

# PHILANTHROPY IMPACT REPORT 2020



OIST

OKINAWA INSTITUTE  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
GRADUATE UNIVERSITY



November 2020

Dear Donors,

Let me start by expressing profound thanks on behalf of the many scientists, future generations of researchers, and local communities you have supported here in Okinawa and around the world.

We all share the same vision—for the future of science, for its impact on our local communities, and for its potential in benefiting society. Thank you for sharing our vision for the future and for your generosity.

In its first nine years as a multidisciplinary, scientific research graduate university, OIST has embarked upon a variety of initiatives with ambitious goals. We strive for research excellence. We seek ways to bring the benefits of world-class science to our local community in Okinawa. We promote these islands not as a tourist destination but as a scientific and entrepreneurial hub for the world. We are attracting innovative technology and talented inventors from across the globe to this unique part of Japan. Ultimately, we are becoming an integral part of both local and global society through our dedication to science and innovation.

In appreciation of your support, we are pleased to share OIST's first philanthropic impact report. This captures many of the outcomes you made possible in the recent years. The report begins on the OIST campus, with our core mission of scientific research and teaching. It then expands into our university community, to Okinawa and Japan, and internationally. We are a local institution with global reach, solving the world's most pressing problems and innovating in ways that challenge us to expand our thinking of what is possible.

Since 2011, OIST has progressed from accepting its first class of students to ranking #1 in Japan and #9 globally for research quality (Nature Index 2019). OIST graduates have gone on to secure research careers at the world's most renowned scientific and academic institutions, and others have become rising stars in industry. Much of this has been possible with your help.

I hope you enjoy reading this report. Truly, your investment in OIST, your commitment to support our work, and your trust in our mission lay a foundation for the institution's long-term sustainability and growth.

Thank you again.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Peter JW". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Dr. Peter Gruss  
President and CEO, OIST



# NEW INITIATIVES IN SCIENCE

Scientific research and teaching are at the core of OIST's mission. Every day hundreds of faculty, students, researchers, technicians, and others are exploring, inventing, testing, and discovering solutions to the world's greatest problems. The breadth of work is too great to cover in a single report, but the following pages highlight a few examples of the interdisciplinary and collaborative efforts underway as OIST continues to strive for excellence and global leadership in science and technology.

## Environmental Data Science

The field of ecological and environmental science is increasingly driven by the collection, curation, and synthesis of big data. Thanks to generous support from the OIST Foundation in 2020, OIST will robustly expand research in this area by developing our environmental data management systems. *"I extend our gratitude for the thoughtful support for our university's effort in advancing environmental sustainability through methodological and rigorous scientific research,"* says President Gruss.

In addition to increasing the overall data infrastructure at OIST, the system will be valuable for marine research, terrestrial monitoring work in Okinawa, and initiatives like IslandScanner. IslandScanner is a new project led by Prof. Evan Economo of the Biodiversity and Biocomplexity Unit in collaboration with faculty from University of California–Berkeley. IslandScanner will take a snapshot of the health of imperiled island ecosystems, including Okinawa, Hawai'i, French Polynesia, and the Marianas. Ecosystems like these are under serious threat due to habitat destruction, climate change, disease, and the spread of invasive species.



▲  
Top to bottom: Prof. Shintake with a wave energy turbine; Climate change researcher looking for clownfish in Okinawa; Researchers in Prof. Economo's unit test an acoustic monitoring device.

## Marine Science

OIST's leadership in marine science research has attracted the interest of several generous supporters in the past decade. Their gifts supplement the substantial contributions made to OIST each year by the Japanese government. Saudi Aramco established the Saudi Aramco Marine Environment Fund in 2012. The Imano Family made a memorial contribution in 2015 to support Prof. Noriyuki Satoh's research on coral reefs and coral preservation. In 2018, Kohei Yamashita, chairman, president, and CEO of Kokyo Tatemono Co., Ltd., made the second of two donations to support Prof. Tsumoru Shintake's Wave Energy Project.

