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A Survey on Awareness of the Nitobe College among the First-year Students of Hokkaido University, 2013

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Abstract — The Nitobe College, named after one of the most notable Hokkaido University alumni, Inazo Nitobe, is one of two new programs to promote the globalization of Hokkaido University, which aims to educate a new generation of global leaders. A web-based anonymous cross-sectional survey was carried out to determine how, and how well, the Nitobe College has become known to first-year undergraduate students of Hokkaido University. The survey results provided the Nitobe College with a precious basis for its operations, planning and evaluation in the years to come. Their comments and concerns were pertinent and to-the-point, a reflection of their expectations for the Nitobe College. Effective collaboration between the students themselves and the administrative and academic staffs is the key to the successful future development of the Nitobe College.

(Revised on 18 February, 2014)

Introduction

On May 15, 2013, Hokkaido University established a new program called the Nitobe College for 129 undergraduate students that aims to educate a new generation of global leaders (Nitobe College 2013). Approximately 70 more students from the same school year will be selected to enroll in the next academic year when they will have gone on to the second year, thus resulting in a total of 200 class members per year. They will be enrolled in the program to earn 15 credits from the Nitobe College curriculum in addition to the regular university bachelor degree requirements, including overseas study, in principle, for 1 semester or more.

The Nitobe College is one of two new efforts to

promote the globalization of Hokkaido University. The other is the Modern Japanese Studies Program (MJSP), which will start in the next academic year (Hokkaido University 2013). These two programs are expected to play an important role in creating a campus where a variety of values and ideas interact, respecting the contributions of all and becoming integrated.

The Nitobe College is expected to increase the opportunities to send undergraduate students of Hokkaido University to overseas institutions so that they can become accustomed to the diversity of customs, cultures, religions, and other social issues in foreign environments while learning communication skills in English and/or other languages. By providing these opportunities to study abroad and to achieve the goals of ambitious

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students, they will acquire not only basic specialized knowledge but also the skills to utilize and put this knowledge into practice. Both the broad knowledge and basic practical skills acquired will provide a basis for them to become future leaders.

The Nitobe College is named after one of the most notable Hokkaido University alumni, Inazo Nitobe, the author of the well-known book *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* and one of the first Undersecretary Generals of the League of Nations (the forerunner to the United Nations) (Nitobe 1969). Nitobe is one of the internationally best known Japanese, the person who interpreted and presented the Japanese sense of ethics and world view to international society.

The Nitobe College has just begun its operation as one of the Projects for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development supported by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (MEXT 2013), and the administrative and academic infrastructure is still being organized as we try to find an effective way to achieve its goals. Even during its development, a central role for the administrators is to provide the best possible services to the students who have enrolled with high expectations.

However, there are not yet sufficient data to quantitatively assess their needs, expectations, and other characteristics. Therefore, we decided to learn how

and to what degree the Nitobe College became known to the first-year undergraduate students of Hokkaido University in 2013. The data collected are expected to be useful for planning of advertisements, advocacy and evaluation programs of the Nitobe College in the next year and beyond.

Methods

A web-based anonymous cross-sectional survey was carried out from 23 April through 2 May 2013 using the Hokkaido University Education and Learning Management System (ELMS). The students were informed about the survey on the ELMS. The questionnaire was constructed and placed on the Internet server that could be accessed through the ELMS. The questionnaire consisted of items related to their gender, Faculty/Program, home location before entrance into Hokkaido University, when and how the Nitobe College became known to them, reasons for entering or not entering the Nitobe College, etc. All 2,579 first-year Hokkaido University students who enrolled in April 2013 were targets of the survey.

