

## Message from the Director of the Office of Institutional Research

Kyushu University's Office of Institutional Research (IR Office) was established in April 2016. Reforms and improvements based on self-assessment of a university's activities and analysis of the results are essential to enhancing that university's functions. Accordingly, national university corporations have a legal obligation to undertake their own evaluation of the extent to which they have achieved the medium-term targets that they set for themselves based on their medium-term plans, and to engage with the certified evaluation and accreditation process for quality assurance in education. In 2001, before it became a national university corporation, Kyushu University established the Office for Information of University Evaluation to conduct university evaluation. As its duties subsequently expanded, the office was reorganized with augmented capabilities in 2004, and it took charge of duties associated with National University Corporation Evaluation and Institutional Certified Evaluation and Accreditation, among others. Although the Office of Institutional Research was able to deal with such evaluation-related tasks, it was barely equipped with any functions to support the analysis of the results of self-assessment and the promotion of university reform and improvement based on numerical indicators and qualitative indicators backed up with evidence. As such, making a fresh start under a new name in Japanese (although its English name remained the same), Kyushu University's Office of Institutional Research was given stronger functions in these areas, in addition to its evaluation-related tasks, with the aim of supporting efforts to develop an enhanced governance framework capable of managing the university strategically, under the President's leadership.

According to the University Subcommittee of the Central Council for Education, IR is the "collection and analysis of data about university activities in such areas as education, research, and financial affairs, and investigative research for the purpose of supporting decision-making by the university." Setting out policies for improvement and reform based on "objective, carefully scrutinized, persuasive data" is likely to facilitate the formation of a common understanding of the need for improvement and reform, and to assist in building consensus on policies for achieving this.

From this perspective, the first and most important duty of the IR Office is to build up "objective, carefully scrutinized, persuasive data." However, this is easier said than done.

Over the years, each of the university's departments has amassed a huge volume of numerical data of all kinds. This was accumulated in whatever form that was easiest for the department in question (and sometimes, the staff member in question) to collect, use, or submit in response to requests for data. Furthermore, the definitions used in data differ in quite a few cases, even where the data covers the same category and the same period. Under these circumstances, merely collecting the data from the departments providing it is not sufficient to enable the IR Office to amass "objective, carefully scrutinized, persuasive data." Starting immediately after the IR Office's establishment, its staff took the lead in building up "objective, carefully scrutinized, persuasive data" from the various data scattered across the university, with the help of IR Office support staff, etc. and with advice from the IR Office's advisors. At the same time, particular care is required in the publication of information and data. Accordingly, we have thoroughly scrutinized the categories for the scope of publication, establishing categories in consultation with each source of data.

The Kyushu University Fact Book contains only part of the data that we have accumulated. Our purpose in compiling it was to provide a snapshot of the current status of the university and its individual departments, for use in making reforms and improvements, and in formulating plans for the future. Compared with the previously published Fact Book (Q-Fact), the data is much more reliable, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The electronic data will be published online and updated as needed, which should make it more useful. It also contains an example of the analysis of the university's research ability. We hope that each department will refer to this and use SciVal or Pure to analyze their own research ability.

As it is published online, we hope that all the external stakeholders who support Kyushu University will also take this opportunity to look over its current status, and provide their assistance and guidance so that we can enhance the functions of the IR Office in evaluating Kyushu University and supporting its reform and improvement.

The Kyushu University Fact Book is the fruit of the labors of IR Office staff and could not have been produced without the assistance of IR Office support staff and advisors. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of them.

Makoto Aratono  
Director, IR Office  
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