Those gifts, totaling more than half a million dollars, have helped OIST form a research cluster to address topics such as ocean currents and species dispersal, evolution and development, effects of climate change, and more. Past successes have helped to attract additional faculty in the field, like Prof. Timothy Ravasi, a leading climate change researcher who recently co-presented a webinar for the OIST Foundation on the future of coral (p.10). Prof. Ravasi established the Marine Climate Change Unit to study the mechanisms of acclimation and adaptation of tropical fish to the environment. His research has implications for fish aquaculture, an important economic sector in Okinawa and Japan, and he has forged collaborations with the Okinawa Prefectural Sea Farming Center and other Japanese institutions.

## Combatting COVID-19

As COVID spread across the globe, many OIST scientists paused their research and turned their attention to the crisis. To support their efforts, OIST launched the COVID-19 Response Fund. Gifts have totaled nearly \$30,000 to date thanks to donors like Morihito Katsuren, who gave because “OIST is providing research and its results to Okinawa.” Eliza Nakamura, another donor, says, “My help might not be worth much...but I would like to cooperate with you to overcome this situation.”

Early projects supported by the Response Fund were the production of face shields using a 3D printer and the “OIST gel,” a lab-made sanitizer following World Health Organization guidelines. OIST donated 2,000 shields to frontline medical professionals in Okinawa and gel to the OIST campus, Chubu Hospital, and Onna Village. “As a citizen of the prefecture,” says donor Junko Tamaki, “I am proud that OIST is contributing to the countermeasures for coronavirus.”

Among ongoing efforts are PCR testing led by OIST provost and virologist Mary Collins, participation in the COVID-19 Disease Map project, and development of rapid antibody testing using a microfluidic chip developed by the Micro/Bio/Nanofluidics Unit led by Prof. Amy Shen.

Tatsuo Kawasaki, who gave to the fund and recently joined OIST’s Board of Councilors, says, *“I really appreciate OIST’s proactive responses that have shown how basic science can have a positive impact when it really matters. I feel a sense of pride being part of OIST’s initiatives.”*



▲ Top: On April 21, 2020, the project team donated its first 400 face shields to the Okinawa Prefectural Government. Bottom: The 3D printed face shields are designed to block coronavirus droplets and aerosols.



▲ Prof. Keiko Kono (3rd from right) leads the OIST Membranology Unit.

## Women in—and Supporting—Science

Great women leaders are supporting OIST’s programs to close the gender gap in STEM-related fields, particularly in Japan. Gender diversity is a core value of OIST where female engagement in STEM is more than double Japan’s national average. Programs like HiSci Lab, formerly Science Project for Ryukyū Girls (p. 7), on-campus childcare, unconscious bias training, and faculty recruitment that encourages applications from female candidates all play a role in OIST’s efforts.

The OIST Foundation has also made women in science a priority. That commitment was recently bolstered by two donations to the Foundation: one from Dr. Machi Dilworth, who earnestly supports OIST’s efforts to increase the number of female faculty in the sciences, and \$10,000 from gender equality champion Atsuko Toko Fish, who founded the Japanese Women’s Leadership Initiative.

Kathy Matsui, vice chair of Goldman Sachs Japan, is another strong supporter of OIST’s gender diversity initiatives. She recently moderated an OIST Foundation webinar featuring prominent female scientist Dr. Rita Colwell (p. 10).

OIST recognizes that closing the gender gap in STEM, particularly in leadership positions, is a global challenge and requires long-term commitments from OIST and other institutions. To this end, we are in the process of establishing a fund that will be used in multidimensional ways to support the advancement of women, including (but not limited to) childcare welfare, leadership development, and recruitment.

### WOMEN AT OIST

15% Faculty

45% Research Staff

41% Students



# STUDENTS, ALUMNI, AND COMMUNITY LIFE

OIST is home to roughly 50 clubs, classes, and organizations that keep the campus—and the surrounding island—healthy, lively, and engaged. Spearheaded by OIST students, these programs forge campus-community friendship. Donors may give to two funds specifically for such purposes (below). Kozue Higashionna, head of the Student Affairs Section, says, “[These funds] go a long way to build their inner leadership as well as to enrich our community.”