Table 1. Numbers and proportions of students by Faculty/Program

Faculty/Program	No. of the first-year students	No. of students who took the placement test	% of students who took the placement test	No. of students who were enrolled the Nitobe College	% of students who were enrolled the Nitobe College	Placement test pass rate (%)
Comprehensive Arts	107	33	30.8%	11	10.3%	33.3%
Comprehensive Science	1075	117	10.9%	35	3.3%	29.9%
Letters	161	43	26.7%	20	12.4%	46.5%
Education	32	3	9.4%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Law	182	44	24.2%	9	4.9%	20.5%
Economics	165	23	13.9%	9	5.5%	39.1%
Science	75	22	29.3%	7	9.3%	31.8%
Medicine	282	15	5.3%	9	3.2%	60.0%
Dental	43	7	16.3%	3	7.0%	42.9%
Pharmacy	26	7	26.9%	2	7.7%	28.6%
Engineering	160	33	20.6%	7	4.4%	21.2%
Agriculture	54	21	38.9%	11	20.4%	52.4%
Veterinary Medicine	37	8	21.6%	2	5.4%	25.0%
Fisheries	180	20	11.1%	4	2.2%	20.0%
Total	2579	396	15.4%	129	5.0%	32.6%

Results

1. Numbers and proportions of students and placement test pass rate by Faculty/Program

There were 2,579 first-year undergraduate students of Hokkaido University as of May 15, 2013. Table 1 shows the proportion of these students by Faculty/Program in addition to the numbers of students who took and passed the placement test for the Nitobe College. Of the 2,579 students, 396 (15.4%) participated in the placement test for the Nitobe College, with rates varying from 5.3% (Medicine) to 38.9% (Agriculture). Of the 396 students, 129 (5.0%) enrolled in the Nitobe College. The Agriculture students (11) accounted for 20.4% of all Nitobe College students followed by those in Letters (12.4%) and Comprehensive Arts (10.3%). There was no student of the Nitobe College from the Education Faculty. The highest placement test pass rate was observed for

Medicine (60.0%) followed by Agriculture (52.4%) and Letters (46.5%).

Table 2 displays a summary of the data for the two broad categories of Faculty/Program. Approximately the same proportions of students in the Arts (33.6%) and Sciences (32.0%) took the placement test but the former (7.6%) represented more than the latter (4.1%). The placement test pass rates were almost the same for the 2 broad categories (33.6% vs. 32.0%).

2. Characteristics of the respondents

Table 3 shows the number (n=544) and proportion (21.1%) of the respondents among the total of 2,579 first-year Hokkaido University students by Faculty/Program as of April 1, 2013. More than 1 of 5 newly enrolled students responded to the Internet-based survey. The Comprehensive Science program accounted for 44.7%

Table 2. Numbers and proportions of students by category of Faculty/Program

Category of Faculty	No. of the first-year students	No. of students who took placement test	% students who took placement test	No. of students who were enrolled the Nitobe College	% students who were enrolled the Nitobe College	Placement test pass rate (%)
Arts	647	146	22.6%	49	7.6%	33.6%
Sciences	1932	250	12.9%	80	4.1%	32.0%
Total	2579	396	15.4%	129	5.0%	32.6%

Table 3. Respondents by Faculty/Program

Faculty/Program	No. of first-year students	No. of respondents (n)	% of respondents by Faculty	% of respondents among Faculties
Comprehensive Science	1075	243	44.7%	22.6%
Law	182	54	9.9%	29.7%
Letters	161	54	9.9%	33.5%
Medicine	282	35	6.4%	12.4%
Comprehensive Arts	107	28	5.1%	26.2%
Economics	165	27	5.0%	16.4%
Fisheries	180	26	4.8%	14.4%
Engineering	160	23	4.2%	14.4%
Science	75	18	3.3%	24.0%
Agriculture	54	14	2.6%	25.9%
Veterinary Medicine	37	7	1.3%	18.9%
Education	32	6	1.1%	18.8%
Pharmacy	26	5	0.9%	15.4%
Dental	43	4	0.7%	9.3%
Total	2579	544	99.9%	21.1%

(n=243) followed by Law 9.9% (n=54) and Letters 9.9% (n=54). However, 33.5% of Letters students answered the questionnaire followed by those from Law (29.7%) and Comprehensive Arts, whereas the rates for the School of Dentistry Faculty and School of Medicine were the lowest, 9.3% and 12.4%, respectively.

