



Kobe University Newsletter "Kaze"

**Vol. 04**

April 2018

## **RESEARCH**

Field-based international law scholar heads to Antarctica!

## **STUDENT FEATURE**

International victory for Offshore Sailing Club

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT**

A bridge between Japan's mountain villages and the world



Kobe insights

# Campus wildlife and mascot Shindai Uribo

Kobe University's main campus area Rokkodai is located at the foot of the Rokko mountains, surrounded by greenery. This area is home to many wildlife, including Japanese wild boar (*inoshishi*). Wild boar are nocturnal and rarely approach humans, but sometimes they can be seen in the early morning or twilight, particularly around the higher areas of the campus – between the trees next to the Faculty and Graduate School of Law, or near the entrance to the Graduate School of Human Development and Environment. If you're lucky you may even see baby wild boar – a lot smaller than the adults, with distinctive stripes on their backs.

These wild boar piglets (known as *uribo* in Japanese) have been the unofficial symbol of Kobe University for many years, and the Rokkodai area even has "Uribo Road", a raised wooden-board platform that connects the campuses. You can sometimes see *uribo* in the undergrowth alongside this platform.



Uribo Road at Rokkodai 2nd Campus

The *Uribo* are also the inspiration for Kobe University's mascot character, "Shindai Uribo" (or Uribo for short). Its name includes the shortened version of Kobe University in Japanese (神大, pronounced "Shindai"), and its design first appeared on the student portal site "Uribo portal". It became the official mascot in autumn 2017, and now Shindai Uribo can be found on web pages, brochures and flyers throughout the university, not to mention in the campus stores. Kobe University students and staff have designed a collection of Uribo stamps for the Japanese chat application LINE.

Shindai Uribo speaks in Kobe dialect, and in keeping with the cosmopolitan image of Kobe, its hobbies include fashion and making sweets. You can follow Uribo's adventures on the Kobe University Instagram (see page 20).

A final note: remember that while the mascot character might be cute and cuddly, don't try to approach or feed any of the wild *uribo* you might see around campus. Their parents are probably close by!



Shindai Uribo outside JAIMS, Hawaii (home to the Honolulu Office of Kobe University)

## Why "Kaze"?

There are two main concepts behind the title "Kaze", meaning "wind". Firstly, Kobe University's goal to innovate, creating a wind of change. Secondly, our location at the foot of Mt Rokkō, an area known for the invigorating wind of Rokkō-oroshi that blows down from the mountain range.

The calligraphy on the cover of "Kaze" was created by Professor Emeritus UOZUMI Kazuaki, a researcher of calligraphy at Kobe University.



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神戸大学

Contact us: intl-relations@office.kobe-u.ac.jp (International Affairs Planning Division)



## SPOTLIGHT

# “Fast-growing university ventures will change Kobe and Japan”

The Graduate School of Science, Technology and Innovation and Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Co., Ltd

To commercialize university research and give back to society, Kobe University started an initiative that oversees the business creation process from education to supporting university start-ups. The Graduate School of Science, Technology and Innovation (opened in April 2016) in collaboration with Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Co., Ltd (STE Co., Ltd.) has established 3 business ventures in just 18 months. From spring 2018, the same Graduate School opens a doctoral course. But why are these university ventures

necessary? We asked board directors and professors YAMAMOTO Kazuhiko and KUTSUNA Kenji about the significance of this initiative.

### University research as the seeds for innovation

Why did you start a company as well as a new Graduate School?

**Prof. Yamamoto:** At our Graduate School we don't just want science-oriented students to work in research and development. We aim to equip them with the skills to link their

results to social and economic values – in other words, to innovate.

But it's difficult to fully support the business side using university organizations. So we created STE Co., Ltd. to support our start-ups, and we set up a fund to invest in these businesses (General incorporated association Kobe University Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Fund). Now we have a system in place that nurtures our university ventures. In the future, I hope we can recover part of the ventures' value in dividends and capital gains, and invest this in the University and new research and development.

Do other universities have similar initiatives?

**Prof. Yamamoto:** Some universities create venture capital, but STE Co., Ltd. doesn't provide capital to invest in established businesses - it functions as a seed accelerator that is involved in the company from square one. I think this is the only initiative of its kind in Japan.

Japanese universities are carrying out impressive research and development, but it's very rare to find people within the institutions who see the connection from research to business. I think it's easier to innovate when you have people like Professor Kutsuna and myself involved, who have been involved in business venture strategy and finance.

You started 3 companies in 18 months. That's fast.

**Prof. Kutsuna:** We already had research results gestating from professors at Kobe University, so we were able to develop them quickly. We've been preparing to open this Graduate School for two years. In meetings with department Dean

Professor KONDO Akihiko and other science professors, I heard many times that even though we have lots of research seeds, the commercialization process doesn't go smoothly. So I invited Professor Yamamoto and we made a scheme for commercialization.

How does STE Co., Ltd support the 3 companies?

**Prof. Yamamoto:** For BioPalette Co., Ltd. we helped them get funding from a large American venture capital fund. For Synplogen Co., Ltd. we consolidated intellectual property rights from the state and large chemical manufacturers, and the next step is large-scale financing. For ViSpot Co., Ltd. we matched them with Sunstar Inc. in a capital and business alliance that has become a joint venture. Our support is different for each company based on the contents of the science and technology.

### Training in-house and independent entrepreneurs at doctoral level

**Prof. Yamamoto:** We'll carry on commercializing existing research results, but the true aim of STE Co., Ltd. is creating businesses from new research. Our doctoral course opens from spring 2018. This course will include students with experience in the working world, in research and development. Before graduating, each student must submit both a scientific doctoral thesis and a business plan in the form of a report on their innovation and strategy research.

What do you mean by people with experience in work and R&D?

**Prof. Yamamoto:** For example, people who want to become in-house entrepreneurs – they have been sent here from their company and will return there after graduation. Or people who have left their companies to become independent entrepreneurs. We'll train both groups into R&D experts with the skills to commercialize.

The doctoral program means that we'll be able to support the whole process from seed discovery to



### interviewee 2 KUTSUNA Kenji

Vice Dean of the Graduate School of Science, Technology and Innovation  
Professor at the Graduate School of Business Administration (jointly-held post)  
Board Director of Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Co., Ltd.

commercialization. This is our new experiment.