## Student Initiative Fund

The Student Initiative Fund promotes student engagement on campus and in the surrounding community via sociocultural, educational, and environmental initiatives. It supports groups like Student Council, LGBTQ and Allies, and Okinawa Science Mentoring Program (p. 7). Mentors help students “take a leap past their own horizon and consider how they can contribute to society in the field of STEM,” says one recent graduate mentor.



▲  
Top: Students organized TEDxOIST in 2018 to share ideas. Right: POWER's August 2020 food drive



Many clubs interact with the surrounding island, and the Fund helps to cover travel fees, including bicycle rentals, that allow for efficient and environmentally conscious travel off-campus. This funding is vital to POWER (Promotion of Okinawa's Welfare, Economy, and Resources Club), which collaborates with local charities to provide essential resources during COVID-19 and other difficult circumstances. Funding may also be used to procure equipment for the sports clubs and others.

The Fund has received contributions from members of the OIST community, including staff, executives, and OIST's president emeritus and his wife, Jonathan and Renée Dorfman, who donated \$10,000. Dr. Dorfman says, *“Donor support for OIST students enables the next generation of global science leaders to thrive. We encourage others to join us in having an impact on the future through such contributions.”*

OIST is also grateful for the gifts of donors who are not otherwise affiliated with the institution, such as Yonekichi Shinzato, chairman of Okinawa Prefectural Assembly, who made a personal contribution. Takako Nishiyama, an Okinawa resident, gave after taking a public campus tour guided by Ph.D. student Dongqi Han. She left campus so impressed with Han's research and grasp of Japanese — which he learned at OIST — that she donated to the Fund in appreciation of students' work.

## Recreation Services BeActive Fund

The Recreation Services BeActive Fund supports student-community interaction and wellness through culturally diverse physical activities. BeActive classes offer group instruction to OIST and local residents. Popular courses include yoga, strength training, flamenco dance, and sanshin.

As Japanese government subsidy funds do not support recreation at OIST, donations to this fund are essential to ensure that the athletic community, on campus and locally, keeps thriving. An anonymous member of OIST leadership contributed approximately \$10,000 each to Recreation Services' general operations and to Haarii Club. Recently the Haarii Club visited Henza Island to meet world-renowned boat builder Naoki Goeku, who created a custom boat for the team that can be loaned to the community.



▲  
Custom boat made for OIST by Okinawan traditional boat builder Goeku-san.



▲  
Top: This eco-friendly polymer can be added to soil, causing it to retain large quantities of water and reducing the amount of water needed to irrigate crops. Bottom: Yukari Mahoe of Nikken Housing with OIST President Peter Gruss

# INNOVATION IN OKINAWA

## Sustainability Meets Innovation

Each year a group of technology innovators from around the world are selected to participate in a fixed-term residency program at OIST where they receive the funding, education, mentoring, and partnerships required to launch their sustainable living projects in Okinawa. The Innovation Square Startup Accelerator (I<sup>2</sup>@OIST) is Okinawa's first global startup program. It supports innovators with world-changing ideas in seven areas that serve society and sustain the planet: energy, health, mobility, water, agriculture, shelter, and materials. Entrepreneurial teams nurture their ideas on campus, in an incubator facility specially designed to support a diverse range of startup ventures. For example:

- A Russian team developed a thermal radiation sensor to detect body indicators of inflammation and cancer in early stages.
- A Canadian team applied AI technology to a brain-inspired biological motion perception system that can give seniors and their caretakers better ways to predict the risk of falls.
- An Indian team transformed agricultural waste into super-absorbent polymers that retain and deliver water to crops more efficiently while serving as a climate-friendly natural fertilizer. Benefitting farmers in the most water-scarce regions, the team's solution received accolades from the E.U.-sponsored Climate Launchpad, the world's largest green business ideas competition, ultimately winning the Carbon Tech category.

I<sup>2</sup>@OIST is part of a broader effort to promote the development of an innovation ecosystem in Okinawa. This longer-term and more expansive vision was the focus of a dynamic expert discussion for the recent OIST Foundation webinar "The Science of Entrepreneurship in Japan" (p. 10).

