



1 September, 2011

Dear IODP Community Members:

This is to inform you of MEXT's position with regard to the recent US proposal from NSF on the future of IODP.

Regarding the New US Proposal

We understand that new US model was created from the viewpoint of securing JR operations under a difficult financial situation. We are concerned that this model is predominantly focused on financial planning for JR operation, and apparently provides few details on another vital aspect, namely: *How will international research cooperation within ocean drilling science be maintained in the future.* We no doubt agree on the vital importance of continuing future platform operations, but we should not lose the common framework for maintaining effective scientific exchange and collaboration in this important field of science.

Need for a Common International Cooperative Framework

The integrated approach of IODP, where a single science community drives operations on multiple drilling platforms, has produced many valuable scientific results. This effort has unified the international drilling community and has helped drive international recognition and enhance political support of the community. Without such an international cooperative framework, the competence/momentum of the drilling science community would be significantly undermined, and severely hampered.

Accordingly, we strongly believe that an international collaborative framework, in line with economic realities, should continue into the future so that we may together continue accomplishing the best possible research science which our mutual intellectual and scientific collaborations including sharing platform boarding and acquired cores can provide. MEXT's financial situation parallels that of the NSF, and we are willing to pursue an alternative model which is much simpler, significantly flexible, much less costly, and less contractually restrictive, assuming that the currently agreed-upon model developed at the IWG+ is insufficient. Therefore, we strongly urge that the NSF and other potential partners work together to craft the best possible cooperative mechanism.



MEXT

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORTS,
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY-JAPAN

MEXT Position and Future *Chikyu* Program

MEXT is determined to make *Chikyu* available for scientific drilling, and we are determined to continue playing a leading role in any prospective international scientific ocean drilling program.

The *Chikyu* program over the next ten years will continue to focus on scientific research on Earth Science themes of global significance and interest, as identified in the New Science Plan “Illuminating Earth’s Past, Present, and Future”, including: Climate and ocean change, Biosphere frontiers, Earth connection, and Earth in motion. Therefore, according to the needs of science, *Chikyu* is ready to go anywhere on the globe; including, but not limited to the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, and a unique project-based approach, utilizing workshops throughout the project formulation and evaluation processes will be encouraged. We believe this system will provide excellent opportunities for facilitating financial and intellectual collaboration with our current international partners and other future potential collaborators.

By diversifying funding resources and adopting more flexible approaches in terms of project planning and operational scheduling, we will also spend more time on scientific drilling than the current level has allowed. Details will be further discussed and will be shared with you in due course.

We are excited about the future possibilities and discoveries awaiting a continued and coordinated scientific drilling research program, and look forward to listening to the community’s feedback on this matter, since we believe that your voice will play an important role in our bumpy journey to find the best international mechanism to improve and extend ocean drilling science and of our respective platforms.

With Warmest Regards,

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