**Prof. Kutsuna:** The doctoral program can accommodate 10 students. Our master's course has a 40 student capacity, and a normal balance for this would be 4 or 5 doctoral students, but we doubled this number.

How will you provide guidance for the business plans?

**Prof. Yamamoto:** There are 6 full-time professors acting as supervisors, including me, and we will organize an advisory board of specialists in finance, intellectual property rights and business strategy will provide guidance to supplement our supervision. We'll start with about 10 members, mainly from outside the University.



### interviewee 1 YAMAMOTO Kazuhiko

Professor at the Graduate School of Science, Technology and Innovation  
Professor at the Graduate School of Business Administration (jointly-held post)  
Board Director of Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Co., Ltd.

## Business ventures for rapid global innovation

What is your current goal?

**Prof. Yamamoto:** We want to make rapidly-growing business ventures at Kobe University - "business ventures for rapid global innovation". Without these businesses, Japan's GDP won't grow.

For example, in the USA the rapid growth of Stanford University's business ventures triggered the formation of Silicon Valley, which now leads the world in IT innovation. The huge success of business ventures from San Diego University made San Diego one of the largest bioclusters. Both started with explosive growth of university ventures. I want to create businesses like this, and contribute to the development of the Kobe area.

**Prof. Kutsuna:** I feel the same way. My dream is that a business venture built on research from Kobe University professors will achieve global success, and one of my aims is to make Kobe University the main base in Japan for education, research and practice in science, technology and entrepreneurship.

**Prof. Yamamoto:** The other day, representatives from two global venture capital firms paid us a visit (ARCH Venture Partners and Eight Roads Ventures Japan). They were very interested in Kobe University's initiatives and the business ventures supported by STE Co., Ltd., and they said they would consider us in their next funding period. The fact that our initiative has created an opportunity for foreign investors to notice Kobe is one positive result.

Do you have plans for a 4th venture?

**Prof. Yamamoto:** Yes. Next year we aim to establish another company and we're preparing for that at the moment. But it's on quite a large scale, so we are talking to Dean Kondo about narrowing the framework.

Finally, what are the conditions for a business to become a business venture for rapid global innovation?

**Prof. Yamamoto:** One of our aims is a listed market value of over 10,000 million yen.



## Research at Kobe



# Field-based international law scholar heads to Antarctica

### BioPalette Co., Ltd.

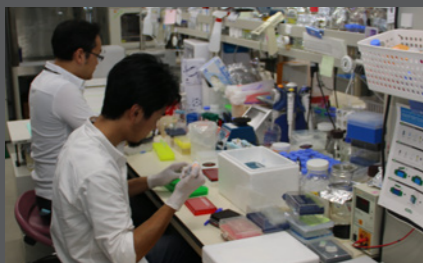
Head office: Nada district, Kobe  
Capital: 200,819,800 yen  
Established: February 21, 2017  
Representative Director: MURASE Shoko (Professor KONDO Akihiko, Professor NISHIDA Keiji, and STE Co., Ltd. CEO MIYAKE Hideaki participate as directors)

#### Seed technology

Research results from Graduate School of Innovation Professor NISHIDA Keiji and Professor KONDO Akihiko

#### About the company

Based on genome editing technology that does not slice DNA, the company aims to develop in the medical, pharmaceutical, agricultural and microorganism fields. In addition to building a strong base in intellectual property strategy, they are looking at the potential of in-house development and alliances with other companies (joint development and selling licenses) in plans to develop globally.



### Synplogen Co., Ltd.

Head office: Nada district, Kobe  
Capital: 10,000,000 yen  
Established: February 21, 2017  
Representative director: MURASE Shoko (Professor KONDO Akihiko, Project Associate Professor TSUGE Kenji, and STE Co., Ltd. CEO MIYAKE Hideaki participate as directors)

#### Seed technology

Research results from Graduate School of Innovation Project Associate Professor TSUGE Kenji and Professor KONDO Akihiko

#### About the company

With the creation of long-chain DNA as its core technology, the company aims to develop in bioindustry, medicine and microorganism research through (1) contracts for creation of long-chain DNA (~50kb), (2) contracts in breeding microorganisms using long-chain DNA creation technology and (3) consultations about long-chain DNA design.

### ViSpot Co., Ltd.

Head office: Chuo district, Kobe  
Capital: 40,000,000 yen (50% from Kobe University professors, STE Co., Ltd. etc. and 50% from Sunstar Inc.)  
Established: September 29, 2017  
Representative director: MORISADA Eito (Board Chairman) KOTANI Tomoko (President). (Professor YAMAMOTO Kazuhiko, Project Professor UCHIDA Kazuhisa, and Project Professor LEE In eui participate as directors)

#### Company vision

To contribute to sustainable growth and development of the biopharmaceutical industry through the practical application of research results that support the development of biopharmaceuticals.

#### About the company

The company will contribute to biopharmaceutical development in Japan by providing a virus clearance examination. This includes test design, creation and submission, a service reporting the test contents, results, lab equipment management and virus measurement, and third-party quality assurance.



*Professor SHIBATA Akiho describes international law as "a tool to establish and strengthen cooperation between nations and to solve disputes arising in a global society". From November 2016 to March 2017, he visited the Antarctic to examine how the Antarctic Treaty is implemented in practice. A scholar of international law carrying out fieldwork with an Antarctic research expedition team is unprecedented. Professor Shibata calls his method "field-based international law studies". As Director of the Polar Cooperation Research Centre, he is now expanding his fieldwork to the Arctic.*

### Diplomatic negotiation and the Antarctica as fields for international law studies

Why are the field-based studies necessary for Antarctic Treaty research?

**Prof. Shibata:** I started to examine the Antarctic Treaty about 25 years

ago. The Antarctic is a landmass, so according to usual international law, it would not be strange for it to be under territorial sovereignty of some nations. In fact, seven countries have made territorial claims, but these are being "shelved" by the Antarctic Treaty, which at the same time guarantees continuing international cooperation and the freedom to carry out scientific investigations in the Antarctica. The Antarctic Treaty is so fascinating.

I started to analyze how the Antarctic Treaty and its related instruments have been created and operationalized, but I couldn't get hold of any documents. This is because agreements between nations are the results of diplomatic negotiations based on confidential documents. While I was searching for those documents in various places, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I found out that I could access the documents if I attended the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCMs), where treaty parties discuss the implementation of the Treaty. So I have attended the meetings since 2002 as a member of the Japanese delegation.





