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The Meaning of JAIST-COE Program and the Changing Circumstances of Academic Research in JAPAN

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The “21st Century COE Program” has been developed by the Japanese government’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to promote scientific research at universities. Three years have passed since the Program’s inception in 2002. The main objective of the Program is to provide intensive support for the development of internationally competitive universities in Japan that will be able to conduct education and research activities at the equivalent level with top universities of the world and to establish research and education centers of the world’s best standard while improving the level of research and fostering world-leading capable individuals for creative research. Based on this objective, among various graduate (doctoral) programs of national, public and private universities, project plans for the development of the world’s best research and education centers have been examined and selected. In 2002 and 2003 respectively, annual financial supports between 100 and 500 million yens over some 5 years per program were granted in five areas, on which interim and ex-post evaluations will be made respectively after two and five years. Subsidies of 18.2 billion yen for 2002 and of 33.4 billion yen for 2003

were budgeted. As a research grant of the maximum of some 500 million yen is allocated to a particular university, strict external, third-party assessments are required. The interim assessment for the project selected in 2002 was conducted in 2004, and some project received harsh assessments.

At the same time, this program demands that universities not only promote their scientific research and also continuously reform and improve their organizational structures. The selection of programs is processed based on applications from universities.

The selection is based on two criteria: “research/education areas demonstrating new academic progress,” and “establishment of research/education infrastructure aiming for the development of new academic disciplines.”

Potential recipients of the Program grants include graduate (doctoral) programs, or combination of such programs, at all national, public and private universities in Japan and research organizations or combination of research organizations such as research institutes and centers (with research levels equivalent to doctoral levels) affiliated with universities.

Applications are submitted by the presidents of

universities based on strategies of their universities formulated under the management system centering on each president regarding how to develop their programs, and what programs, into world-class research/education centers. Multiple applications can be made by a university. The selection examination is conducted by an examination committee comprising of intellectuals.

This report introduces the 21st COE Program of Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (JAIST), “Technology Creation Based on Knowledge Science” and examines its implication on and significance for science and technology in Japan. Regarding details of specific research programs at JAIST, please refer to individual reports in this session.