

Cooperation, Collaboration, Independence and Participation: Developing University Co-op Activities throughout Japan and the World

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The value of the University Co-op has been more and more appreciated both domestically and internationally.

The transformation of national universities into independent administrative corporations has forced not only national universities but also public and private colleges and universities to undertake managerial efforts with ever limited budgets which make it difficult for them to fulfill education and research missions. So, conducting student support activities, ranging from campus welfare to career development programs, tends to be beyond their reach. The comprehensive and fundamental services, including operation of cafeterias, campus stores and travel agencies, career services and the Student Mutual Benefit, can only be provided by the University Co-op, with dimension and substance acquired over a long history.

The University Co-op is a co-operative, which is totally different from private companies with which some universities have partnered up in recent years. Business the University Co-op engages in is not the same as those of for-profit companies. Run by the cooperation of students, graduate students and international students as well as faculty and staff, the University Co-op aims for members' benefits. Therefore, the University Co-op, consisting of these constituents of the university is able to collaborate with the university's efforts in education and research.

The University Co-op solidifies the financial foundation by making efficient use of the share capital funded by members, and has maintained and strengthened independence, which is based on the democratic "one person, one vote" principle. In the process, the University Co-op is largely dependent on the participation of members in business and social activities as well as efficient and hard works of Co-op staffs. Therefore, an ever increasing number of universities throughout Japan has begun to enjoy the virtuous circle with values of cooperation, collaboration, independence and participation.

Through recent international exchange programs, it becomes obvious that activities of the University Co-op are unique and worth extending worldwide. This year, NFUCA will zealously continue to promote the dissemination of the activities of the University Co-op in Japan throughout Asia and the rest of the world.