

[Casebook of International Activities at Kansai University]

International Exchanges between Science and Engineering Students at Kansai University (KU) and Researchers and Students in Germany

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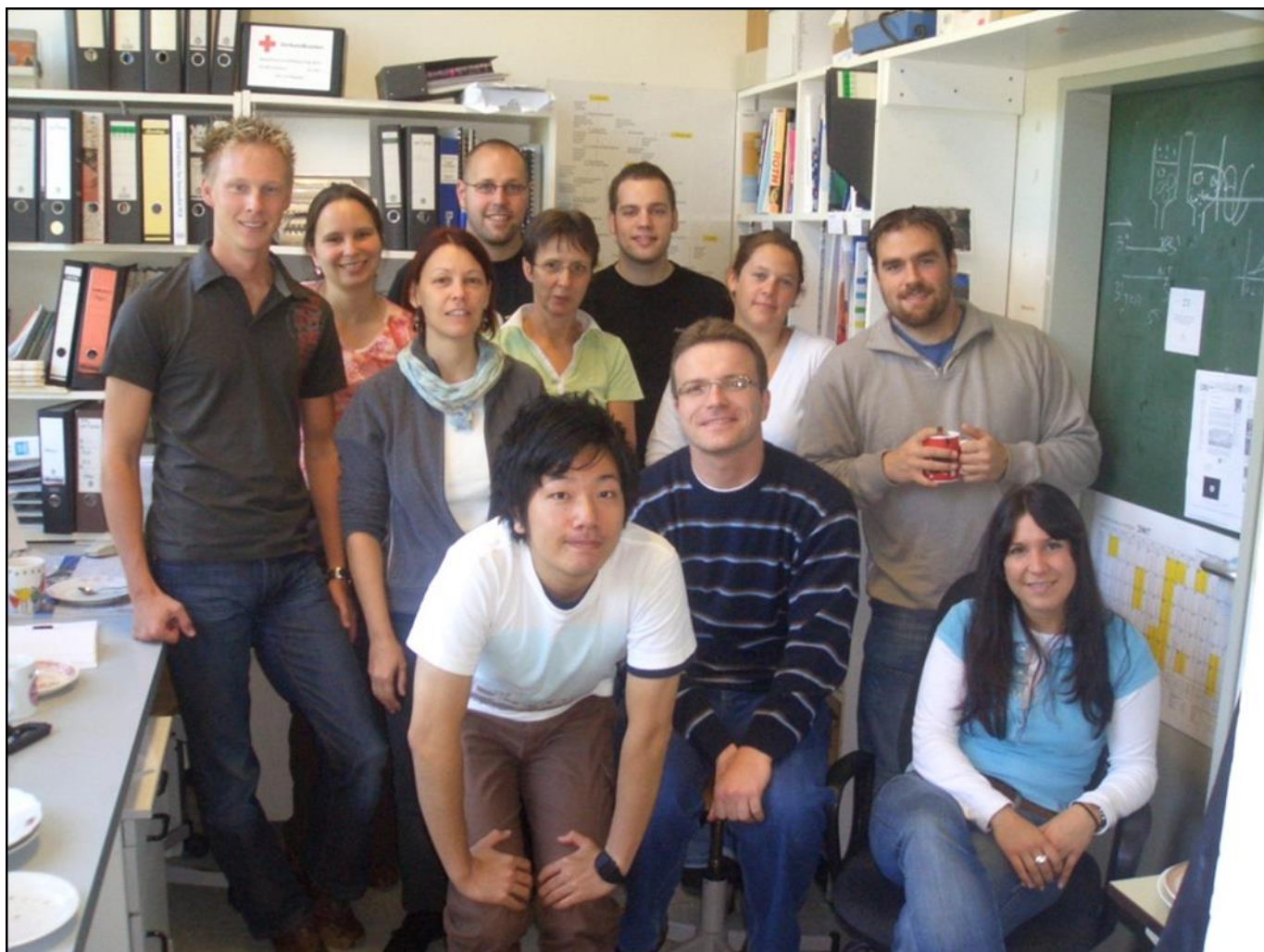


Photo from an exchange experience at the Institute of Bio- and Genosciences of Forschungszentrum Jülich (“Jülich Research Center”), Germany

[Activity outline]

Main activity	Exchanges of researchers and students between KU and universities overseas
Organizations involved (at present)	Institute of Bio- and Genosciences of Forschungszentrum Jülich (FZJ), RWTH Aachen University, University of Münster, Bielefeld University (all in Germany)
Duration	Ongoing since 2007
Number of past exchange students	(Past outbound exchange students from KU) Jun. 2007—1 graduate student, went on exchange to RWTH Aachen University Aug. 2007—1 graduate student, went on exchange to the Institute of Bio- and Genosciences at FZJ Aug. 2007—1 graduate student, went on exchange to the University of Münster Jul. 2008—1 graduate student, went on exchange to the Institute of Bio- and Genosciences at FZJ

	<p>(Past inbound exchange students to KU)</p> <p>Apr. 2005—1 student in a Diploma Course at RWTH Aachen University, came on exchange for a 6-month program at KU</p> <p>Nov. 2016—2 students in a Master’s degree course at Bielefeld University, came on exchange for a 3-month program at KU</p>
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[Interview with Professor Oikawa]

—How did these exchange programs get started?

