

OIST Looks to Future

The 6th meeting of the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University's (OIST) Board of Governors (BOG) took place on 9 and 10 May on the OIST campus. The University's advisory body, the Board of Councilors, met on the same dates.

In his status report to the both the Board of Governors and Board of Councillors, OIST President Jonathan Dorfan underlined that OIST was now a fully functional graduate university. The ideals on which the University has been planned; a fully international, multi-disciplinary center of research and learning with world-class faculty and students; are now reality. He thanked the Japanese government for its courage in creating a graduate university that has broken the traditional mold. Dorfan pointed out that OIST has been honored over the last 6 months by visits by the Emperor and Empress of Japan, by Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs, Science and Technology Policy and Space Policy, Mr. Ichita Yamamoto, and by Prime Minister, Mr. Shinzo Abe. *"We have been privileged by these visits,"* said Dorfan. *"All our staff and students were proud to have the opportunity to display their commitment and enthusiasm to our very distinguished guests."*

OIST Provost Robert Baughman explained that the selection process for the second class of graduate students was well advanced as was the recruitment drive for 5 new professors. *"At this point in the procedure, we are encouraged by the high level applicants for our positions. We will maintain very high standards."* Provost Baughman also reported on progress on the development of the Okinawa Coastal Ocean Observation System and the establishment of support sections for marine sciences and physics.

One of the recommendations of the previous meetings of the Board of Governors was for the establishment of a Child Development Center on campus, pointing out that such a facility was essential for recruitment and retention of the best faculty and staff. President Dorfan said that he was especially pleased that a pre-school facility had opened in January 2013 in temporary buildings and now 47 pre-school and 10 after-school children attend "Tedako", Okinawan for "Children of the Sun". Funds for a larger permanent Child Development Center are part of the 2013 budget proposal.

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Moving to the future of the University, Dr. Dorfan informed the Boards that a supplementary budget in FY2012 provides funds for the construction of the Laboratory 3 building. *“We are grateful for the confidence that the government has shown. Construction work will start in the summer of 2013.”* Laboratory 3 will include extra space for teaching and more research laboratories, whilst the ground floor will be devoted to the business development and technology transfer functions of the University. The completion of Laboratory 3 in 2014 will also mark the completion of the planned first stage of the OIST Graduate University.

OIST Graduate University is a visionary creation by the Japanese government of a world-leading institution. The BOG acknowledged the outstanding government financial support that has so far been applied to bring the University to its current state. The OIST Framework document foresaw the critical importance of maintaining a stable level of funding for operations through the first ten years. The Board passed a resolution that the Government affirm the commitment to provide stable year-to-year operating funding through this initial period to ensure the continued success and growth of the OIST Graduate University

The Board of Governors decided to launch an exercise to prepare a plan for the development of the University over the next 10 years. A planning group will be established to work on the model of doubling the size of the Graduate University in that period. *“Much has been achieved and we must look at what needs to be done to consolidate OIST’s position as one of the world’s leading graduate universities,”* said Chair of the Board of Governors, Torsten Wiesel. *“One crucial consideration is the ideal size of the University to allow it to achieve its ambitious goals.”*

Two members of the Board of Governors, Prof. Yuan.T. Lee and Lord Martin Rees, stood down at the meeting. The appointment of new members is the responsibility of the Board of Governors and careful preparation has been ongoing to select new members. Koji Omi has been asked to join the OIST Board of Governors, with appointment taking effect as of October 2013. *“Koji Omi, then Minister of State for Science and Technology Policy and for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs, along with Akito Arima, was responsible for the launch of the OIST project in 2001. The fact that the University is here today is in a large part due to his vision and determination. We owe him a debt of gratitude,”* said Torsten Wiesel. *“It is therefore particularly pleasing that Koji Omi will be joining the OIST Board of Governors and we look forward to his advice and opinions.”*