

【Director's Message】



NISHIUMI Maki

Chuo University Institute of Social Sciences was established in November 1978, with an aim to undertake interdisciplinary joint research on social sciences and to contribute to development and advancement of academia. The Research and Education Deliberative Council back then presented the following four elements as the significance of the institution.

1. Define university as a research institution with a mission to promote further advancement of research and learning, as opposed to a simple educational institution.
2. Provide research environments where researchers can cooperate, challenge and support each other as a group, as well as individually exert their best abilities and assume responsibilities.
3. Create a “joint research” system in which researchers across different faculties can collaborate as a Chuo University team and engage in joint research activities on the same theme.
4. Establish the institution as part of Chuo University, so that the day-to-day operation can be managed within the scope of university autonomy.

In this day and age, Japanese universities are increasingly facing fierce competition with other universities, and consequently their education and research tend to be evaluated based only on performance and efficiency in a short-term. It can be said that the above-mentioned elements that define the value of our institution are already effective as they are at this moment, but the significance is becoming even greater today.

Since establishment, researchers at our institution who specialize in social sciences including political science, law, history, economics, and sociology have been actively engaged in inter-disciplinary joint research activities while staying true to their individual logic and procedures. To put it briefly, distinctiveness of our research activities would be the process of understanding various problems arising in everyday life at global, regional, national and local levels, clarifying inter-relationship between such problems in different levels and figuring out the overall structure, and eventually working out solutions to the challenges that become clear.

Today, people all over the world are under the threat posed by COVID-19. The pandemic has made a great change in the way human interaction works in both public and private settings, and the conventional form of human-to-human communication which enables us to feel the existence and to directly see the expression on each other's face has been made increasingly difficult. To overcome COVID-19, we still have to wait for development of fundamental treatment and practical use of the vaccines. At the same time, this pandemic has shed light on and is even further promoting existing social and financial inequalities, medical disparities, as well as various forms of human right infringement, discrimination and prejudice.

How can Social Science address, analyze, and provide practical solutions to the world that has undergone drastic changes due to this pandemic? This is the time the value of Social Sciences is being questioned. To what extent do the traditional way of thinking or the consciousness framework still work for the flesh-and-blood world and society, and what is no longer effective? As is the case with any other academic fields, what is currently required for Social Sciences is to face the new reality and work to further improve the situation by clarifying issues, seeking out solutions, and assuming social responsibility.

Chuo University Institute of Social Sciences endeavors to be part of such challenges.

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