

Summary

The Chiba University Global COE Program under the leadership of Dr. Toshinori Nakayama has been remarkably active and highly successful in only its second year of existence. The Program has already held three international symposiums and four workshops in addition to jointly organizing a summer program with RIKEN. The Visiting Professor program consisting of 18 internationally recognized scientists from around the world has brought a remarkable number of leading scientists to Chiba University for varying periods of time to educate and stimulate both students and researchers. Reciprocally, Chiba University graduate students and scientists have made over 30 trips overseas for both short and long term educational purposes, providing not only advanced scientific training but providing important two-way scientific exchanges. In addition, the Program has embarked on new approaches to enhance the education and English skills of both graduate students and medical students including the establishment of new research seminars and new presentation seminars for graduate students and the establishment of new courses designed to stimulate medical student interest in translational and clinical research. Overall, the International Advisory Committee is extremely impressed and enthusiastic about the Program's educational and scientific successes to date, and endorse with the greatest possible enthusiasm the continuation of the Program and its funding. It is the opinion of the International Advisory Committee that the Chiba University Global COE Program is already a great success, with even greater successes to come in the future, and that the Chiba University Global COE Program will play an increasingly important role in developing and promoting Japan as a world leader in immune system regulation and treatment.

For the Advisory Committee,



Alfred Singer, Chairman

I. Management by the program leader

The G-COE program has more than met its goal to provide a focus for research and training in immunology and immunotherapy. This has been achieved through a series of meetings, student/young investigator activities, on-going collaborations and interactions. The leadership for this G-COE is outstanding and Dr. Nakayama has done a superb job of launching the G-COE program. The G-COE program already has international visibility and has brought new, original perspectives to immunology at Chiba University and worldwide.

(A) Home page

The current homepage is informative, attractive and easy to navigate. It has been suggested that summaries of each project's annual progress be added to the homepage, as well as links that would allow the visitor to drill down for additional information and articles.

(B) Annual Report

The annual report is comprehensive and easy-to-follow, giving an excellent over-view of the Program's research and training activities. Most important it provides clear evidence that the G-COE has been remarkably successful in both its research program and training in the short time of its existence. The G-COE should serve as a model for international scientific exchange and national scientific reorganization.

(C) Newsletter

The Newsletters are informative, professional and attractive. However, the Newsletter would benefit by clarifying who the target audience is. The newsletter also should consider a greater focus on science, including more research highlights and workshop summaries. The graphic representations of scientific principles are outstanding. There should be more of those.

II. Education of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows

1) G-COE RA (research assistant) program

This is an outstanding approach to mentoring students, both in how to deliver seminars and to speak publicly in English. The G-COE-RA program, Annual Best Research Award and G-COE CVPP are very well-organized in terms of educational structure, promotion system and internationalization. An added benefit to this program is that it promotes discussion between lecturers in basic research and relevant clinical researchers, thereby accelerating the integration of research on immune system regulation and therapeutics among young researchers. The entire Advisory Board expressed great enthusiasm for extending support for as many young RA and Ph.D. students as possible.

2) Annual Best Research Award

The Advisory Board is very supportive of the goal of encouraging and rewarding outstanding students and providing them with international research experience. There is a general sentiment that more students should be recognized in some way.

3) Global COE CVPP (Chiba Visiting Professor Program)

This is an excellent way to stimulate the intellectual environment and expose students to new ideas and approaches. Indeed, this program is vital to the mission of the G-COE. In the future, consideration might be given to including small group discussions for the visiting professors. The possibility of student exchanges with the labs of the visiting professors might be considered. It was also suggested that more European immunologists be among the visiting professors.

4) Independent young researchers

The Advisory Committee strongly supports the appointment of independent young researchers as an extremely important function of the COE. The COE should take a leadership role advancing women scientists, as they are underrepresented in the Japanese research community.

5) International symposium, workshop, and retreat

There is unanimous agreement that the scientific symposia have been exceptionally successful events and so are highly valued. It has been suggested that consideration be given to organizing a symposia specifically composed of international young investigators and students.

6) Efforts to train young researchers with a view of promotion of clinical research

The proposed new programs all hold great promise to improve the clinical training and patient-oriented research of future physician-scientists. It is suggested that the new programs be implemented over time, rather than all at once, to avoid distracting attention away from the currently successful G-COE programs.

III. Research Activities

Each of the core researchers is playing a vital role to the world-class research operation of the G-COE. The students are playing vital roles in this process and are publishing and presenting their work sufficiently. High-impact papers have been published in both the basic and clinical arenas, demonstrating that the research conducted in the G-COE is recognized as excellent by the broader scientific community. The member list of G-COE fellows is a renowned set of investigators who are collectively influencing research on asthma, allergy, autoimmunity, infectious diseases and basic discovery throughout the world. The projects concerning research activities performed by the RA graduate students are high-impact, rigorous and relevant to human health; the summaries are very informative. To date, the students are making good progress.

IV. Others

The Chiba G-COE serves as a model as to how important such initiatives can be for promoting outstanding research and education in basic and clinical sciences. It is with the greatest possible enthusiasm that the International Advisory Committee endorses the continuation of funding for the Chiba G-COE.