Male students accounted for 62% (n=333) (Figure 1). Of the 544 respondents, 319 (59%) students came from the main island of Honshu followed by those from the city of Sapporo (n=128, 23%) and areas of Hokkaido areas other than Sapporo (n=90, 17%) (Figure 2).

3. Acquaintance with Nitobe College

Of the total of 541 respondents, 389 (72%) heard about the Nitobe College before their entrance into Hokkaido University (Figure 3). Among these 389 students, 220 (56.8%) first learned about the Nitobe

College through the leaflet enclosed with the acceptance letter from Hokkaido University, 43 (11.1%) in the admission briefing and 38 (9.8%) from the Hokkaido University homepage. On the other hand, a very small proportion of students became acquainted with the Nitobe College through newspaper advertisements and mass media such as magazines (Table 4).

We also asked the students (n=146) who did not hear about the Nitobe College before their entrance into Hokkaido University how the Nitobe College became known to them (Figure 4). Nearly 50% and 41.4% of these students learned about the Nitobe College during the orientation for new students and from pamphlets and other materials on campus, respectively (Table 5).

Figure 5 shows that 94 (17%) students were enrolled in the Nitobe College, suggesting that the Nitobe College students were overrepresented (72.9%; 94/129) among the respondents.

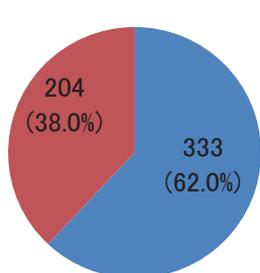


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents by gender (n=537)

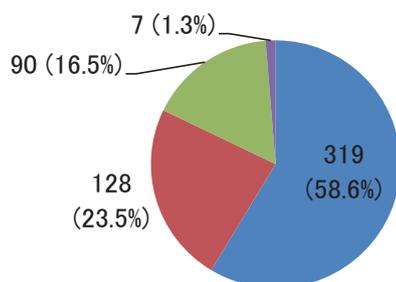


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents by home location (n=544)

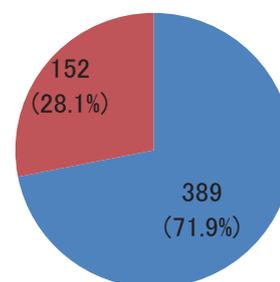


Figure 3. Did you hear about the Nitobe College before your entrance into Hokkaido University? (n=541)

Table 4. How did you hear about the Nitobe College (among all the respondents n=541)?

Methods	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Leaflet with admission notice	220	56.8%
Admission Briefing	43	11.1%
Others	43	11.1%
Hokkaido University home page	38	9.8%
Newspaper and Advertisement	17	4.4%
Acquaintances and friends, etc	13	3.4%
Magazines/Media	7	1.8%
Teachers	6	1.6%
No response	2	0.4%

4. Reason for the entrance into the Nitobe College

To the question about “Why did you enter the Nitobe College?,” the students listed the following reasons (multiple choice): 1) to improve English skills (91.4%), 2) to study abroad (79.8%), and 3) to communicate with international students (46.8%) (Figure

6). About 30% of the students selected the reasons usefulness for job hunting, strengthening of teamwork ability, and improvement of problem-solving skills. Female students tended to list more affirmative reasons for the entrance into the Nitobe College than males.

On the other hand, “giving priority to undergraduate courses” “no confidence in English” and “anxiety about conflict with the regular undergraduate courses” were

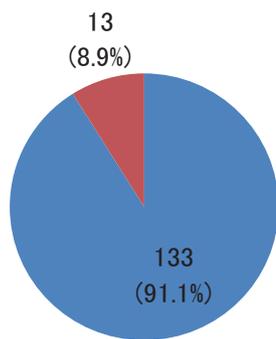


Figure 4. Did you learn about the Nitobe College after April 1st? (n=146)

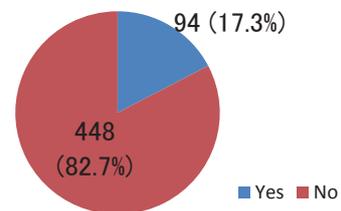


Figure 5. Are you currently enrolled in the Nitobe College?