*“Natural scientists collect plant samples in the field, and I collect documents from treaty negotiations.”*

**interviewee: SHIBATA Akiho**

Professor, Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies (International Law), Director of the Polar Cooperation Research Centre

*You were there at the diplomatic negotiations.*

**Prof. Shibata:** Yes. Treaties are a result of diplomatic negotiations, so if you attend the negotiations, you can understand how international laws are created and implemented. Natural science researchers collect plant samples in the field, and I collect documents from treaty negotiations. That’s how I started my field-based research.

I participated in the meetings for about ten years, and had opportunities to speak to scientists doing research in the Antarctic. They told me, “Unless you visit the Antarctic yourself, you won’t know how international law functions there, or whether it is useful”, and that piqued my interest. They wanted me to see the Showa Station [in Antarctica]. For that I had to join the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition team, but there was no precedent for a social scientist taking part. I was able to revise the Antarctic Research Expedition Plan to include humanities and social sciences in the Japanese research, and finally I could go.

*What were the results of your field survey?*

**Prof. Shibata:** I’m in the middle of writing a book about them. I may also have a chance to publish papers about my survey as a legal scholar, and speak at international conferences as a representative of the Japanese government.

## International law and Antarctic tourism

*Why did all parties agree to shelve their territorial claims?*

**Prof. Shibata:** One reason is a special trait of the Antarctic: the potential results from scientific activities there are extremely beneficial for humankind. Under the Treaty, the territorial claims are neither negated nor recognized. The Antarctic Treaty is based on an agreement that these claims will not be invoked for the sake of global interests in the Antarctic, including the merits of scientific activities there. The Antarctic Treaty was concluded at the height of the Cold War in 1959, but despite military-motivated politics, they were able to agree on the freedom of scientific activities and the peaceful use of Antarctica. It is amazing that this has been maintained for more than half a century.

*You’ve also identified the value of the Antarctic as a tourist destination*

**Prof. Shibata:** The Antarctic environment, with scenery untouched by human civilization, is extremely attractive. About 50,000 people visit the Antarctic every year even now, and during my trip there I felt that we couldn’t suppress the human motivation to see such attractive places. Some say there should not be any money-making activities in the Antarctic, including tourism. But if you regulate tourism because it’s commercial, what about Japanese fishing activities in the Antarctic? It’s a tricky issue.

I think that while tourism itself should be permitted, balanced rules are necessary to protect the Antarctic environment and our scientific activities. Japan’s Showa Station is not included in sightseeing courses yet, but if tourism expands across the whole region visitors will probably go there. Before that happens we need to establish appropriate rules that will address environmental protection and emergency rescue measures as well. Having been there myself, I have a sense of the Showa Station’s isolated geographical conditions, and the sensitivities of allowing tourists to enter such a locality. I think this enables me to contribute to establishing international laws that suit the location.

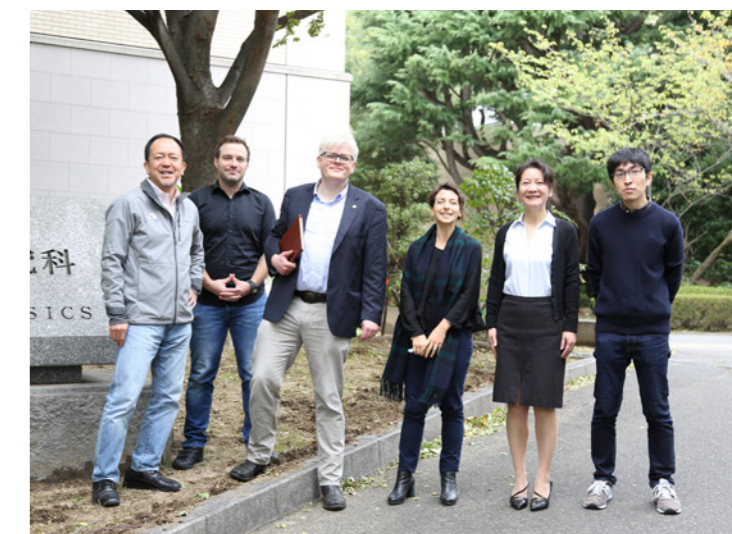
## The role of international law in a delicate region

*“Commercial use” is also referred to in bioprospecting issues.*

**Prof. Shibata:** Bioprospecting is searching for genetic resources in organisms that can be used for commercial purposes such as making pharmaceutical products. Unique genetic material tends to be found in extreme environments, including polar regions. Today, there is already an international law stipulating that when a company in country A finds a useful genetic



*The Polar Cooperation Research Centre (PCRC) hosts international researchers, some of them Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) fellows, from universities in Finland, Norway, Spain and China. They are all attracted to the PCRC’s unique research on Arctic international legal and policy issues. The seminars, attended by those international researchers, have tremendous impact on the students studying international law at the Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies.*



resource in country B and benefits from it, country A must share such benefits with the country of origin, namely country B.

However, in the Antarctic the territorial issue makes this system complicated. For example, Japan’s Showa Station is in an area claimed by Norway. If Japanese researchers take genetic material back and Japanese companies make a profit from it, can Norway claim a share from Japan? Norway may argue: “We agree with freedom for scientific activities in our claimed territory, but not for commercial activities”. It is difficult to implement a legal system in the Antarctic based on a claim arising from the “territory” where such genetic material is found.

Some say we should start regulating bioprospecting activities, but it is a complex legal operation to draw a line between scientific and commercial aims. Personally, I think that the objective criteria for drawing that line is openness – in other words, if one can exchange information regarding one’s activities in a detailed and timely fashion as required under the Antarctic Treaty, those activities can be considered scientific with no confidential trade secret.

*It’s a very delicate field, isn’t it?*

**Prof. Shibata:** The Antarctic Treaty can be vulnerable because of its territorial ambiguities, but all the nations involved work together to protect this fragile base. This is very important – if this collapses, everything will be jeopardized.

International law plays an important part in this kind of delicate situation.