I<sup>2</sup>@OIST received both public and private support in Okinawa, including \$95,000 from Nikken Housing, an Okinawa-based real estate company. They created the Nikken Housing Accelerator Fund to support a start-up team working to improve living by making sustainable use of Earth's natural resources. "Industry must work cooperatively with academia and government to help solve the challenges facing our society," says Yukari Mahoe, the company's board director. "Nikken Housing is pleased to support efforts to educate and train future innovators who can contribute to Okinawa and its natural environment, and connect Okinawa to the world."

President Gruss says, *"We are extremely grateful for the donation from Nikken Housing. We hope to develop similar partnerships in the future that will bring more innovative talents, life-changing ideas, and smart growth opportunities to Okinawa."*



# EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

According to data from the Okinawa Prefectural Government and other sources, Okinawa has lower scores on the National Achievement Test and a lower proportion of young people pursuing higher education (36%) than the rest of Japan. Of those who do continue their education, fewer focus on science subjects. As a result, OIST is committed to promoting STEM in the community.

## Global Donors Foster Local STEM Education

While the Japanese government subsidizes OIST's research and graduate education operations, OIST relies on external funding from around the world for community programs.

In Okinawa, the Orchid Bounty, a fund comprised of donations from participants in and organizers of the Daikin Orchid Ladies Golf Tournament, recently made a grant. "OIST's activities to conserve the natural environment of Okinawa and support career development for future female scientists are particularly remarkable," says the fund's secretariat staff.

U.S. donors have also helped to meet the need. In Hawai'i, Robert Nakasone, a member of OIST's Board of Councilors, organized a fundraising event that raised \$25,000 to supplement support from the Okinawan People's Council for the Promotion of OIST, which allocates about \$17,000 annually to community programs. Shoko Farmer, an Okinawan living in Seattle, made a personal donation that was matched by her company, Russell Investments. And, the Tanaka Memorial Foundation in New York pledged two grants. Foundation Chair Makiko Ueshima says, *"We are a proud supporter of the OIST Foundation's efforts to expand STEM education for youth in Okinawa. These efforts will build exciting new opportunities for Okinawa, for Japan, and for the world."*

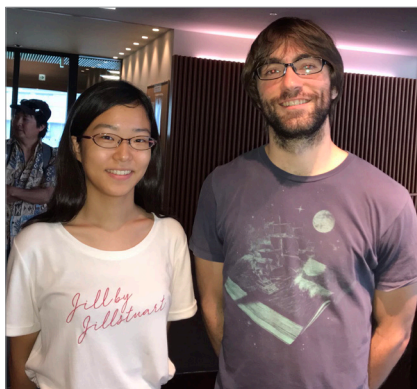
Misaki Takabayashi, vice dean of the Graduate School at OIST, where a new science education outreach team was recently formed, says, "We are truly appreciative of everyone's support."



## OIST'S STEM OUTREACH PROGRAMS

- Children's School of Science
- HiSci Lab, formerly Science Project for Ryuku Girls
- OIST Science Festival
- OKEON Project
- Okinawa Science Mentoring Program
- SCORE! Science in Okinawa: Research for Enterprise
- Travel to the remote islands
- University Marine Initiative

▲  
High school students from Okinawa experiment with surface tension.



▲  
Nina Harano and her graduate mentor, Collin Stecker

## OIST Mentors Inspire Future Scientists

The Okinawa Science Mentoring Program (OSMP) pairs high school students with graduate students once a week for six weeks during the summer. Students immerse themselves in science through interactions with their mentors.

"Since becoming a researcher has been my dream, I had to seize this special opportunity of one-on-one science mentoring in English," says Miku Sugama who flew to campus weekly from Miyako Island, 186 miles south of mainland Okinawa. With an interest in biochemistry and pharmacy, she aspires to invent medicine with no side-effects.

