

February 23, 2011

Report of the 2011 RIKEN Administrative Advisory Council

For a RIKEN that will continue to be a shining light

At the request of President Noyori Ryoji, the 10 members of the RIKEN Administrative Advisory Council convened at RIKEN and downtown Tokyo on February 22 and 23, 2011, to review RIKEN's administrative structure and management systems.

In its 2009 report, the 7th RIKEN Advisory Council urged the "formation of an Administrative Advisory Council to advise the President and Executive Directors on matters of management and administration." We commend President Noyori for acting on this advice and convening this advisory council. Enhancing administrative functions is important for any institution involved in research and development inside and outside of Japan, and especially so for RIKEN.

President Noyori asked us to review and make recommendations in three areas: "collaborations with universities and industry," "public relations strategies," and "creating a truly international administration." We have gone further, however, expanding from these three areas to discuss the whole of RIKEN's administrative structure as viewed from our diverse professional perspectives, and to consider the kind of administration that is needed for a world-class research institution such as RIKEN.

General remarks

(1) Expectations of RIKEN

- The objective of the RIKEN scientist is to carry out research that will serve to sustain humanity, maintain the security and prosperity of Japan, and enrich our lives. The objective of the RIKEN administrative employee is to provide the support that is needed to further this research.
- RIKEN is an Independent Administrative Institution conducting world-class research and must create a pioneering administrative structure that will be a model for other research institutions.

(2) Enhancing the awareness of administrative employees

- RIKEN's administrative personnel need to shake off their self-perception of being secondary to the researchers. If we think of RIKEN in terms of a private business model, then RIKEN's research achievements are its products, and its administrative personnel are its sales force or operation managers. RIKEN's existence depends on the administrative personnel and they should take pride in this fact.
- Administrative personnel need to have a greater awareness of their role and act with more independence, working hand-in-hand with the researchers to further their shared objectives. This will require a significant change in perceptions among both administrative personnel and researchers.
- If administrative personnel are to be viewed as active participants in RIKEN's management, then they should be referred to and thought of in a new way, such as "Operations" or perhaps "Operations / Administration." In the end whatever term is chosen should be printed on everyone's business card as part of the overall effort to raise awareness among RIKEN's personnel. In addition to this change in nomenclature, clearly defined missions should also be established and widely disseminated among RIKEN's employees.

(3) Characteristics and career paths of RIKEN administrative employees

- The members of this council are in agreement that there is a need to foster the development of a RIKEN-style Research Administrator who can undertake the implementation of management policies and strategies. Research administrators need to be skilled in relations management and need to be bridge builders capable of building win-win relationships with universities and private industry.
- In looking at RIKEN's personnel structure, it is evident that the number of permanent administrative staff has not kept up with the significant structural changes taking place as a result of the increase in research personnel. This is a matter of considerable concern. There is as well a need to clearly define the authority and responsibilities of fixed-term administrative staff, objectively evaluate their performance, and compensate them accordingly. Fixed-term administrative staff should be also be given the career option of becoming permanent employees.

- Personnel management should be tailored to RIKEN's special circumstances and should be designed for continuity and stability of operations. This will necessitate a rethinking of compensation packages and work conditions in order to secure highly competent administrative personnel.
- For human resource development, we recommend in-house training programs in which personnel "teach" a topic that is specific to their job. Teaching others is the best kind of training. This kind of in-house training should be complemented with effective outside training. Continuing programs for both researchers and administrative staff that are tailored for RIKEN could be created similar to those offered by the Foundation for Advanced Education in the Sciences (<http://www.faes.org/>), a part of the National Institutes for Health in the United States.

(4) Employment of women and foreign personnel

- Women, as was pointed out in the RAC report, are an important human resource, and it is to be hoped that we will see an increase in women administrative personnel. No time should be wasted in drafting an action plan and guidelines to encourage the entry of women employees.
- There should be a continuing effort to hire foreign personnel, both research and administrative, and arrangements should be made to ensure that compensation can be offered that will secure internationally top-level personnel.

(5) Other matters

- A review should be made of the authority and responsibilities of the administrative organizations at RIKEN headquarters and at the various campuses. The degree of authority and assignment of responsibilities between headquarters and the administrative research promotion divisions at the outlying campuses should be clarified, and decisions should be made on how much initiative can be allowed at the individual campuses.
- Given the need to cut its personnel costs and operating expenses, it is not going to be easy for RIKEN to secure the administrative staff that it needs. But if the objectives for science and technology innovation set forth in Japan's fourth basic plan for science and technology are to be achieved, direct investment in research

will not be enough; clearly, the role of the administrative divisions in linking research and society will become increasingly important. While there will be management costs that need to be streamlined, there will also be research costs that need to be optimized, and the two areas should be separated in making costs analyses. The latter research costs need to be considered as investments and treated accordingly.

