



Hironori Kasahara (left), Kana Inata (center), and Koichi Suga agree on the importance of a supportive and creative education and research environment at Waseda.

HOW WASEDA UNIVERSITY IS HELPING JAPAN STAY COMPETITIVE

The faculty at Waseda are working diligently to elevate education and research at the university as well as across Japan. They are also providing a strong enticement to students looking for exceptional mentors and an excellent research environment.

The appeal of top faculty

After earning her Master's degree from Waseda University and her Ph.D. from the University of Essex in the United Kingdom, one of the things that drew Kana Inata—an assistant professor at the Faculty of Political Science and Economics—back to Waseda was its faculty members.

"In recent years, the number of faculty who specialize in positive political theory has been growing here, some of whom obtained their Ph.D.s at the world's top institutions and are members of the university's Positive/Empirical Analysis of Political Economy Model Unit. They invite researchers from abroad to hold seminars on the latest findings, so there is a sense of being part of a global research environment."

Currently, Inata is using game theory to analyze the effectiveness of protest groups seeking political change. She developed an original bargaining model showing that greater mobilization of resources does not consistently improve the chance of a group's demands being met, because it neglects the probability of counter-protests arising. The model also sheds light on how investing in organizational infrastructure, while reducing available resources, decreases the chance of counter-protests.

"Since I need to conduct analyses based on assumptions, it is very helpful that I can seek advice from professors on campus who are experts in relevant fields, including political science, history, and regional studies," Inata adds. She hopes that her research will advance the frontiers of knowledge in the field of group organization and in the context of political activity.

Producing leaders to keep the economy strong

"As Dr. Inata mentioned, we welcome outstanding scholars from abroad to lecture here, enabling our students to receive the highest level of education," says Koichi Suga, senior executive vice president for academic affairs. "Consequently, we are deepening our interaction and partnerships with some of the world's top universities for collaborative research," he adds. "Enhancing education and research levels can help to produce leaders who contribute to the world at large, something Waseda has always been conscious of."

Japan has one of the most rapidly aging populations in the world, making it more important than ever for such leaders to keep Japan globally competitive in order to maintain a strong economy.

"We are playing our part in this effort by opening our doors to more international students and researchers through various initiatives, such as English-based degree programs," Suga explains.

New technologies to inspire the world

In terms of scientific research, Hironori Kasahara, senior executive vice president for research, points out that Japan needs to continue to lead by innovating, especially when it comes to technology. "To achieve this, we must find a way to help fund more Ph.D. candidates' tuition and living expenses, something Japanese universities have not done thus far," he says.

To do this, Kasahara helped to implement the Waseda Open Innovation Ecosystem Plan. This plan supports researchers, including Ph.D. candidates, in building collaborations with industry to carry out joint research programs and to develop new products. "Previously, we would develop something and then see if industry could use it, but it makes more sense to work with a company from the beginning," says Kasahara.

This approach gives researchers the opportunity to produce papers and create patents that align with societal needs, which in turn provide financial support for further research by using profits from the sale of proprietary products. "Newly created technologies can inspire the world, so it's a win for the researchers, a win for industry, and a win for Waseda and Japan," says Kasahara. The plan also provides supports for researchers who wish to set up their own venture businesses.

Kasahara also notes that it is important to create an environment where researchers have the freedom to conduct the kind of research that excites them. "That's the kind of university Waseda would like to be recognized as internationally," he says. "And that is what we're working to become."

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