

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 four Inter-University Research Institute Corporations. At that 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 2006 were as follows. Assoc. Prof. Koji Mikami moved to Hokkaido University as an associate professor on August 31 and Assoc. Prof. Takehiko Kobayashi moved to the National Institute of Genetics as a professor on November 30. Dr. Kazuhiro Kikuchi moved to Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research as a research associate and Dr. Takeshi Noda moved to Osaka University as an associate professor on January 31. Dr. Goro Horiguchi moved to the University of Tokyo as an associate professor on October 31.

The following researchers joined our institute over the past year. Dr. Shigenori Nonaka from UCSF as an associate professor on January 16, Dr. Osamu Sadakane, a JSPS post-doctoral fellow, as a research associate on August 1, and Dr. Takahiro Yamaguchi, a JSPS post-doctoral fellow, as a research associate on October 1. Dr. Atsushi Miyawaki became an adjunct professor and Dr. Kazuhiro Sakamaki became an adjunct associate professor on April 1.

The collaboration program between NIBB and the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) under



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the sponsorship of NINS, which began in 2005, is a continuing success. The program aims to promote joint research activities between the two organizations and to prompt mutual visits by researchers and graduate students, thereby encouraging an exchange of information and intimate communication, both of which are indispensable for the prosperity of joint research. Activities seen this year are as follows. Two symposia were held at NIBB: "Frontiers in Bioimaging" in March and "Biology of Protein Conjugation: Structure and Function" in December. A meeting on mouse biology was held at Moterotondo EMBL outstation in April. Four seminars were held at NIBB by visiting researchers of EMBL, while NIBB researchers stayed at EMBL to prepare for the introduction of the SPIM microscope to NIBB.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Prof. Mikio Nishimura for winning the Chunichi Cultural Prize in May, Prof. Norihiro Okada for winning the Fujihara Prize in June, and Prof. Yoshinori Ohsumi for winning the Japan Academy Prize in July. It was our great honor that NIBB's former Director General, Emer. Prof. Hideo Mohri, was decorated with the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Gold and Silver Star in November.

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

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Director-General