- The fact that RIKEN has more fixed-term contract employees than tenured employees is both a strength and a weakness. How effective RIKEN is in taking advantage of this situation will be a test of its managerial skills. RIKEN needs to bring together a diversity of excellent researchers, technical staff, and administrative personnel who meet the highest international standards, and must provide them with the opportunity to make maximum use of their skills and talents. It is also to be hoped that these people will later move on to Japan's universities and other research institutions, as well as overseas, in a beneficial ripple effect. We believe RIKEN has ample capability to do this. The weakness of RIKEN's employment system is that it does not provide young researchers with secure employment. This will be another challenging issue for RIKEN to resolve.

1. Collaborations with universities and industry

Taking the initiative

If collaborative research topics that will have a powerful impact on society are to be chosen, planning and marketing will be just as important as the research itself. And it is the administrative personnel who will need to be at the center of these tasks as RIKEN promotes collaborations with industry and academia.

Establishing a RIKEN style of collaboration

RIKEN's administrative personnel should play a significant role in crafting a unique, RIKEN-style of collaboration. As one way to do this, we recommend the creation of a "pre-baton zone" program. RIKEN's "baton zone" concept is to be commended, but there should be a system in place that gives more leeway for RIKEN initiatives. A "pre-baton zone" funded by RIKEN would enable RIKEN to take the initiative in building up the value of its research results. In designing this kind of program, special care should be taken to draft a business model that emphasizes the securing of external funding.

There is also a need to re-examine RIKEN's intellectual property and create a portfolio of unique RIKEN patents and licenses. If RIKEN is unable to judge the value of its own research results, it should secure people from the outside who can.

Raising awareness

We have high expectations for RIKEN's external collaborations and open innovation initiatives. But to pursue these initiatives RIKEN's administrative personnel will need to change the thinking of RIKEN's researchers. This requires first of all an environment in which there is valid and clear goal-setting and evaluation for both administrative and research personnel. Incentives should be put in place to encourage research results that have the potential to lead to external collaborations or innovations. These incentives can be more than just salary increases. They might, for example, include study programs within and outside Japan, internships at private corporations, and other opportunities for administrative and research personnel to learn and grow. Hereafter, open collaborations with industry will become increasingly important and will require the joint and coordinated commitment of both research and administrative personnel.

Making effective use of overseas bases

To achieve world-class collaborations, RIKEN must make full use of its overseas presence in its marketing strategy. It must first of all clearly define the international standards for its collaborative undertakings, and use its overseas bases to build a network for securing and fostering diverse, top-class international human resources, including administrative personnel with outstanding strategic planning and liaison abilities.

The image we propose is that of a multinational trading company dealing in research, and the need is to foster a greater awareness of how important it is to develop the diverse liaison skills that are integral to such a commercial enterprise.

Finally, RIKEN should seek out as partners those overseas corporations and research organizations that implement best practices. This would involve, for example, finding ways to partner with businesses that have superior patent strategies, such as IBM, and to seek out avenues for human resource exchange with such research institutions as the NIH. In particular, RIKEN should turn its attention to Asia in this regard.

Formulating intermediate and long-term visions

It is to be hoped that RIKEN's administrative personnel will take the initiative to draft intermediate and long-term roadmaps. We are also hopeful that RIKEN's administrative personnel will undertake to re-think their function and take the initiative to draft and implement action plans that will further RIKEN's external collaborations. These intermediate and long-term roadmaps should be periodically re-evaluated and revised as necessary after contrasting actual achievements with original plans. This should be a regular annual undertaking.

Also required is the firm commitment of top management to provide support by promoting RIKEN's objectives and appropriately allocating RIKEN's key resources.

2. Public relations strategies

The foundations of RIKEN's thinking

The Noyori Initiatives for enhancing the visibility of RIKEN, maintaining RIKEN's outstanding history of achievement in science and technology, motivating researchers, making RIKEN useful to the world, and contributing to culture, can be applied to all aspects of RIKEN's operations and management. RIKEN's public relations activities need to be grounded in these initiatives.

Acting quickly

There are already a number of action plans being implemented. The effectiveness of these plans should be reviewed and changes made immediately as necessary without waiting until the plans come to the end of their term.

Organizational reform

RIKEN's public relations should be deliberated at the management level, and all departments including those involved in research should be involved in the discussions so as to heighten everyone's motivation.

Specifically, cross-sectional communication should be encouraged among the following categories of RIKEN personnel to enhance the quality of RIKEN's public relations activities.