Table 5. How did you hear about the Nitobe College (those who knew about the Nitobe College before entrance; n=146)?

Reason	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Orientation for new students (April 5)	65	44.5%
Materials on premises brochure and pamphlets	55	37.7%
Nitobe College guidance (April 9)	6	4.1%
Hokkaido University home page	4	2.7%
Acquaintances and friends, etc.	2	1.4%
Others	1	0.7%

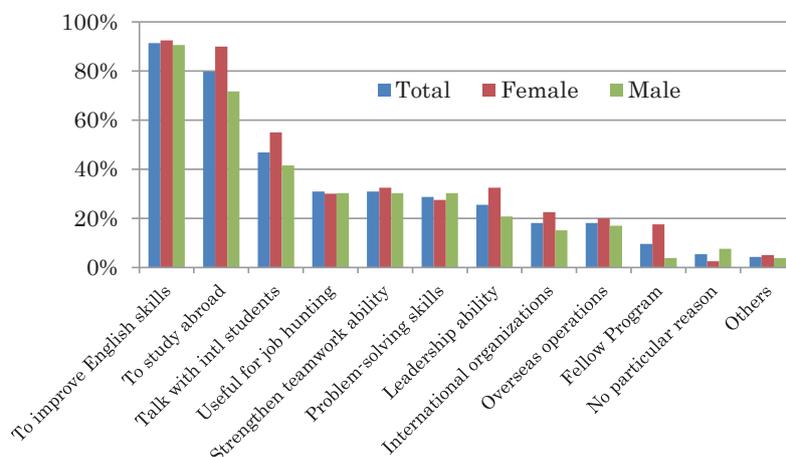


Figure 6. Why did you enter the Nitobe College? (multiple choice; n=93)

listed as the main reasons why students did not enroll in the Nitobe College. There were 80 students among all the respondents who failed to enroll in the Nitobe College after passing the placement test (Figure 7).

5. Summary of comments from the respondents

There were many comments from more than 100 respondents that were very useful for planning advocacy for the Nitobe College in the future. The crucial questions among them were: 1) what are the practical merits, significance and importance of the completion of the Nitobe College? and 2) What does it mean to nurture global human resources?

There were also many comments on advocacy for the Nitobe College, and the majority felt that its advocacy and public relations activities were insufficient. Many of them thought that the Nitobe College should, for example: 1) strengthen public relations activities, 2) better inform students about the contents of the Nitobe College, 3) hold the orientation earlier and supplement it with ample information, 4) provide students with information about how they should balance the courses between the Nitobe College and the regular faculties, 5) have more consultations among the various faculties from the viewpoint of obtaining credits, and 6) provide more sufficient study contents. One student commented that he had a different image from before entrance into the Nitobe College. It is not necessary to be a Nitobe

College student to take the offered English courses, one student said. Another student commented that she hesitated to enter the Nitobe College because its contents were not well designed.

The placement test was carried out using the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score provided by the British Council (British Council 2013). Many students questioned its appropriateness. The students were evaluated solely by written English ability without ascertainment of listening and hearing abilities. To objectively select potential future global leaders, the students felt that the test was insufficient in terms of its contents, and suggested revising it to make it more comprehensive so that students with considerable potential for growth in the future would be selected.

There were also many concerns with overseas education and its financial cost. Some felt that overseas study for more than 6 months was too long and thus, multiple short-term visits to foreign institutions should be promoted more. They requested that a firm mechanism should be established to avoid any repetition of school due to the long-term overseas study. Needless to say, some students also requested full support of overseas education from the Nitobe College.

