

【Director's Message】



NARUKO Hiroko

It has been almost two months since I assumed the position of the Director of the Institute of Social Sciences in April 2021, after being unexpectedly elected in the election held at the end of last year. I will make every effort to promote smooth research activities of the Institute of Social Science while maintaining good communication with researchers, visiting researchers, associate researchers, and the staff of the Office of the Research Institutes who support our research activities.

Although we still cannot foresee the end to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have become able to identify what is possible and what we can do to move forward during the pandemic based on the experience from last year, and preferentially implement them. This is the first year of the second phase of Chuo Vision 2025, the mid to long-term business plan of Chuo University which will celebrate the 140th anniversary in 2025. This vision clearly states that the University will "strive to develop a research foundation that will support education and to promote further advancement of research that contributes to human society." It also states that it is necessary to support the development of young researchers including graduate students, and to promote contribution in the fields of academic research, social implementation of research results, namely technological innovation, reflection in policies and social systems, and reformation of mentality. Based on the above, I would like to list some of the challenges that our Institute should work on.

1. Advancement and expansion of interdisciplinary research

As the name suggests, the Institute of Social Sciences is where research is conducted for individual research field of Social Sciences. At the same time, it is an ideal place for comprehensive research with rich interdisciplinary characteristics. We hope to further promote diverse interdisciplinary and fusion research in the future.

2. Enhancement of the ability to disseminate research findings

Chuo University bears a responsibility to society as a large private university with a strong tradition. It is necessary that we devise and implement measures to further promote interdisciplinary research and make sure that the research findings are disseminated widely to researchers both inside and outside the university as well as to

society, and to contribute to the social implementation of those findings. We would like to work with everybody involved in discussing and planning the concrete measures.

3. Open administration

We will strive to make our Research Fellows Assembly and Administrative Committee open and transparent so that the researchers are encouraged to freely express their opinions. It may be necessary to introduce some opportunities (questionnaires, etc.) to listen to the opinions and requests from visiting researchers and associate researchers.

4. Improvement and enhancement of research support for all generation

It is essential that the Institute supports graduate school students (young researchers) with their research in cooperation with each graduate school, and although we have already introduced and implemented a peer-review system, we need to further improve our support for young researchers. At the same time, we should not forget necessary consideration for researchers of other generations to make sure they can also engage in their research smoothly.

5. Encouragement to gender research and female researchers

There was a reception open only for female researchers at a medium-sized Social Science conference held recently. With only nine researchers attending, I was reminded of the current situation in Japan that the number of female researchers are still small. Since I was fortunately appointed as the director, I would also like to give our institute a capability to function as a hub for encouraging female researchers and promoting gender research.

In addition to the five points discussed above, there is another important challenge of promoting research collaboration with overseas researchers. I feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that we should stop once and think deeply about the past and for the future. I would like to thank everyone involved for your support.

NARUKO Hiroko