## Does the Arctic need an “Arctic Treaty”?

*Will you be conducting Arctic research at the Polar Cooperation Research Centre?*

**Prof. Shibata:** It was mainly established to do research on Arctic legal and policy issues. While the Antarctic is a landmass surrounded by ocean, the Arctic is an ocean surrounded by land, which includes, for example, parts of Russian and Canadian territories. The land in the Arctic region belongs to the eight Arctic states, whereas the Arctic Ocean is governed by the Law of the Sea. So there is no Arctic Treaty.

After establishing the Centre and starting research, I realized that the Arctic has the same traits as the Antarctic, so we should encourage scientific activities in this region also. When I visited the Antarctic, it occurred to me that we should also recognize the Arctic as a special region in international law. I want to build upon my Antarctic Treaty research and look at international laws that take account of the special traits of the Arctic.

*Are you envisaging an “Arctic Treaty”?*

**Prof. Shibata:** I don’t think we need one. Rather than making a treaty that comprehensively regulates the entire region, I think it’s better to establish separate treaties

for different issues: scientific cooperation, ocean use, fishing activities, etc. There are different countries involved for each of those issues. For example, the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation only involves eight countries with Arctic territories, but Japan and China can join the fishing treaty for the Arctic Ocean. The players are different, so I think a systematic development of functional treaties is more effective than having one core agreement.

I also attended the negotiations for the Agreement on Enhancing International Arctic Scientific Cooperation. Participating in these Arctic diplomatic meetings gives me a better insight into the particularities of the Antarctic Treaty meetings.

*You’re field-based in the Arctic research too. How interested are students in this field?*

**Prof. Shibata:** Quite a few students express an interest, but both the Antarctic and the Arctic are very far for them [wry laughter]. I talk about how interesting field-based international law studies can be to deepen students’ interest. I would like to pass on to young, promising international law scholars my experience and the voluminous documents I collected from the field.

**Editor’s note: This article can also be found on the Research at Kobe website under “Spotlight”:**

[http://www.kobe-u.ac.jp/research\\_at\\_kobe\\_en/index.html](http://www.kobe-u.ac.jp/research_at_kobe_en/index.html)





## Research Center for Urban Safety and Security

In January 1995 the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake devastated the city of Kobe and the surrounding area. 47 students and staff at Kobe University lost their lives. Just over one year later, in May 1996, Kobe University established the Research Center for Urban Safety and Security (RCUSS). The Center's mission is "to realize a safe and secure society, contributing to the creation of vibrant urban areas through comprehensive education and research on the necessary methodologies and frameworks".

Located in a quake-hit city, Kobe University is acutely aware of the need for comprehensive research to ensure safety in urban areas. The Center's research deals with a broad spectrum of disasters, from earthquake risk assessment to infectious diseases and disaster emergency medicine. The Center's research groups work with faculties in Kobe University, national and international organizations.

The Center consists of three internal departments and a Cooperative Department that collaborates with researchers in medicine and health science, humanities, sociology, and international areas.

The **Risk Assessment Department** assesses the resilience of urban living environments in the face of disasters such as earthquakes, tsunami and extreme weather. They study the mechanisms for earthquakes and tsunami, and model the safety of the ground we build on.

The **Risk Management Department** focuses on lessening the impact of disasters – this includes emergency responses, short and long-term plans for recovery and reconstruction, and fire safety management. The department looks at infrastructure, such as highways and houses, as well as emergency procedures in the case of earthquake, fire or tsunami. They work in Japan and in developing countries.

Raising awareness is also an important part of safety, and the **Risk Communication Department** aims to improve the systems for monitoring disaster information. This includes emerging infections, healthcare for disaster relief workers, and

water-related risks such as flooding. The department handles disaster information for people with and without disabilities.

The Research Center also collaborates with faculties and graduate schools across multiple disciplines in the **Cooperative Department**. In medical and health sciences fields, the Center works with experts to train and mobilize emergency medical professionals, and in training community-based emergency personnel. They study the mental and physical impact of disasters, particularly on vulnerable people such as children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. They provide assistance to meet the practical health needs of disaster victims.

In the humanities and social sciences, the Center holds experimental workshops to help recovery in areas hit by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. These workshops include volunteer students, and look for alternative methods to empower residents and ensure sustainable development. Research groups also explore the social responses to disasters within Japan.

A significant part of the Center's work is focused on international projects: sharing information and working with developing countries to promote disaster risk reduction overseas. The Asia Disaster Risk Reduction Management Research Group focuses specifically on Asian countries, which are the most frequently hit by natural disasters in the world. This group works with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Asian Disaster Reduction Center/ International Recovery Platform.

As part of the University's mission to give back to society, the Center also collaborates with Kobe City to hold open seminars on the third Saturday of every month. These free events are attended by local residents, government and company employees as well as students and professors from the University. There have been more than 230 seminars to date.

RCUSS homepage:  
<http://www.rcuss.kobe-u.ac.jp/English/index-e.html>

## Learn about Japanese Technology in English Global Master's Program in Engineering

Since academic year 2017, the Graduate School of Engineering has offered an English-taught Master's Program for international students. Classes are provided in English for each field including Architecture, Civil Engineering, Electric and Electronic Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Chemical Science and Engineering, enabling students to earn a Master's Degree in all departments.

All lectures in the Graduate School of Engineering are categorized A to D as follows:

A: All contents are provided in English. Professors who provide Category A classes may accept international students for supervising in English.

B: Textbooks and/or board writing are prepared in English. Lecture language is Japanese.

C: Textbooks and/or board writing are prepared in Japanese/English. Lecture language is Japanese.

D: All contents are provided in Japanese.

More than 80% of lectures are categorized A or B,



The Graduate School of Engineering campus

enabling many international students to enjoy their studies in English. Professors who provide lectures categorized A may also offer academic supervision in English for research activities.

The Graduate School of Engineering is the largest graduate school in Kobe University consisting of about 150 research staff. The School offers education and research ranging from fundamental science and liberal arts to innovative engineering for the development of human resources. Kobe University is among the top 1.3% of the best universities in the world and was placed among top universities by 15 subjects in the QS World University Rankings 2017, including top 201-250 in Chemical Engineering and top 251-300 in Mechanical Engineering. The Graduate School of Engineering is also home to the Center for Membrane and Film Technology, which aims to produce solutions for environmental and energy issues and become an international hub for membrane engineering technology.

