

## INTRODUCTION

The National Institute for Basic Biology (NIBB) was founded in 1977 as one of the Inter-University Research Institutes to promote and stimulate studies in the field of biology. As a center of excellence (COE), NIBB promotes not only basic biology but also the modern biological sciences by conducting first-rate research on site as well as in cooperation with national, public and private universities and research organizations. Research at the NIBB covers a wide variety of biological fields, such as cell biology, developmental biology, neurobiology, evolutionary biology, environmental biology, and theoretical biology, and is conducted to elucidate general and fundamental mechanisms underlying various biological phenomena.

In 2004, NIBB, in alliance with four other national institutes - the National Astronomical Observatory, the National Institute for Fusion Science, the National Institute for Physiological Sciences, and the Institute for Molecular Science - established the National Institutes of Natural Sciences (NINS), one of the four Inter-University Research Institute Corporations. At this time NINS began to promote collaboration among researchers of the five constituting institutes and to sponsor many projects, one of which was to hold the Imaging Science Symposium in August, in which cutting-edge imaging technology related to a wide range of basic scientific fields from astronomy to biology was discussed.

Besides being a research institute, NIBB also functions as an institution of higher education. It constitutes the Department of Basic Biology in the School of Life Science of the Graduate University for Advanced Studies (SOKENDAI). The Department offers a five-year Doctoral course (with a quota of three students) for university graduates and a three-year senior Doctoral course (with a quota of six students) for those students who have completed a Master's course.

Changes in our personnel during 2005 were as follows. Prof. Norio MURATA retired and Dr. Khoji UENO moved to Musashino University as a professor on March 31st. Dr. Tomomichi FUJITA moved to Hokkaido University as an assistant professor on June 30th. Dr. Hirokazu TSUKAYA moved to the University of Tokyo as a professor, while at the same time becoming an adjunct professor at NIBB, and Dr. Takashi KITSUKAWA moved to Osaka University as an associate professor on September 30th.

Conversely, three researchers were newly appointed: Prof. Masamitsu WADA from Tokyo Metropolitan University and former adjunct professor at NIBB, as a professor, and Dr. Hitoshi NAKATOGAWA from a JSPS Post-Doctoral fellow as a research associate, both on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Dr. Takako TANAHASHI, a visiting scientist, was appointed as a research associate on July 1st. Dr. Takehiko KOBAYASHI was promoted to an associate professor from a research associate on April 1st. In addition, Dr. Takeshi NODA returned from his stay at UC San Diego on December 12th.



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NIBB has started a collaboration program with the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) under the sponsorship of NINS. The agreement was signed on July 11th by Dr. Yoshiro SHIMURA, the president of NINS, and Dr. Iain MATTAJ, the director general of EMBL, and is effective for at least five years. The program aims to promote joint research activities between the two organizations and to prompt mutual visits by researchers and graduate students, thereby encouraging exchange of information and intimate communication, both of which are indispensable for the prosperity of joint research. Activities seen this year are as follows. A symposium on developmental and cellular biology was held in July at EMBL, Heidelberg. Seminars were held at NIBB by visiting researchers of EMBL, while NIBB researchers stayed at EMBL for the preparation of collaboration using the microscopic facility at EMBL.

The Strategic Planning Department, a new office for the promotion of collaborative activities, the management of international conferences and training courses held by NIBB, and various public relations activities such as publications, posters, and web pages, was opened in April. The office is chaired by the vice director of the institute and is expected to support the director-general in developing a future strategy for the progress of the institute.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Prof. Mitsuyasu HASEBE for winning the JSPS Prize and Japan Academy Medal in March and Prof. Yoshinori OHSUMI for winning the Fujihara Award in June.

We always welcome any questions or suggestions concerning the research activities of NIBB.

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Director-General