and students at the Graduate School of International Media, Communication, and Tourism Studies (IMCTS) already for a while, becoming a Hokkaido University Partner was a pleasant surprise. At the time Hokkaido University had an office in Helsinki, and it was a pleasure to meet the Deputy Director and Director there on a regular basis. Exchanging information and opinions and planning future activities over a cup of tea was always a delight.

With IMCTS and other partner universities we have been organizing a "Tandem Language Learning Project (TLLP)" for a number of years. The aim of this project is to promote research exchange and creation of research networks between students and faculty members, as well as to help students acquire the academic language skills that they need to be able to carry out their research. The specific program content includes "Tandem Learning", in which graduate students from different universities form pairs and support each other's research online, and "TLLP Study Sessions". This online activity and the on-site Study Sessions offer an opportunity for participants to learn to communicate about their MA or PhD project topics in a foreign language, in Japanese or English. They also have a chance to rehearse the roles of chair and commentator/discussant in an academic seminar.

This project has enabled many students and staff to travel to Sapporo from Helsinki and personally experience student and academic life on the Hokkaido University campus. In addition, a handful of our students have been granted the prestigious Hokkaido University President's Scholarship, enabling them to continue their studies at Hokkaido University at MA and PhD level. At the University of Helsinki, Hokkaido University students can participate in Japanese language acquisition classes as course assistants and get to know local students and staff. Exchange ties have also enabled members of the University of Helsinki staff, like me, to visit Hokkaido University as a Visiting Researcher. All these contacts have been extremely enriching and valuable! For students at the University of Helsinki, Hokkaido University is a popular exchange destination. Helsinki and Sapporo have many similarities, such as being surrounded by nature and greenery, and being cold and snowy in winter, so for Finns it seems to be easier to handle the climate, compared to other exchange destinations in Japan. The campus is green and spacious, and students enjoy the academic and leisurely atmosphere in Sapporo.

My current research and teaching activities cover a wide range of topics pertaining to the Japanese language in and outside Japan. My understanding of multilingualism and language revitalization in Japan have been deepened by contacts with many Hokkaido University colleagues working on Ainu and related topics.

The TLLP Study Weeks organized at Hokkaido University, my visit as a Visiting Researcher, talks, lunches and dinners with colleagues, and all the events (e.g. on Ainu language and culture) that I have been able to participate in have been memorable, and contacts with Hokkaido University have encouraged and enabled me to locate and continue with interesting research topics.

The TLLP continued with an onsite Study Week at the University of Helsinki in March 2025. We were happy to meet Hokkaido University students and staff again in Helsinki!

Researchers and students, be curious!

1. Visit to the Center of Ainu and Indigenous Studies
2. Bilingual linguistic landscape of Hokkaido
3. Summer festival in Sapporo

With the reorganization of the Hokkaido University Ambassadors and Partners System, this installment of "Letters from Ambassadors and Partners," which began in the Litterae Populi Spring 2017, marks the conclusion of the series. A total of 32 Ambassadors and Partners have contributed to the series to whom we extend our heartfelt thanks for their support. Hokkaido University remains committed to further promote its international PR activities.

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Dr. Maria D.P.T. Gunawan Puteri

Associate Professor, Head of Academic Development Center, Swiss German University

Becoming a Hokkaido University Partner was both a privilege and a responsibility. It gave me a platform to contribute to Hokkaido University's global mission while enhancing my ability to facilitate impactful collaborations. I felt inspired to bridge connections between Hokkaido University and my professional networks, ensuring mutual benefits for both institutions.

Hokkaido University stands out for its dedication to advancing Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Zero Hunger initiatives. Its emphasis on brain circulation and international collaboration aligns with the global challenges in food security and sustainability. These initiatives inspire excellence in academia and research globally.

In Indonesia, Hokkaido University is widely recognized for its innovative approach to global challenges, particularly in biosciences and agricultural sustainability. Its reputation for fostering international collaboration has made it a sought-after partner for Indonesian universities.

