

Preface

Japanese national universities have contributed to nation building through education and research for more than one hundred years. Their functions and achievements in the past have been well recognized and praised in society. In the future, the role of national universities is expected to expand and continue demonstrating leadership both nationally and internationally.

However, because of the economic stagnation over the past two decades, the central government has reduced financial resources that national universities perceive as necessary in sustaining current levels of education and research quality. In addition to financial difficulties, universities, like other agencies of government, must respond to increasing public requests for accountability. To meet these demands, universities should formulate and publish their missions, disclose their financial management data, and publish their achievement and evaluation results. In short, national universities now are required to be managed more efficiently and effectively in pursuing their missions. The 2004 reform of the National University Corporation in Japan, to a great extent, was necessitated by those external forces. Many scholars, public officials, and civic leaders have invested tremendous energy and time to accomplish reform in Japanese higher education. Now it is time to discuss this reform process and to evaluate its results.

This volume is a collection of articles dealing with this national university reform in Japan. These contents are presented for the benefit of non-Japanese higher education researchers and policy makers who are especially interested in the process and results of reform. Readers will find familiar words such as de-regulation of government control, corporation, accountability, president leadership, responsiveness to business and student needs, new public management, university evaluation, and performance budgeting. They also will discover that these terms take on slightly different meanings when used in the Japanese context. Japanese reform was modeled to the experience of other foreign countries. But of course, any foreign model of reform is subject to modification when applied to the Japanese higher education situation. We hope this volume, which details the successes and shortcomings of reform efforts in Japan, will inform those who are interested in university reform in their own countries.

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June 2008