

Message from the President (19th SBJ President: Professor Kenji
Sonomoto) | 1

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It is my great honor and privilege to be given the opportunity to serve as the president of the Society for Biotechnology, Japan (SBJ), which has over 90 years of tradition of leadership succession. As the newly appointed president, it is my sincere hope and desire to facilitate for the further development and growth of our society. However, this task would be impossible to attain without your support. I am sincerely hoping for the active participation and support from all our directors, branch directors, representatives, and all members, so that our society will be able to reach even greater heights in the field of biotechnology in the years to come.

Last year, under the leadership of our former president, Satoshi Hirashima, Professor of Osaka University, the 90th Anniversary of SBJ was successfully held, in which, all of SBJ's achievements for the past 90 years were showcased.

The 100th anniversary of SBJ is fast approaching and as early as now we should set our eyes for this big occasion. I would like to encourage every member in reflecting the interesting discoveries within the past 90 years and used it as a benchmark for the road ahead in the next 10 years.

One of the highlight of the SBJ's 90th Year Anniversary event was the publication of the book entitled "Open, Open! The World of Bio: The Introduction of Biotechnology from 14 years old". This book is available in every Prefectural Public Library as well as to all Super High School Libraries all over Japan. It has become an epoch for the public's interest.

In order to facilitate the career growth of all members, which would also translate to the growth and development of SBJ, it is essential to continue this kind of enterprize as well as make use of the contribution of every SBJ member. For example, Excellent Student Award of the Society for Biotechnology, Japan (Hischo Award) will be given to 50 – 60 exemplary graduate students who are Ph.D. candidates or equivalent level. This award program aims to encourage students to work even harder and harness their innate talents for the further growth and development of SBJ. We visualize that after they will be awarded with their respective Ph.D. degrees and become a full pledge member of SBJ, they will play an active role as they are full of vigor and enthusiasm that would enhance the interaction among all age-group members.

To know the right path that we should take for our society's furtherance, it is important to know the current status and identify the hurdles that SBJ is currently facing. The effect of our country's aging population has trickled-down to our organization. Since 2007, the number of SBJ's active members has gradually dropped from about 2,500 members, although fortunately, the SBJ's student membership has been increasing. This problem is also evident not only to our organization but to other scientific societies as well. We should acknowledge that this poses a severe financial threat to our society. Relying on the grant and income we obtain from our English journal publications would not guarantee the SBJ's continued existence. We should look for other means and look for other avenues to raise funds.

In order to abide to the regulations set by the new public service corporation system, SBJ's needed to evolve from a "Non-profit General Corporation" to a "Public Interest Corporation". Thanks to the efforts done by our past president Shinji Iijima, last April 1, 2011 our society received the authorization to become a "Public Interest Corporation". As a "Public Interest Corporation" SBJ's mandate is to bring welfare and benefit to the general populace by revitalizing the growth of science and technology. As I reflect the impact of SBJ to the public in the last 2 years through the 90th Anniversary Commemorative Publication, which was a great success. Thanks to the efforts of Toru Nakayama (Director of Bioengineering Education) and other individuals who have contributed to its success. In addition, as a "Public Interest Corporation", SBJ is allowed to accept donations from corporations and individuals, which would help ensure the continued existence of our Society despite the current financial hurdle that SBJ is facing.

With this new set-up, I want to summarize the following three missions for the next 10 years:

1. **Securing of financial capital to maintain the SBJ's operations** (Fiscal Consolidation)
2. **Planning the new system as a "Public Interest Corporation"** (Establish a system concerning donations)
3. **Enhancement of the interaction among members from different age bracket and profession**

In addition to our 10-year missions, we should also establish SBJ's objectives for the next 2 years. Although reforms on SBJ's structure and policies have been introduced by the previous presidents, system evolution is still inevitable to cater the challenges of the future. To cite an example, during the last administration of ex-president Satoshi Hashirama (I was the vice president at that time), the 3 missions were: (a) From Academia to Industry, (b) From Seniors to Juniors, and (c) From a Domestic to an Asian Perspective.

All these aimed to build a steady development of our Society. These were all conceptualized based on the unresolved challenges from the previous administration. Now, I would like to focus on the 7 tasks that our Society is facing.

1. **Planning of new activities of SBJ** (Enforce smooth communication between head and branch offices)
2. **Promotion of Industry-University Cooperation** (Facilitation of the translation of science into products)
3. **Contribution to the local communities** (Planning of regional alliances symposium)
4. **Aggressive public relations of business activities and member services** (Further promotion of electronic information system, enhancement of Japanese journal (Seibutsu-kogaku Kaishi))
5. **International exchange and promotion of international development** (Improvement of SBJ's presence, enhancement of English journal (JBB))
6. **Promotion of educational activities among students in the biotechnological industry** (Human resource education such as industry-university cooperation)
7. **Promotion of the active role of young members in the management of the Society** (Executive officers having a young member as their direct assistant)

To sum up the points mentioned above, there will be 3 missions + 7 tasks. In order to accomplish all these, I would need the help of the newly appointed executive board members such as Vice Presidents, Prof. Katsuya

Gomi (Tohoku University) and Dr. Osamu Kurahashi (Ajinomoto). Please refer to the organizational chart available at SBJ's homepage (https://www.sbj.or.jp/e/about/about_sbj_organization_chart.html). This organizational chart was made by the former president Harashima in an effort to assist the system of solving problems that would arise. Through this, checking the history of the evolution of the organization management was also made possible. Since last year, a system of "aid for the administration officer", which is part of the "young generation towards biotechnology training", has been implemented. In addition, an integrated general affairs and accounting office under each vice president was established in an effort to develop a more responsive and smooth operation. Furthermore, in order to reduce the burden of each director as well as to ensure the continuity of organization, a two-person director system for the respective duties was adopted. This is to encourage cooperation among members to take part in the management process and exercise sympathy towards the Society's leaders.

Training the younger generation to play an active role in our Society is important. However, we should not get stuck in the idea of just developing our junior members but rather we should encourage all members, both young and old, to strive hard for everyone's growth and development. The older generation should be the guide of the younger generation, sharing them their experiences and guiding them not only in the shaping of their dreams but in achieving it as well. I believe that my role as the president of this Society is to provide an environment for such encounters. I envisioned SBJ to be a great Society were each member can freely exchange ideas breaking the boundaries of the heterogeneity of the age among its members.

The Society for Biotechnology, Japan
President
Kenji Sonomoto

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