My research focuses on sustainable food production and functional food technologies. Collaborations with Hokkaido University's Research Faculty of Agriculture emphasize developing novel food sources and health-specific food applications. We've jointly published research papers and conducted reciprocal mobility programs for students and faculty. A defining moment was hosting Hokkaido University visiting researchers and faculty members at Swiss German University, particularly during Dr. Maria Stefanie Dwiyanti's visit in 2019. This experience not only solidified academic ties but also deepened institutional-level collaborations, leading to fruitful exchanges like thesis co-advisory and research dissemination. Additionally, seeing Swiss German University students participate in the HUSTEP program every year from 2023 at Hokkaido University was incredibly rewarding. In the future, if we can develop the interdepartmental exchange agreement between the Faculty of Agriculture at Hokkaido University and the Swiss German University into an inter-university agreement, it could enhance reciprocal student and faculty exchanges, creating greater academic impact.

My time at Hokkaido University provided a strong foundation for my academic pursuits, offering exposure to cutting-edge research and international collaboration. As a Hokkaido University Partner, I've expanded my network and leveraged my role to promote impactful programs that benefit both Hokkaido University and Swiss German University. I hope Hokkaido University continues to expand partnerships in Southeast Asia, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations in food technology, engineering, and biosciences.

Hokkaido University embodies the spirit of innovation and collaboration. To its community, I say: continue striving to create sustainable, impactful solutions. Your work inspires global partnerships and fosters the next generation of thought leaders.

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1. Swiss German University Rector visited Hokkaido University in May 2023
2. Giving a lecture at Hokkaido University in March 2018
3. Hokkaido University Partner Appointment Ceremony in January 2019

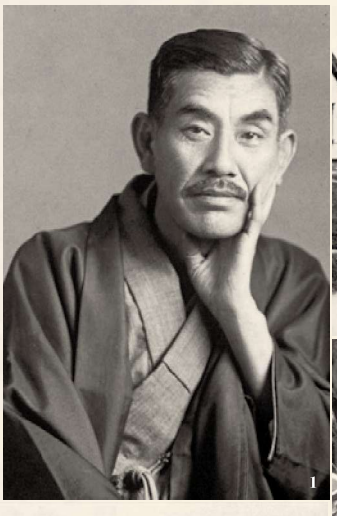
Hokkaido University Archives

150 years of Challenge

SCENE-22

1924-1937

The 50th Anniversary and the Bust of Dr. William S. Clark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Souki (‘foundational origins’)

Hokkaido Imperial University (currently Hokkaido University) celebrated the 50th anniversary of its ‘foundational origins’ (創基, *souki*) in 1926, 50 years after its opening as Sapporo Agricultural College.

The term *souki*, used by Hokkaido University to express its beginning, is uncommon. Universities typically use terms like *souritsu* (founding), *kaigaku* (university opening), or *kaiko* (school opening). In fact, in 1901, the institution commemorated ‘the 25th anniversary of Sapporo Agricultural College’s founding.’ However, Sapporo Agricultural College later became the Agricultural College of Tohoku Imperial University, rising to university status, and then achieved independence as Hokkaido Imperial University. Because of these significant organizational changes and two name changes, conventional terms like ‘founding’ were difficult to apply. During preparations for the 50th anniversary celebration, several classical Japanese compound terms were examined, and *souki* was ultimately selected. This term has been used ever since, and next year, 2026, will mark the 150th anniversary of the University’s *souki*.

The term, conceived and first used by Hokkaido Imperial University, has since been adopted by many universities in recent years. For institutions that evolved from domain (*han*) schools or private academies of the early modern period, or for those formed through the merger of multiple schools, this term provides a convenient and ingenious solution when they want to trace their founding philosophy and unique institutional character back to their historical roots.

The 50th anniversary ceremony and the opening ceremonies of the schools of Medicine and Engineering

Hokkaido Imperial University held its 50th anniversary ceremony on May 14, 1926, welcoming numerous guests, including members of the Imperial Family, the Minister of Education, the Director General of the Hokkaido Government, the mayor of Sapporo, and the President of Tohoku Imperial University. Opening ceremonies for the School of Medicine and the School of Engineering were conducted concurrently. The School of Engineering had just admitted its first students in April of the previous year (1925), and, from the outset, its opening ceremony was planned to coincide with the 50th anniversary celebration. Meanwhile, the School of Medicine had begun offering courses in April 1922, but its opening ceremony had been indefinitely postponed, as the Great Kanto Earthquake of September 1923 necessitated dispatching a medical relief team and hindered students from the Kanto region from attending classes. The ceremony was finally held on the occasion of the 50th anniversary. This anniversary served as an opportunity to confirm and highlight that Sapporo Agricultural College, the root of the School of Agriculture, was the founding origin of the university, while also formally proclaiming the establishment of the new schools of Medicine and Engineering, demonstrating that the university had become an institution standing on these three academic pillars.

