

Research Administration in Japan

On November 18 and 19, the joint symposium of the 3rd URA Symposium and the 5th RA Study Group Meeting took place at Kyoto University. It attracted the largest number of participants as a gathering of URAs in Japan. One of the main objects of this symposium was to initiate discussions towards a national URA networking organization.

Who attended There were close to 500 registered participants. More than three quarter were URAs or other personnel supporting research and/or industry-university collaboration at universities or other research institutions. Others were government officials from The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), personnel from funding agencies, university directors and their equivalents, some people from industries, and small number of faculties and students. Considering that the original quota was supposed to be 300, we can see that the interest in URAs are higher than ever.

About URA Symposium URA Symposium is held by the universities selected for the national project which develops a system to promote and establish research administrators (URA) (Hereafter, the URA Project). MEXT started the project in FY 2011, and so far 16 universities (listed below) have been working on it.

In this symposium, the 16 universities presented a poster on their approaches and activities for the URA Project. Seven of them also had 25 minute sessions. In addition, three “education track” sessions were held for the entry-level URAs. Their topics were: 1) what research administrators are, 2) science and technology policy, and 3) general research ethics.

About RA Study Group Meeting

The RA Study Group was formed by the interested individuals in Kanazawa University in 2010. Its members overlap those in the URA Project, and once the project started, the group has received some funding from the URA

Project. Still, they remained as a bottom-up style association for URA networking, and organized their own yearly meetings.

In this symposium, the RA Study Group had 9 of 1.5 hour sessions and 59 poster presentations. On the second day, Thomson Reuters, Elsevier Japan, and Nature Publishing Group hosted luncheon seminars on research management tools.

Two of the sessions discussed the URA networking organization, and others discussed:

- International collaboration
- URAs at smaller universities
- Grant proposal management
- Support for humanities and social science departments
- Day-to-day issues URAs come across
- Conversation with FA
- Building professional skills on your own

The posters were roughly divided into four groups: 1) facilitating research strategy, 2) pre-award services, 3) special activities, and 4) others, including reinforcement and promotion of research universities. The topics frequently discussed were:

- Building and using database
- Preparing grant proposals
- Outreach
- Efforts for the Reinforcement and Promotion of Research Universities Project at each university

There were a few posters introducing research administration, development, and management overseas, specifically, Italy, Germany, and US.

About the official URA organization in Japan

At the very end of the symposium, everyone gathered in the largest hall, and Prof. Koji Tanaka, the head of Kyoto University Research Administration Office, addressed the need and conception of



One of many conversations had at the 3rd URA Symposium at Kyoto University.

an official national URA networking organization. He also explained the circumstance and the scheme for starting such organization, and asked the participants to register as its founding members.

According to the schedule, the founding group will call for its members until the end of February 2014. Then, in the spring of 2014, the founding members will launch the first organizational meeting. They are also calling for a university, which will be in charge until the meeting.

My thoughts First of all, I would like to congratulate the organizers of this symposium for successfully pulling it together. It certainly was a huge event. Witnessing that there are so many people working on the URA endeavor should have encouraged many of URAs and those thinking about introducing URA system into their institutions. In addition, the networking opportunity this symposium provided was quite valuable. Japanese URA system is at its infancy, and slowly but steadily, we are making progress. As we have accumulated some experiences, we have a little better idea on what we are, what we need, what we can learn from others, including our foreign counterparts, and where we are heading to.

Japanese URA organization is barely at its conception. It will take some time before it truly becomes a counterpart of NCURA and others in the world, but we have taken a step forward. Meanwhile, our communication with you is going to be based on individuals, group of individuals, and/or universities/research institutions.

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