- (1) Management
- (2) Public relations committee (membership should be changed to include researchers, and, perhaps once a year, a center or institute director to review PR strategies)
- (3) PR liaison committee
- (4) Individuals directing PR activities at the various RIKEN campuses

Adopting a RIKEN motto or slogan that could be printed on the business cards of all RIKEN personnel could go a long way in enhancing RIKEN's visibility within society at large as well as among those who already have a vested interest in RIKEN.

The spirit and mission of public relations

Defining the mission and implementing a PDCA cycle of "Plan, Do, Check and Act" to achieve the mission is the usual approach to public relations. In doing this at RIKEN,

however, the following two key words should be taken into account: “independence” and “autonomy.” In other words, RIKEN should not depend on Japanese government funds to pay for its public relations activities and should seek out ways to raise the required money on its own.

Specifically, RIKEN should consider creating a PR framework directed at the investment community and possible sponsors. This would be equivalent to the investor relations (IR) activities of a private corporation. The market price of a company’s stock is one way to measure the effectiveness of IR. RIKEN’s public recognition surveys are a good tool for gauging the effectiveness of PR and RIKEN is to be commended for conducting such surveys.

The effectiveness of RIKEN’s investments in PR warrants review. While RIKEN’s approaches to media such as television and newspapers are to be commended, new efforts should be undertaken to enhance its public presence.

RIKEN needs to redefine what its value is to society, who should be the targets of its public relations activities, and what kind of messages it wants to convey. The objective should be to achieve 100% recognition within the international scientific community, rather than, say, 60% recognition among the general public.

Approaches

It is recommended that RIKEN undertake a comprehensive public relations strategy that includes marketing, branding, and investor relations. New targets should be defined and new kinds of PR approaches should be made. This should probably be undertaken not only by those responsible for public relations, but as a collaborative undertaking spanning all departments.

Among many other opportunities at RIKEN for women, both in science and in administrations, public relations is an area in which women could make a major contribution to RIKEN’s mission. It should also be noted that the high visibility of other, well-known research institutions is due in part because they have their own public relations spokesmen. We suggest that RIKEN should foster the development of its own public relations spokeswomen, and take the initiative to recruit people from outside of RIKEN who are well-experienced in PR. Forming a public relations team of personnel from outside and inside RIKEN would be a good way to foster the development of future

public relations personnel.

If RIKEN seeks to attain a global standard of public relations, it must make a major shift in its publicity focus from research facilities and hardware to the researchers themselves. Research is RIKEN's greatest asset. Highlighting the individual RIKEN researchers who carry out that research will certainly attract attention from other sectors.

3. Creating a truly international administration

A role model for globalization

We feel RIKEN has a strong commitment to globalization. All that it needs to do, to put it succinctly, is to continue fearlessly on the course it has set for itself. RIKEN aspires to attain global standards, but it must take care not to settle for the global average. RIKEN has always been at the forefront in the world of research, acting as a role model for other research institutions. It is to be hoped that RIKEN will serve as a national role model for the internationalization of Japan as a whole.

Given this premise, the current goal to increase the percentage of foreign researchers at RIKEN from 15% to 20% is much too timid. The goal should be at least 30% and RIKEN needs to set forth specific steps for achieving this objective.

Extensive overseas experience

RIKEN's globalization must extend to its administrative divisions as well. An active effort should be made to recruit foreign and Japanese management personnel with extensive overseas experience to fill positions in policy planning as well as implementation.

We commend RIKEN for its initiative in implementing overseas programs for its administrative personnel. These kinds of programs are especially important for young administrative personnel. Overseas experience, particularly hands-on training at overseas research institutions, is an effective means of internationalization for RIKEN. It is recommended that RIKEN take this a step further by implementing an exchange program in which personnel at overseas research institutions come to RIKEN. This could be done by taking advantage of RIKEN's wide-spread international network.

Seeking out human resources

To recruit people in line with global standards, RIKEN must prepare appropriate recruiting packages, and this will entail a significant change of RIKEN's current salary scales. We realize this will be very difficult to achieve, but we still urge RIKEN to make a strong effort to overcome the barriers that are in the way. Our full support will be behind this effort.

The international trend today is for researchers to be highly mobile as they move from

country to country in search of better and enhanced research environments. RIKEN can be likened to a baseball team. In assembling the team it must be careful to obtain maximum value and return for its investment in talent. RIKEN must bring together a team that will foster the development of top-class Ichiro-like players who can go out into the world and leave their mark in the major leagues, and at the same time attract world-class players who want to come to RIKEN to further their careers.