“Now, as the campus is about to take on the colors of spring, trees fills us with immeasurable joy. We hope that his noble and respect among future generations at this university.”
(President Shosuke Sato’s congratulatory address at the unveiling of the Bust of Dr.

In his address at the ceremony, President Shosuke Sato stated, “If we at Hokkaido University wish to stand as an authority in academic circles and to contribute to our nation’s culture and the global academic community, we must quickly establish additional schools beyond our existing ones, such as schools of Science, Law, and Letters, to realize our completion as the highest educational institution.” He thus emphasized a vision for future expansion as a comprehensive university by adding schools of Science, Law, and Letters to the existing schools of Agriculture, Medicine, and Engineering.

Installation of the Bust of Dr. William S. Clark

On the afternoon of the same day, an unveiling was held for the bust of Dr. William S. Clark, the first vice-president of Sapporo

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1. Sekiro Tajima, who sculpted the bust of Dr. William S. Clark
2. A public exhibition held on the day of the Opening Ceremony of the School of Engineering (1926)
3. The 50th anniversary ceremony, attended by members of the Imperial Family (1926)
4. The lantern procession for the 50th anniversary (1926)
5. An exhibition of materials at the University Library (1926)
6. Activities of the medical relief team dispatched by the School of Medicine following the Great Kanto Earthquake (1923)
7. A banquet celebrating the 50th anniversary (1926)
8. A visit to M.C. Harris's grave in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of his baptism (1928)
   From left: (front row) Isami Hiroi, Kanzo Uchimura, and Inazo Nitobe (second graduating class members); (back row) Kazutaka Ito and Masatake Oshima (inaugural class members)
9. The unveiling of the Bust of Dr. William S. Clark (1926)
10. The bust of Dr. William S. Clark on the day of its unveiling (1926)
    From left: Mitsuyoshi Yanagimoto, Masatake Oshima, Kiyoshi Uchida, and Yomonoshin Kuroiwa (all inaugural class members)

Agricultural College, created by the sculptor Sekiro Tajima. This was a symbol of the university's 'foundational origins.' There was a minor controversy surrounding the bust. Masatake Oshima, a member of the inaugural class of Sapporo Agricultural College who had been directly taught by Clark, had objections to the unveiling being promoted by President Sato, who was his classmate, and had indicated his intention not to attend it. However, after being urged by Kazutaka Ito, another member of the inaugural class, to deliver a congratulatory address in his place and with the persuasion of alumni association members, Oshima attended the unveiling ceremony. In his congratulatory speech, while celebrating the development of his alma mater, Oshima stated, "The rise and

seeing Dr. Clark's imposing bust beneath the towering spirit will long continue to inspire profound admiration

William S. Clark)

fall of a school depends not on the improvement of its external appearance but on the enrichment of its internal quality. And the spirit of the faculty and students has the greatest influence on this. Now, as this university attempts to expand northward, Dr. Clark's statue seems to be watching over the deterioration of its academic culture with a piercing gaze." Kanzo Uchimura, a member of the second graduating class, refused to come to Sapporo for the 50th anniversary and published a critical article titled "Where is Dr. Clark's Spirit Now?" in the Otaru Newspaper on that day, offering harsh criticism: "I do not think Dr. Clark's spirit remains in Sapporo. What remains is only his name. Now I hear a bronze bust of him has been installed. But that is all."

Both Oshima and Uchimura expressed their discomfort with how Hokkaido Imperial University at its 50th anniversary had become so far removed from the Sapporo Agricultural College that had deeply influenced them. The gap between them and President Sato, who had pursued a practical path aiming for stable management and steady expansion over thirty years, was considerable. The direction of their love for their alma mater and what they saw when they looked up to Dr. Clark were fundamentally different.

President Sato retired when the School of Science was established at Hokkaido Imperial University in 1930. In 1937, shortly before his death in 1938, Oshima published *Dr. Clark and His Disciples*, a biographical account of Dr. Clark.