Engineering is the one of the most attractive fields for international students who want to study cutting-edge technology in Japan. This course also enables us to accept more exchange students from our partner universities.



"It is our great pleasure to welcome you to the Graduate School of Engineering. We assure you an excellent atmosphere not only for learning state-of-the-art engineering but also for spending good daily life."

- Professor TOMIYAMA Akio  
 Dean of the Graduate School of Engineering



From 2018, the Graduate School is also hosting an English-taught summer school for students from our partner institutions

## International voices

Approximately 1,200 international students from countries around the world are currently studying at Kobe University. In this corner, our international students introduce their native countries and offer some insights on studying abroad in Japan.



**Teodorescu Alina Cristina**

1st year Master's student at the Graduate School of Business Administration

Originally from Romania, she came to Kobe University in April 2015 as a research student. In April 2017 she enrolled as a student of the SESAMI Program, an entirely English-taught graduate degree. She is a vegan.



**Romania**

Located in Eastern Europe, Romania is a republic bordering the Black Sea. The capital is Bucharest, and the country has a population of roughly 19.7 million. In the center of the country lie the Carpathian Mountains, and it is split into the four regions of Transylvania, Wallachia, Moldavia, and Dobruja.

### What did you do before you came to Kobe University?

After I graduated from the Faculty of Business and Administration at the University of Bucharest, I joined a travel company, and for about a year I provided support for visitors coming from Asia to Europe and I was a tour guide for a short time. Around that time I successfully applied for a Japanese government scholarship for international students, and I came to Kobe University.

### Why did you choose Kobe University?

I've been interested in Japan since I saw a Japanese animation on television in middle school. At first I didn't know what language they were speaking, but I liked how it sounded, and I wanted to learn it. I started studying Japanese seriously from high school, and decided that I wanted to come to

Japan one day.

In order to go to a Japanese university as a research student, I had to choose a research topic and find a professor who would supervise me. I looked at a lot of universities but I couldn't find anyone. I happened to know a Japanese teacher in Osaka, and when I talked to that teacher, he introduced me to a professor at Kobe University. The professor who became my supervisor had also worked in Romania, which was a curious coincidence.

### What are you researching at the moment?

I'm interested in foreigners who set up companies and do business in Japan. I want to study how they succeeded and managed to overcome difficult issues such as visas. I will start the research in earnest later this year. At the moment I'm interviewing the people who run those sorts of businesses.

## Enjoying sports and vegetarian lifestyle in Japan

Romania is a country where many beautiful old buildings from the Middle Ages can be seen, from Peles Castle, the summer retreat of the royal family, to Bran Castle, known as Dracula's castle. The country is full of natural beauty, and the wine is very famous. We spoke to Romanian citizen Alina about her experiences at Kobe University.



**Bună ziua!**  
Hello in Romanian

Rasnov Citadel



Inside Dracula's Castle



A country with abundant nature



Mushroom stew and polenta

### What do you normally do when you're not studying?

Since I came to Japan, I began going to the gym. It's been fun, and it made me want to get more involved with the sports and fitness world, so recently I started part-time work at a gym too. Right now I'm just in charge of reception, but when my training finishes I can become an instructor. I'd like to try that challenge.

I also enjoy traveling. Recently I went to Tottori prefecture. I visited the Tottori sand dunes, went to the very steep Eshima Ohashi Bridge, and Mizuki



Making wine at home



Entrance to a winery

student friends who are vegetarians and vegans too.

### Were you surprised by any of the differences between Romania and Japan?

The first thing I was surprised by is that everyone here makes detailed plans quite far in advance. In Romania if you say to a friend "Let's hang out the day after tomorrow" they can usually hang out, but in Japan if you don't ask two or three weeks in advance, they will already have made plans. I was surprised that people have to plan so far ahead, but now I'm the same - I've started planning my schedule far in advance too [laughs].

### How has Kobe University been for you so far?

It's a really good study environment for students. There are lots of computers and study spaces that students can use freely, and Wi-Fi on campus. There are small gardens where you can relax in peace and quiet, and I like the beautiful scenery too.

### What are your dreams for the future?

I want to work in Japan after I graduate. I don't know exactly what I want to do yet, but I'm interested in becoming a gym instructor, so maybe I'll follow the path of sports for a while. If there's an opportunity, I'm also interested in establishing my own business. I'd like vegetarianism and veganism to become more widespread in Japan, so maybe I'll start a restaurant.

### How is Japanese food different from your home country?

I became a vegetarian after I came to Japan, so personally my diet changed a lot. I was looking up different ways to diet when I discovered vegetarianism and veganism. At first I wasn't very motivated, but I learned from documentaries about the effect that eating animal products has on animals, the environment and our health, and my understanding changed. I want to follow a stricter diet and go vegan but that's difficult in Japan, so I'm a vegetarian who rarely eats products containing milk and eggs. I have other international



Romania is a country of wine

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

# AGLOC International Agriculture Circle

## A bridge between Japan's mountain villages and the world

The Kobe University Faculty of Agriculture offers a class called "Introduction to Practical Agriculture" as part of a collaborative project with local organizations. Under the guidance of farmers working with Sasayama city in Hyogo prefecture, students spend a year identifying different issues and approaches to agriculture. AGLOC started from this class. It is now an outstanding agriculture volunteer circle: in both 2016 and 2017 it was a finalist for the "University Students' Award In Foods, Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry" organized by Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

### Why did you decide to launch AGLOC?

**Abe:** Participating in "Introduction to Practical Agriculture" made me wonder if we could help out in the Okano district of Sasayama. International students at Kobe University wanted to join in with agricultural activities too, so I started a volunteer circle that included international students. Our mission is "connecting local and global". Japanese agriculture is stagnating, and it is seen as an industry in decline,

while the demands of the global food industry increase. By working with international students to connect farming villages with the world, I hope to be able to contribute to Japanese agriculture, even just a little.

**Tokutomi:** AGLOC is mainly students from the Faculty of Agriculture, but many students from other departments participate too, such as the Faculty of Economics. Thinking about Sasayama from an economics perspective is fun.

### What sort of activities are you involved in?

**Abe:** The main one is agriculture volunteering. Right now we are working with about 16 farming households in the Okano district, and we help them with farm work once a month.

