

Greetings from the President's Office

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Cooperation among four national and public universities in Akita

There are 14 higher educational institutions in Akita and the president of each work diligently on the management of their institution.

It is important for universities to cooperate not only in nation-wide presidents associations but to also in collaborative interaction among local universities such as faculty exchange with neighboring universities. Akita prefecture has an education cooperation organization called “Consortium Akita” which consists of national, public and private universities as well as junior colleges and institutions in Akita, providing a scheme for credit transfer, student interaction, academic research and faculty/staff development, and an alliance with local high schools. Nevertheless, there are challenges to reaching an adequate standard and achieve outcomes as planned.

The president of Akita University, Akita Prefectural University, Akita University of Art, and AIU, regularly see each other a few times a year to discuss the latest academic news and to develop further collaboration among the universities. Since each university has characteristics and strengths in varying areas, such as in the arts or in internationalization, the different features allow us to be less competitive toward each other and instead more cooperative.

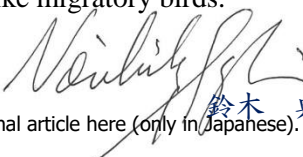
In fact, we, the presidents, all have one common hobby. People might regard us as square, but to be honest, we are very much karaoke lovers. After our official meetings, we have dinner together and go sing karaoke, which is usually not planned.

During my teens and twenties, there was a singing boom and singing cafés became very popular. Strangers would sing together for hours over a cup of coffee. Today, this has been replaced by karaoke; however, singing songs with others, and in public, has always been an attractive feature and beauty for Japanese people who generally feel a sense of embarrassment.

Each of us have our own repertoire of songs and we sing them by taking turns. Honestly speaking, my favorite genre of music to sing is *enka*, Japanese ballads of the *showa* era back in the 1930s and 40s. When I was teaching at universities in the US almost 40 years ago, I used to sing songs loudly in my car on long-distance drives across the Americas in order to help keep me awake. I fondly recall “*Onna sendo uta* (female waterman song)” by Mr. Michiya Mihashi and “*Inochi karetemo* (even if my life withers)” by Mr. Shinichi Mori.

What karaoke invokes for me is the contrasting combination of singing old Japanese *enka* in the open inhabited US prairie, about 50 years ago. It is true that people often appreciate their own culture and cuisines after leaving their home country and even become a little patriotic. Enjoying *enka* during study abroad may sound imprudent, but it was absolutely the height of my intercultural integration for me.

Nowadays in Japan, integration and the reorganization of universities is becoming a reality. I personally would like to enhance the quality of higher education in Akita and establish a new scheme that will allow students of the four universities to multi-directionally enroll in courses, like migratory birds.



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<http://www.asahi.com/area/akita/articles/MTW20190121051550001.html>

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