Hokkaido University HISTORY
1924-1937

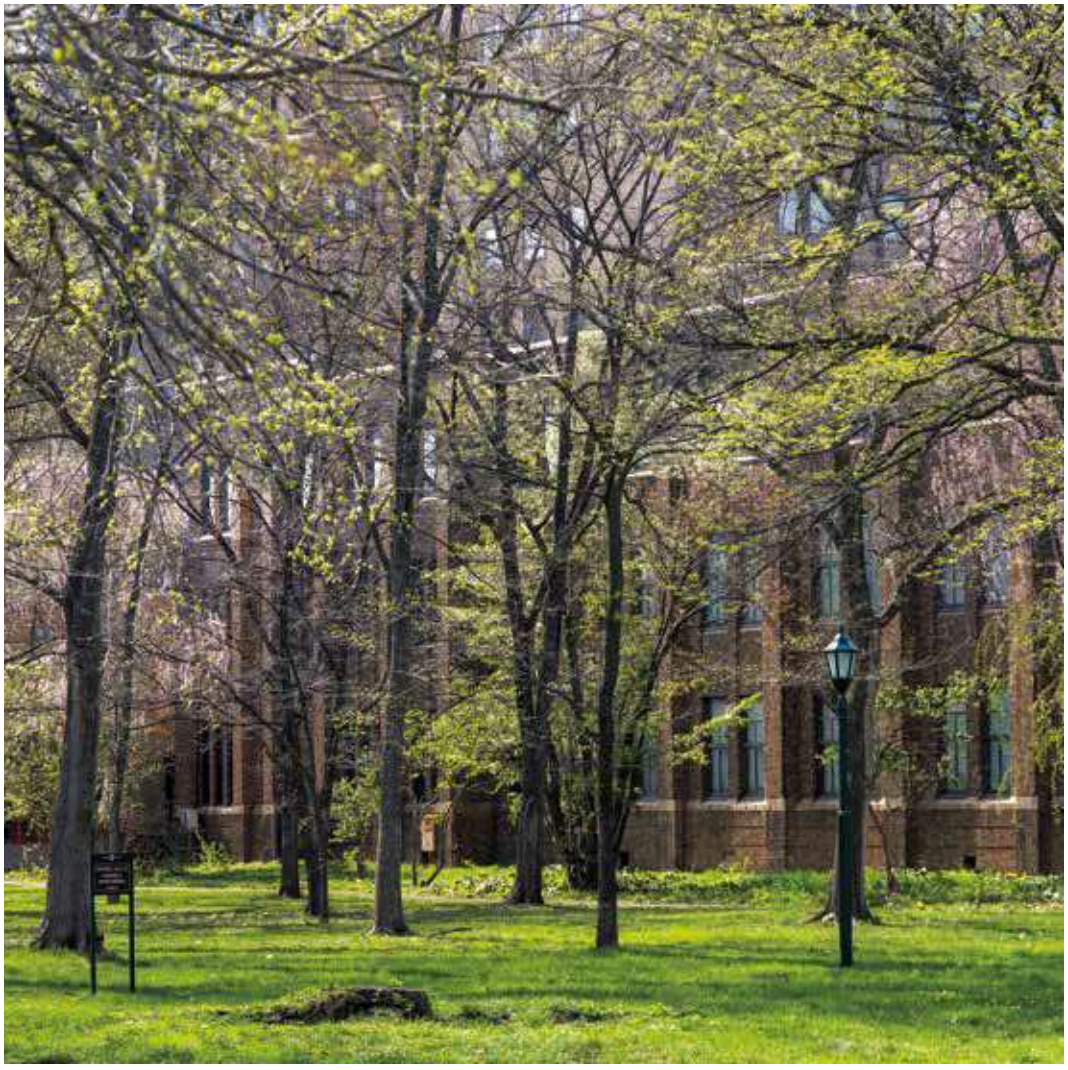
1924	February	The School of Agriculture Council proposes the 50th anniversary celebration.
1925	June	The Sapporo Alumni Association decides to install a bust of Dr. William S. Clark.
	August	Naohiko Masaki, president of Tokyo Fine Arts School, is consulted regarding a sculptor for the bust. (Sekiro Tajima is selected.)
1926	March	*The History of Hokkaido Imperial University in Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary* (written by Professor Kuro Nakajima) is published.
	May 14	The 50th Anniversary Ceremony and the opening ceremonies of the schools of Medicine and Engineering are held.
		The unveiling of the bust of Dr. William S. Clark is held.
		Campus exhibition (until May 16)
		Student lantern procession
	May 15	Academic lectures (until May 16)
	May 16	The Opening Ceremony of the Athletic Field and Sports Meeting is held.
	May 17	An athletic competition is held.
1930	April	The School of Science is established.
	December	President Shosuke Sato retires.
1937	July	Masatake Oshima publishes *Dr. Clark and His Disciples.*

Hokkaido University Archives

This facility collects, classifies and preserves historical documents and records of Hokkaido University. It also conducts investigations and research on its history.