**Tokutomi:** In Sasayama we often help with growing mountain yams (yamaimo) or beans. We are involved in everything, from ploughing the field to harvesting. In the past year and a half I have done agriculture volunteering about 20 times.

**Bureemu:** In my home country of Thailand it's mainly adults who support agriculture, and there are lots of one-off support initiatives so it's very rare for students to participate on an



**AGLOC Head**  
**ABE Daiki**

3rd year, Faculty of Agriculture,  
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ongoing basis. I'm always making new discoveries in AGLOC. For example, in Japan the cultivation methods are passed on through detailed written records. In Thailand agricultural technology is rarely recorded in such detail, so farmers have to study everything themselves from square one. There are very few agricultural schools too. These sorts of differences are interesting.

**Tokutomi:** In the past year and a half lots of international students have joined us - 81 people from 22 countries.

**Abe:** We're also developing special products using Sasayama's traditional vegetable, the mountain yam.

**Tokutomi:** Mountain yams are hard to grow, and every year less people grow them as they don't provide enough income. We want to give more value to these crops, so we decided to develop special products.



Local residents have high expectations



Cultural exchange through agriculture



Exchange with local children

**Abe:** One of these products is karukan (a sweet cake) made from mountain yams, called ChoKobe. We developed it in collaboration with the Kobe University Sasayama Field Station, which is involved in solving issues in agricultural regions. A local Japanese confectionary store made the cakes, and they sell them in-store. In the future I hope we can distribute them further afield.

**Tokutomi:** We also made mountain yam pancakes. We developed a recipe based on ideas from international students, and distributed a recipe pamphlet to every household in the Okano district. At first we had a mountain yam pancake stall at local events, and gradually more and more people told us "I want to make them". Now local people have started to make them at festivals.

### What's the driving force behind your activities?

**Abe:** We are aiming for three things: local to global, global to local, and mutual exchange between local and global. As part of our "local to global" activities we go on study trips to foreign countries during the low season. So far we've visited Vietnam and Taiwan and learned about the differences between their methods and Japanese farming. We use this information in our agriculture support initiatives.

**Tokutomi:** For "global to local", first we strengthen the ties between international students and local



A running total of 81 international students from 22 countries have participated

residents. We're creating opportunities for exchange between these groups, like welcome camps, exchange parties with local elementary schools, and joining local festivals.

**Abe:** Not all the farmers welcomed the international students to start with. That's why over the past year and a half we've been creating opportunities for exchange, so that everyone can understand our activities based on a deeper understanding of other cultures. Recently I've seen more farmers participating in these activities.

**Tokutomi:** More farmers are studying English and engaging with the international students too.

**Abe:** The Kobe University Center for International Education organizes trips for international students to learn more about Japan, so we act as guides for their visits to Sasayama. We also use a matching app to guide foreign visitors in Kyoto. Eventually we want to link these activities to attracting inbound visitors to Sasayama. As for mutual exchange between local and global, we aim to use our agriculture volunteer activities to encourage international students to visit Sasayama regularly and tell people overseas about this region. Bureemu has made videos about Sasayama in English, and she shares them online.

**Bureemu:** I want more people to know about what we're doing and join us. We haven't used videos in our PR yet, so I thought it would be an interesting experiment.

**Tokutomi:** We submitted one video to the Sasayama Film Contest. We'll show the world Sasayama as seen through Bureemu's eyes.

**Abe:** International students getting so interested in Sasayama and agriculture that they start making videos is one positive result of our activities.



**AGLOC Secretary**  
**TOKUTOMI Shusuke**

3rd year, Faculty of Human Development,  
Department of Human Development and Environment

### What are your plans for the future?

**Abe:** Our activities are based on the idea of "connecting local with global", so I want to be able to leave evidence of a positive contribution to local farmers. Developing special products and spreading the word are key. Once these are on track, I think they will lead to new initiatives.

**Bureemu:** What about introducing special products to visitors from overseas? If we have them taste the food, film their reactions and post it online, I think it would be a popular video.

**Tokutomi:** Good idea! I hope more international students join us with great suggestions like Bureemu.

**Abe:** We are not professional agriculture volunteers, but I think that we can still use our perspective as students to contribute to local areas. We may not make huge profits, but I want to find fun ways to help out. So if you are interested in agriculture, you want to develop specialty goods, or you want to meet international students ... for whatever reason, if you're interested in AGLOC's activities, come and join us!



## International special feature

# Asian alliances for a better future

## A word with the experts



*Kobe University has a long history of partnership with Asia and our activities have been expanding drastically for a decade, spurred by the establishment of two Asian offices in China and Vietnam. We interviewed Professor Kan Kimura (Director of Asian Academic Collaboration), Professor Lin Huang (Vice-Director of Asian Academic Collaboration) and Professor Zhi-wei Luo (Director of the Kobe University China Office) to tell us how Kobe University initiates collaboration with Asia and their perspectives on the future.*

### Close Partnership with Asia

**Prof. Kimura:** Kobe University's collaboration with Asia started on a researcher basis with China and Korea and has grown to include ASEAN countries. I expect our collaboration will further expand to southern and western Asia. One unique point is that among the ASEAN countries Kobe University has many partner institutions in Vietnam, where our liaison base is located. I must also mention our long history of collaboration with Indonesia in infectious diseases research, including the creation of a joint collaboration base at Airlangga University. We are now at the stage where we have two tasks: to deepen collaboration with strategic partners and to develop new partnerships,

for example with India, a giant among developing countries.

**Prof. Huang:** As the first step of our activities, we must go back to 2003 when the office in Beijing was established by the Graduate School of Business Administration. It was initially supported by the 21st Century COE program, one of the research funding programs of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science [JSPS]. Kobe University was the first national university in Japan to establish a liaison office in China and it made the headlines on national news programs. In 2008, the China Office was reorganized as an 'official' liaison office of Kobe University when support from the COE program ended. The Office's presence has contributed to Kobe University's high reputation in China, ensuring our active participation in 'Study in Japan' fairs and academic symposia in China.

### Liaison Office initiatives

**Prof. Luo:** On December 18, 2017, the China Office was relocated to the Beijing Center for Japanese Studies of Beijing Foreign Studies University, one of our strategic partners in China. The Beijing Center for Japanese Studies was established under an agreement between the Japan Foundation and the Ministry of Education (MOE) of the Government of the People's Republic of China to promote Japanese studies, including Japanese technology. We expect the office to promote collaboration with China not only in the social sciences and humanities but also the natural sciences.



