

Chapter 1 Technical Services Division

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Overview

The Technical Services Division is making major contributions to scientific advancements at the Institute as one of the three pillars of the organization, along with the divisions for research and administration. Since April 2004, national universities have all been restructured into independently-managed entities and accordingly are now adopting the principle of the market mechanism based on management strategies. Now, under the new system, the attainment of mid-term goals for the coming six years at each school will be duly reflected in the government's subsidy for the following period. In other words, it is now a critical mission for the Division to provide efficient, speedy and flexible technical support to researchers. To accomplish this, the Division must realize the importance of building a sophisticated operational management structure for all of its working staff members engaged in support services, to enable them to carry higher standards of awareness and skill and, at the same time, fully focus on their assignments.

To reach that objective, every staffer in the Division is obliged to regularly submit a self-evaluation report to develop and examine his or her own strengths. In addition, several committees set up earlier for operational management were integrated into fewer groups with a stronger focus on providing support services. Furthermore, while the Division's internal and external publications – such as news bulletins, service guidebooks, overseas training reports, individual performance reports, award announcements, and support service reports – have so far been separately and irregularly issued, they were all combined into an annual activities report as a package of materials to track the organizational performance against the goals. Meanwhile, technical processes and evaluation methods developed within the Division are published every other year under the title of “Technical Division Research Report” and donated to various research institutes.

On the other hand, staff members are required to pursue greater sophistication and efficiency in their service activities. Since it is essential to define a common goal for staffers in order to generate satisfactory results as an organization, the following principle has been laid down to discipline the Division's daily efforts. “The Technical Services Division supports the quality and vitality of studies that researchers are pursuing on the aspects of technical expertise. Innovate and provide state-of-the-art techniques in services. Try to find a way to make the impossible possible by close communication with researchers. Expend all possible efforts to

assure safety in the workplace. Accomplish your mission to make your contribution to society.”

The Division is currently facing the biggest challenge in its approach to establishing a research support organization, as indicated by one goal in the Division’s mid-term plan. The plan states that the Division should provide more efficient and speedy services by setting up new facilities in the University’s Base Research Center and Research Support Center and by improving staffers’ skills, including those related to advanced technology, by reinforcing training programs and thus enabling them to acquire technical qualifications. In the preliminary work to execute the plan, a conceptual study is underway to reform the existing organization of the Technical Service Division into the Materials Research Institute’s Technical Center.

Norio Kobayashi, representing the Division in 2004