There were also some comments on the importance of Japanese skills before English, which is only an instrument. One student reported that he entered Hokkaido University because of the establishment of the Nitobe College even though he had been accepted at a famous private university in Tokyo.

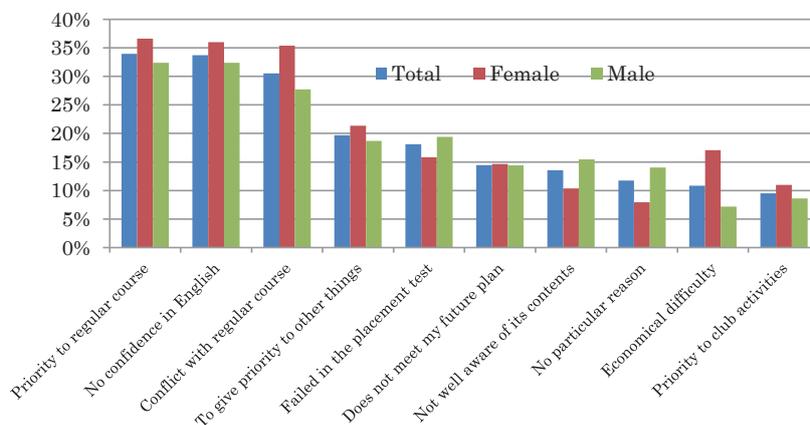


Figure 7. What was your reason for not entering the Nitobe College? (multiple choice; n=442)

Discussion

This survey was the first attempt to ascertain the total image of the Nitobe College, which was opened on May 15, 2013, of first-year Hokkaido University students. Because it was soon after the time of its opening in the busy orientation and registration period, the response rate (21.1%) was not high. However, from the data on the distributions by gender and home locations of the students, the respondents were very similar to those of all the first-year students of Hokkaido University in 2013. Therefore, we believe that the data are more or less representative.

About 70% of the respondents heard about the Nitobe College through the leaflet enclosed with the acceptance letter from Hokkaido University and admission briefing. On the other hand, very few students heard about the Nitobe College through media such as a newspaper or homepage. This information should be taken into account in the planning of cost-effective advertising and advocacy methods for the Nitobe College. Most of the students heard about and received information on the Nitobe College through personal channels, rather than public ones such as the mass media.

About 80-90% of the students chose the Nitobe College to strengthen their English ability and take advantage of overseas education opportunities as the main reasons for the entrance into the Nitobe College. As reasons for not entering the Nitobe College, approximately 30% of the students answered that they: 1) wanted to give priority to the regular faculty course over the Nitobe College, 2) were concerned with the balance in the courses between the Nitobe College and the regular faculties, and 3) did not have sufficient English proficiency.

It is also important to note that more than 100 students provided valuable comments on the Nitobe College that were very useful for advocacy, content formulation, operations, and evaluation of the Nitobe College in the future. Most of the comments were relevant and straight to the point, such as the questions about the practical merits, purpose and importance of the completion of the Nitobe College as well as the meaning of global human resources. In addition, the students commented on insufficient advocacy, promotion, and public relations activities of the Nitobe College as well as the relevance of the current style of the placement test

to its goals based on the ascertainment of English ability alone. Some students expressed their concerns about the timing and cost of the study abroad and wanted to receive more information on these matters.

The survey results provided the Nitobe College with valuable information for its future operations, planning and evaluation. Their comments and concerns were straightforward and pertinent, reflecting their expectations for the Nitobe College. Increased efforts are required for administrative and teaching staff members of the Nitobe College to meet the students' expectations in terms of its operations and academic orientation and support. Needless to say, the Nitobe College students should take affirmative initiatives themselves, taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the Nitobe College.

Effective collaboration between the students themselves and administrative and academic staffs is the key to successful future development of the Nitobe College. We have no time to rest but must make haste in accordance with well-informed, transparent, effective and timely decision-making processes.

Acknowledgements

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