Embraced by Spring Light

Photographer: Hiromi Terashima



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As the winter chill softens and melting snow nourishes the ground, signs of spring quietly fill the Hokkaido University campus.

Trees awaken from their winter slumber, adorned with the promise of renewal as they sprout fresh buds, while cherry blossoms, bathed in gentle sunlight, await their moment to bloom.

Spring is a season of new journeys and encounters— graduates venture forth on their chosen paths and new students take their first steps into unexplored academic territory.

With spring breezes whispering through the elm forest, the campus once again begins to write a new chapter in its history.

Note: For videos showcasing the natural splendor of the campus in different seasons, please visit the University website.

Videos of campus views QR code

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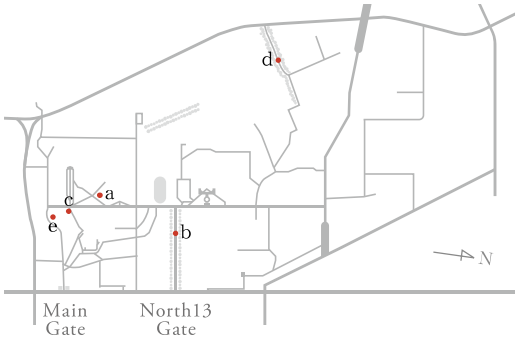

a. Elm Grove
b. Ginkgo Avenue
c. Bust of Dr. William S. Clark
d. Heisei Poplar Avenue
e. Central Lawn

Hokkaido University's 150th Anniversary

Ambition to enlighten the world

Through this Litterae Populi Magazine, we will introduce the Hokkaido University 150th Anniversary Project. This third installment offers a Hokkaido University original goods for 150th Anniversary.

Hokkaido University Sake

With Japanese TV personality Matsuko Deluxe serving as the poster girl since 2014, Hokkaido rice, especially the *Yumepirika* and *Nanatsuboshi* varieties, has gained recognition across Japan and has earned a reputation for its excellent quality nationwide.

Based on the idea that if delicious table rice can be produced, then quality rice suitable for sake brewing (sake rice) can also be produced, Hokkaido has also been putting significant effort into sake rice production for about 20 years. After extensive cultivar improvement efforts, three varieties—*Ginpu*, *Suisei*, and *Kitashizuku*—are now cultivated as Hokkaido's flagship sake rice varieties.

The momentum to produce excellent sake is also growing, with multiple sake breweries relocating their operations to Hokkaido to make local sake using Hokkaido-grown sake rice. Kamikawa Taisetsu Sake Brewery, in particular, has also been putting efforts into industry–academia collaborative initiatives, such as by establishing the Hekiungura brewery on the campus of Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine (named after a student dormitory of the university) in response to requests from the local community.

Amid these developments, an initiative to create a sake unique to Hokkaido University has begun.

The Experimental Farm at the Hokkaido University Field Science Center for Northern Biosphere has been producing non-glutinous table rice in its adjoining paddy fields, which partner businesses have been putting on their menus. However, the Farm wanted more people to know about Hokkaido University Rice as a farm product resulting from their research. Given the Farm's limited rice production capacity, it is challenging to distribute rice widely as a product; hence, it came up with the idea of cultivating rice for sake brewing.

As a result, the Field Science Center for Northern Biosphere, which has been developing original goods by utilizing products derived from their research results, has joined forces with Bellissimo Co., Ltd. and Nippon Seishu Co., Ltd. Bellissimo produces original Hokkaido University merchandise using these products, while Nippon Seishu has been brewing sake in Sapporo for many years. These three organizations agreed to take on the challenge of creating Hokkaido University Sake as an all-university initiative.

For seed rice, due to the difficulty of obtaining the initially planned *Kitashizuku* variety, the *Suisei* variety was experimentally planted in 2024. With sufficient yield for brewing secured, the production of Hokkaido University Sake began. From 2025, *Kitashizuku* will be used for cultivation.