### interviewees (from left to right)

HUANG Lin (Vice-Director of Asian Academic Collaboration, Professor at the Graduate School of Business Administration) KIMURA Kan (Director of Asian Academic Collaboration, Professor at the Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies), LUO Zhi-wei (Director of the Kobe University China Office, Professor at the Graduate School of System Informatics)

As the director of the China Office, I would like to strongly encourage Kobe University researchers to use the China Office as a platform for their academic activities.

**Prof. Kimura:** The replacement of the China Office doesn't mean a literal 'replacement' but means we have got a new counterpart in China. Through the office, using our network with Beijing Foreign Studies University, we can expand international collaboration with other Chinese universities and share information about trends in higher education and research in China. Our Liaison Office in Vietnam located within Foreign Trade University at Hanoi can be utilized in the same way. As a specialist in Korean studies, I myself will now take the initiative collaborating with several strategic partner universities in Korea to build another academic base.

### Why Asia?

**Prof. Luo:** Asian countries' economic and social situation has advanced drastically in recent years. We are now facing the same societal challenges, including ageing societies. We believe that research collaboration can contribute to solving those issues, and we'll also be approaching them from similar cultural backgrounds.

**Prof. Kimura:** Mobility is quite active in Asia, and Japanese universities have a high reputation in the region. We can welcome talented researchers and students. The Japanese government has many initiatives to contribute to the development of Asian countries and we can apply for collaboration with government support.

I should also emphasize that the alumni networks of 13 countries in Asia play a key role in our international activities. One special point of our alumni networks is that the network is also open to Japanese alumni who live in the country. The networks have been used not only for meetings to reunite and share memories but also for academic and business networking in the area. I hope the alumni networks will continue to expand across borders.

**Prof. Huang:** Using the alumni networks, Kobe University Global Link Forum (KUGL), now the Kobe University Academic Research and Education Forum (KUAREF) has been held annually as an Asia-focused academic symposium for international research collaboration.

### Future perspectives

**Prof. Luo:** Kobe University has strong links with research organizations and

regional communities including the super computer system and medical industries in the Kobe bay area. Kobe University has a high reputation for disaster research and entrepreneurship and we have started international joint research based on these disciplines. I hope that more interdisciplinary research will be created in these fields to link them to other areas.

**Prof. Kimura:** Talking about student mobility, we can say that visiting students enjoy their studies in Kobe University's multicultural surroundings, created during the long history of Kobe as an international harbor city. In order to send many students abroad, Oceania, which is a popular destination among Kobe University students, is also our target to strengthen partnerships including student exchange and short term programs.

**Prof. Huang:** Forward-looking initiatives for internationalization should also be our strong point for partnership with Asia. As in the case of the China Office, Kobe University has always been one step ahead of other Japanese universities for international activities. We will strive for university internationalization in the same way to contribute to a better future.



## Europe

### Conferral Ceremonies of Doctor Honoris Causa



Dr. Pöttering receives Doctor Honoris Causa

On October 16 at Kobe University, His Excellency Dr. Hans-Gert Pöttering received a Doctor Honoris Causa from Kobe University. Dr. Pöttering was awarded the degree in recognition of his achievements during his time as President of the European Parliament, as well as his considerable contribution to education and research at Kobe University through the activities of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

Following the degree conferral, Dr. Pöttering gave a memorial speech titled “Challenges for the European Union in a World of Insecurity”. The speech dealt with issues the European Union is facing in this period of global instability such as immigration and refugee crises, and he emphasized

### 8th Kobe University Brussels European Centre Symposium

The 8th Kobe University Brussels European Centre Symposium “EU-Japan Initiative for Excellence- Strategic Research Partnership in Medicine, Biotechnology and Social



### Bilateral Kobe-Kiel Workshop

On September 18, Kobe University held the Bilateral Kobe-Kiel Workshop at Kiel University in Germany. Kobe University and Kiel University concluded an inter-university academic partnership on May 12, 2016, and we are actively involved in research exchange in the natural and social

that in these times, it is even more vital that the EU upholds its founding vision and principles.

On November 24 at the Dancing House in Prague, the Czech Republic, Prof. Jiří Drahoš received a Doctor Honoris Causa from Kobe University. Prof. Drahoš was awarded the degree in recognition of his contributions to international research partnerships between Japan and the Czech Republic, as well as his substantial support for our relations with Europe as a member of the Kobe University Advisory Board.

In 2015, Kobe University established the Overseas Advisory Board to utilize the valuable connections nurtured through our international activities. We invited experts who contributed to Kobe University’s academic activities from academic and governmental sectors, including Prof Drahoš. From 2017, we also welcomed Dr. Hans-Gert Pöttering as a new member.



Prof. Drahoš receives Doctor Honoris Causa

Sciences-” took place in Brussels, Belgium on November 21. The symposium was held in collaboration with Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), where the Brussels European Office is located. Over 90 people attended the symposium, including Japanese and European officials, researchers, students and business representatives.

The four breakout sessions were organized under the themes of 1)Higher Education, 2)Biotechnology, 3)Migration and Community Building, and 4)Healthy and Active Ageing. Japanese and European researchers presented the latest results of cutting-edge research and discussed future opportunities for collaboration. The sessions included presentations from the Mission of Japan to the European Union and European Commission to share the views of policymakers.

sciences. This workshop aimed to initiate and expand international joint research between our universities. Researchers from both institutions presented cutting-edge findings in the two breakout sessions on nanoscience and international relations.

## Asia

### Opening ceremony for relocated China Office and 10th anniversary celebration of Kobe University Alumni Association in Beijing

On December 18, the opening ceremony for the relocated China Office was held at the office’s new location at Beijing Foreign Studies University. A signing ceremony took place for a Memorandum of Understanding between the Kobe University Center for Asian Academic Collaboration and the Beijing Center for Japanese Studies, reconfirming both sides’ intentions to strengthen our collaboration. President TAKEDA Hiroshi and Professor PENG Long, President of Beijing Foreign Studies University shared perspectives on collaboration in the meeting after the ceremony. They expressed their plans to expand collaboration from Japanese studies to social sciences as well as joint educational programs.

