President’s Address

- Formation of a COE center and the concept of university reform -

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Thank you for arranging your busy schedule to come to our symposium today. Today is practically the kickoff day for "A Center for Advanced Fire Safety Science and Technology for Buildings" adopted this year as the 21st century COE program promoted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. I request that you have intense discussions on the subject titled "What Will 21st Century Fire Science Pursue?" and actively cooperate in promoting our COE program as well as play a part in blazing a trail in the discipline.

The Research Institute of Fire Science and Technology started as a small but efficient laboratory. Cooperation from many people and researchers, including professors in this field in Japan, is essential for it to become a center for interaction in the genuine research of fire science. In that sense, we earnestly hope you will meet to discuss the issue today.

First of all, the COE is intended to form a world-class education and research center, which will be used to promote the university reform requested in the application hearing. To this end, the president is strongly requested to exercise his leadership when necessary, and institute a committee for promotion of the COE under the President’s Office Committee to fulfill his responsibilities in supporting, inspecting, and evaluating the promotion.

The university has 122 years of history since its establishment. We hope to promote university reform using the three pillars of Research, Education, and Social Action, aiming to continue and develop the founding philosophy, "Form the Foundation of a Science and Technology-oriented Nation through the Development and Creation of New Science and Technology," as well as uphold the merit system based on strict performance evaluations.
This figure (Figure 1.3.3) shows the basic concept of forming a center within the university, not necessarily for fire science. "The warp" is indicated on the left side of the figure, which means that permanent organizations exist as the warp. Majors in the graduate schools on the Kuki, Noda, and Kagurazaka campuses belong to the warp, so to speak, consisting of a significantly large science-oriented university with eight research courses and 26 majors. Management of Science and Technology research courses are planned to start in Kagurazaka in April this year.

Also, the "woof" is indicated in the center of the figure, which means that various research organizations exist as the woof across majors and disciplines. The Center for Fire Science and Technology as the parent organization of the COE Project, the Research Institute for Biological Sciences as the base for biological science research courses, and other facilities and centers are located side by side at the Research Institute. These were established one after another primarily with government subsidies for the basic science and technology plan which started seven or eight years ago to conduct advanced research adapted to the times. They assume dynamic aspects, so-to-speak, to be assessed in five years or so and reorganized into new forms according to the times rather than existing permanently.

The warp and woof, like the lines of longitude and latitude on a globe or of tapestry, are combined to form outstanding patterns, each of which constitutes a research and education center. The basic concept of our university is to make the feedback from the COE Project, as indicated by the arrow pointing up and down to the left, the driving force in reorganizing and restructuring research courses and majors.

The COE program is intended to fortify the Center for Fire Science and Technology in the Research Institute and create a course for COE fire science each in research course majors, across which to develop human resources for fire science research as far as the warp is concerned.
Currently, the university is investing a large budget to improve the various facilities. A new school building for the College of Pharmacy was completed as part of its relocation last April. A new lecture building for the Noda Campus was completed in September of the same year. Also, the Kagurazaka Campus reconstruction plan started while a new building is about to start at present. The university has entered a new era in which rapid expansion of research space and many other things are taking place.

*Figure 1.3.5* briefly shows the orientation and necessity of the COE program within the university reform concept. Though it is well understood that there is a strong desire to improve infrastructure for establishing the *first fire science research course*, how much of an on-campus consensus can be obtained in these five years will depend on the procedures and results of this project. As mentioned in the application form, the university officially supports at present the first two: development of a department into a center and establishment of COE graduate courses. With these, we intend to enhance research functions and develop human resources related to fire science. Therefore, we strongly hope for success in the plan for formation of the center. With this symposium as a turning point, we request cooperation from everyone on and off campus, and desire as an open university to contribute to society with your support and guidance.