For the naming and design of Hokkaido University Sake, an on-campus competition was held to create label designs based on student ideas. The competition attracted more than 150 design submissions from 96 students. Following a rigorous evaluation, the two designs shown in the photos were selected for the labels.

The grand prize design is used for the 2025 brew label, and the runner-up design for the 2024 brew label.

Suisei was used as steamed rice for fermentation (half the amount of sake rice) at Nippon Seishu Co., Ltd., and brewing has been proceeding as planned.

According to a company representative, the 2024 brew is *junmai* (pure rice) sake "with a delicate aromatic character, soft on the palate yet with acidity and body. Like Hokkaido University students, it is youthful now but is expected to develop depth of flavor over time." Hokkaido University Sake "Okuchi" was available for sale in limited quantities in late March 2025.

The 2024 sake rice planting was the Experiment Farm's first attempt. Building on this experience, it aims to produce the total amount of rice needed for brewing in 2025 using the *Kitashizuku* sake rice variety, with plans to brew *junmai ginjo* (pure rice, special brew) sake using sake rice grown entirely at Hokkaido University. Everyone involved is determined to create sake befitting the celebration of the university's 150th anniversary.

The runner-up: "Okuchi" by Seiya Kawasaki, Graduate School of Engineering

The grand prize: "Kita no Hirameki" by Ikuko Nomura, School of Pharmaceutical Sciences

Request for Donations

Hokkaido University's 150th Anniversary Fund

How to Donate

Click "Donate" on the Hokkaido University Frontier Foundation website, select a payment method (credit card, postal/bank transfer, or convenience store payment), and follow the procedure.

With credit card payment, you have the option to make recurring donations (monthly, once a year, or twice a year). Registering as a member at the time of application for donation allows you to change your registration details online at any time.

Building excitement for the 150th anniversary by wearing UTme! T-shirts

150th HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

Collaboration with UNIQLO UTme!

In September 2023, we began collaborating with the UNIQLO Tokyu Department Store Sapporo Branch to sell T-shirts and tote bags (large and small).

As part of its community-based store development initiative, UNIQLO has been selling T-shirts and other items featuring logos, characters, and other designs in collaboration with local businesses since 2022. Hokkaido University, which will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2026, also sponsored and participated in this initiative to commemorate the opening of the UNIQLO Tokyu Department Store Sapporo Branch in 2023.

At our university, staff members wear UTme! T-shirts when participating in events such as alumni events and Homecoming Day to build momentum for the 150th anniversary celebration.

We invite all readers of this article to join us in building excitement for the 150th anniversary by wearing a UTme! T-shirt. A portion of the sales will be used to support our university.

Collaborative products from UNIQLO UTme! and Hokkaido University

Hokkaido University 150th Anniversary Special Menu at the Hokkaido University Co-op Cafeteria

Hokudai Shorthorn beef Tatsuta Rice Bowl

In 2024, the Hokkaido University Cooperative (hereafter "the University Co-op") began to offer the Hokkaido University 150th Anniversary Special Menu to build momentum for the University's 150th anniversary.

The first offering was the Hokudai Shorthorn beef Tatsuta Rice Bowl. This dish features beef from Hokudai Shorthorn raised at the Shizunai Livestock Farm of the Hokkaido University Field Science Center for Northern Biosphere. At the farm, researchers study cattle-raising methods based on the concept of raising them as herbivorous animals with as much grass feed as possible, and they are raising Hokudai Shorthorn using sustainable methods.

For this special menu, the University Co-op Cafeteria served 1,400 rice bowls in four days. Despite the 650 yen price tag—an expensive menu item for the cafeteria—it was so popular that it sold out before noon every day.

The second offering was the Jumbo Kakiage Rice Bowl—Kakiage is a mixed vegetable and seafood tempura fritter. This filling menu item was designed with the primary goal of satisfying the appetites of students at the University, who are the main customers of the cafeteria.

This rice bowl was priced at 495 yen, and 3,823 were sold in five days.

Both menu items were praised by President Houkin when he sampled them. A portion of the sales went to the 150th Anniversary Commemorative Fund.

The University Co-op is currently developing a third special menu item, and there is much anticipation for what will come next.

Jumbo Kakiage Rice Bowl

URL ▶ https://www.hokudai.ac.jp/fund/en/

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