On December 17, the day before the ceremony, over 30 members of the Kobe University Alumni Association in China were joined from Kobe University by President TAKEDA, Executive Vice President INOUE Noriyuki and other faculty and staff in a grand celebration for the 10th anniversary of the Kobe University Alumni Association in China.



Outside the new China Office

### Keynote Speech at the 10th Japan-China University Presidents’ Conference

From October 19 to October 21 the 10th Japan-China University Presidents’ Conference was held at Northeastern University in Shenyang, China. This conference has been held every two years in Japan and China since 2000, providing a forum for university presidents from China and Japan to gather and discuss their common agenda.

President TAKEDA Hiroshi delivered a keynote speech titled “Internationalization of Japanese universities – from the perspective of exchange with Chinese universities” representing about 20 universities and organizations. President TAKEDA expressed his expectations for further

collaboration in research and education between Japan and China, introducing Kobe University’s initiatives for internationalization and integrated research between social and natural sciences.

The Japan-China Student Forum was held in parallel with the Presidents’ Conference and attended by about 40 Japanese and Chinese students including a Master’s student from the Kobe University Graduate School of Business Administration. Lively discussions took place to share knowledge about innovation, including artificial intelligence and entrepreneurship.

## Americas

### The Second Honolulu Office of Kobe University Symposium



On February 5, the 2nd Honolulu Office of Kobe University (HOKU) Symposium “Intra-Pacific Collaboration for Advanced Academic Research on Transborderness of Japanese People, Culture, and Thoughts” was held at Hawaii Imin International Conference Center. The symposium aims to promote dialogue and exchange between Japan, the Americas, and other Pacific Rim countries, and offers an

ideal opportunity to present new findings and exchange ideas in Japanese philosophy, culture, history, literature, and performing arts from a Pacific perspective. HOKU was established in July 2016 as our first liaison office in Americas and the symposium was HOKU’s annual biggest event, gathering more than 15 researchers from Kobe, Hawaii and other regions from United States.

After the symposium, on February 6, Kobe University held the first Americas Advisory Board meeting at HOKU. The meeting was attended by two board members: Professor Shuji Nakamura (2014 Nobel Prize Recipient in Physics and Professor of Graduate School of Engineering, Santa Barbara, University of California) and Professor Liang-Shih Fan (Graduate School of Engineering, Ohio State University) sent his comments on the presentation materials. The board members discussed various research collaboration activities including University Hospital activities.

## International victory for Offshore Sailing Club



Kobe University's Offshore Sailing Club took first prize in the Student Yachting World Cup 2017. This is the first win for a team from Japan, a remarkable accomplishment against strong competition from Europe.

The team was made up of nine students from the Faculty of Maritime Sciences and one from the Faculty of Agriculture. They competed with teams from Ireland, Scotland, England, Norway, Switzerland, Canada and Indonesia.

The event took place from October 16 - 22 in the Frioul archipelago (Marseille, France). Although the 16 races were spread across seven days, an average day saw the teams participate in between four and six races. The Kobe University team gradually improved their position, climbing to first in the final rankings. England and Scotland took 2nd and 3rd place. (The last day of races was unfortunately cancelled due to high winds.)

Every evening the teams gathered to hold parties. The Kobe University team introduced sake and organized a Japanese food stall. The Offshore Sailing Team have made history as the first Japanese team to win this award, and we look forward to their continued success.

## Meet the Student PR Ambassadors

Who better to introduce Kobe University than our current students? In summer 2017, we launched the Student PR Ambassadors - a group of volunteers who tell the world about Kobe University in English. Their activities include interviews, creating articles and social media posts, and leading campus tours for overseas visitors.

So far the ambassadors have led campus tours for delegations from France, Hungary, Vietnam, and the United States. One member commented "The more I lead campus tours, the more I like Kobe University". They have also helped design an English-language campus tour map for visitors, including a guide to Kobe city.

Collaborating with staff from the International Exchange Planning Division and the Communications Division, these students experience a different side of university life, and make global connections. The team have interviewed international students, members of the Kobe University Brussels European Office, and former President of the European Parliament His Excellency Dr. Hans-Gert Pöttering when he visited Kobe University to receive a Doctor Honoris Causa.

The Student PR Ambassadors are accepting new applications from April 2018, and of course international students are welcome to apply. Contact the International Affairs Planning Division for details.



Kobe University Tanabata Festival



Campus tour



Interview with Dr. Pöttering

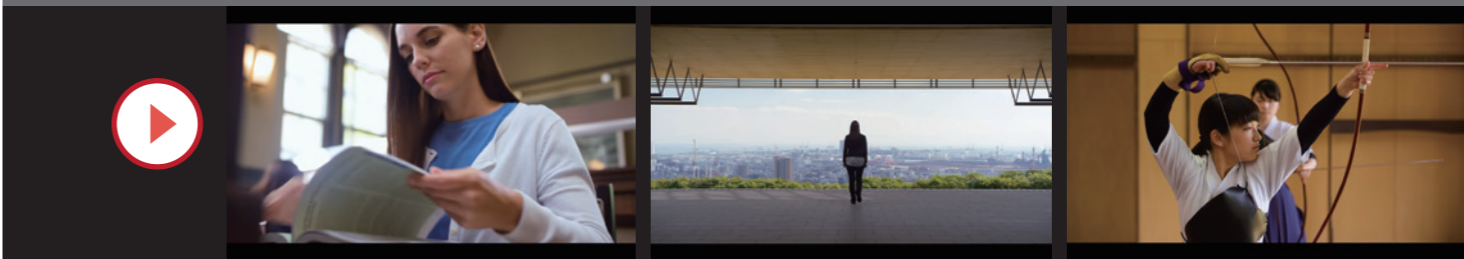


# Social Media

Kobe University is on social media! Like, share and follow us at the accounts below.

## Discover the University on film

In January 2018, we released a new short film introducing Kobe University from a student perspective. Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/YvFVDP4gUxQ>



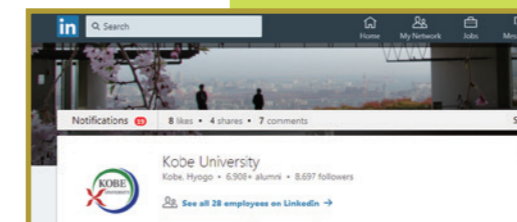
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