Prof. Oikawa: For one year, from August 2001 to August 2002, I studied at FZJ in Germany as an overseas researcher from KU. After I returned to Japan, I launched a joint study with the German researchers from various backgrounds that I had become acquainted with during my time in Germany. As part of that study, our research team also thought about starting mutual exchanges of students between the two countries; however, at that time, KU had not yet developed an effective system to send students to universities abroad. Therefore, we decided to take advantage of grants from the “2007 Kansai University Priority Research Fields” program (KU’s own research aid program available at that time), and with these grants, we began our outbound student exchanges to universities and institutions in Germany.

—What was the situation like when KU students were sent abroad on exchanges for the first time?

Prof. Oikawa: Until 2006, in the science and engineering-related fields of study at KU, international exchanges had only been carried out on an individual basis among teachers as part of their research studies, and few international exchanges had been conducted at the organizational level. Against this backdrop, in 2007, following the reorganization of our faculty system in 2006, the Faculty of Engineering—which was what our faculty was called back then—launched practical study programs that sent students to institutions outside KU. Those programs included overseas study programs, and since then, short-term international exchange programs for graduate students, which are tied in with the international joint study programs for teachers, have been conducted.

—How were you personally involved in the launch of these programs?

Prof. Oikawa: To stimulate the development of international exchanges at the Faculty of Engineering at an organizational level, I prepared plans to incorporate individual-level research studies into a system that utilizes networks and to start short-term study abroad programs for graduate students. As one of the model programs, I submitted a research project proposal (that mainly focused on the area of life science and biotechnology) titled “Proposal of International Exchange Programs in the Field of Life Science and Biotechnology by Utilizing Networks” to the selection committee of the “2007 Kansai University Priority Research Fields” financial aid program, and luckily the proposal was accepted by the committee.

—How did this proposed research project work?

Prof. Oikawa: Through this research project, our team succeeded in incorporating joint research between KU and European universities and research institutions (especially in Germany, the U.K., and France), at which only a small percentage of KU exchange students had chosen to study until then, into a system utilizing networks. In addition, we managed to strengthen and further stimulate joint research by teachers, and also to begin short-term overseas study programs for graduate students at KU. We were particularly successful at creating such programs for first year graduate students, to whom it had been almost impossible to provide such opportunities due to the strict rules set at KU at that time. Since then, we have been sending KU students to universities and institutions in Germany and accepting exchange students from them. Through these exchange programs, we strive to further advance joint research and do our best to help students become directly involved with people from different cultures, improve their English presentation and communication skills, and broaden their international perspectives.

—What have been the difficulties or problems in developing these programs?

Prof. Oikawa: With regards to the KU students we have sent abroad, we have had some trouble getting them to the universities they are to attend, finding ways to cover their expenses, and securing their safety. Concerning incoming exchange students to KU, in 2005, a system of accepting international exchange students did not yet exist at KU. Because of that, back then, we faced difficulties working things out with the relevant university offices, particularly in finding accommodations for these exchange students. I just hope that we will have more and better accommodation facilities for the foreign science and engineering students attending our short-term exchange programs coming from universities that are not KU partners...

—How are you handling the costs and expenses of these exchange programs?

Prof. Oikawa: In 2007, we took advantage of KU's "Priority Research Fields" research aid program. In subsequent years, however, both outgoing and incoming exchange students have been paying their own expenses themselves.

—What are your future goals with these programs?

Prof. Oikawa: We would like to continue our outbound and inbound international exchanges, focusing especially on exchanges with universities and institutions in Germany. We will also keep working hard to make a contribution, however small that may be, to the development of the international perspectives of students studying in the field of science and engineering.



Photos from exchange experiences at the University of Münster, Germany

[Relevant Website URL]

“The Oikawa Lab” (The Research Lab of Enzyme Science and Technology) website—English
The Department of Life Science and Biotechnology of the Faculty of Chemistry, Materials and Bioengineering, Kansai University (http://biomole.life-bio.kansai-u.ac.jp/new/index_en.html)