Nina Harano, who participated in OSMP and the International School of Science Japan, a summer camp hosted at OIST, says her campus experiences led her to apply to universities in the U.S. *"I was very inspired by the diversity at OIST,"* she says. "Students whose first languages weren't English just get together to break the barrier of language and dive into the mysteries of science." When it came time for the next stage of her education, Nina wrote her college essay about her time at OIST. Today she is a student at Columbia University in New York and plans to major in neuroscience. She hopes to become a neuro-ophthalmologist and solve vision problems that astronauts experience in a microgravity environment.



## CHARTER SPONSORS

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November 2020

Dear Friends,

Thanks to the support of our visionary charter sponsors, the OIST Foundation is promoting and supporting innovative global scientific breakthroughs through research and related programs at the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University (OIST) during this difficult time. In doing so, we also endeavor to foster the friendly relationship between the U.S. and Japan, empowering Americans to support the sustainable development of Okinawa and deepening U.S.-Japan relations through OIST. Just one year after its inception, I am pleased to report that the Foundation has made remarkable steps forward in pursuing its mission.

The OIST Foundation's programs and activities featured on the following pages highlight critical topics and people of importance to the U.S.-Japan relationship that have a scientific and innovation focus. They bring together prominent scientists from both countries, primarily through OIST, to discuss common research issues, questions, and themes that are of great concern to the world in which we live. Through a series of dynamic discussions and dialogues around science and its relations with a broad range of human experiences such as U.S.-Japan history, Okinawan culture, classic music, climate change, and business and entrepreneurship, the Foundation has engaged more than 1,000 individual participants from across the world. Some of our leaders and loyal members also contributed philanthropically to this growing bilateral community. Together with OIST, we build a bridge connecting Okinawa with the U.S., intellectually and experientially.

On behalf of the Foundation Board, I extend my sincere appreciation to the individuals and institutions in the U.S. who made philanthropic contributions to celebrate the Foundation's establishment. Our special thanks go to Nasser Kazeminy, who provided the critical funds to cover the initial administrative costs of operation. And most importantly, we offer our deepest gratitude for all the donors who support our mission. We are honored to be the builders of this community with you, and to share your enthusiasm for science, for Okinawa, and for the positive U.S.-Japan relations.

Sincerely,

Takeshi Ueshima  
Chair, OIST Foundation



# BRIDGING OKINAWA WITH THE WORLD

## Celebrating the Launch of OIST Foundation

On November 14, 2019, a ceremony was held in Washington, D.C. to launch the OIST Foundation at the official residence of H.E. Shinsuke Sugiyama, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States. Guests included government officials, leaders in the business and scientific communities from both Japan and the U.S., leaders in the Okinawan-American community, representatives of the Okinawan Prefectural Government, Japan-related parties in the U.S., the Board of Trustees and Advisors of the OIST Foundation, and OIST faculty.

Though unable to attend the event, Nobel laureate Steven Chu, 12th U.S. Secretary of Energy, marked the occasion by saying, ***“OIST is still in its infancy. To continue on its journey, it needs to grow international awareness and support. The launching of Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Foundation is an important step towards achieving the noble ambitions of OIST.”***



Left to right: OIST Foundation donor and trustee Nasser Kazeminy; Takeshi Ueshima, Founder/CIO, Heritage Fund Management, LLC and chair of the OIST Foundation Board of Trustees; Makiko Ueshima, chair of Tanaka Memorial Foundation (p. 7); and OIST President Dr. Peter Gruss



David Janes (far left) moderated a discussion with OIST Provost Mary Collins and Professors Evan Economo, Keshav Dani, and Izumi Fukunaga.



The group Okinawa Cultural Performance donated its time to the event so attendees could enjoy eisa, Okinawa's traditional drum dance.

## Foundation Bridges U.S. Supporters with OIST

Recognizing the impact of OIST on Okinawa and on the world, a group of Americans founded the OIST Foundation in 2019. As a tax-exempt nonprofit organization in the United States, U.S.-based donors can support OIST's research, teaching, and community outreach activities by giving to the Foundation.

Upon the establishment of the Foundation, former U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos wrote in a statement, “The OIST Foundation can play a vital role in [providing] a mechanism for Americans to engage with a region in Japan that has great potential to be at the forefront of scientific innovation in Asia.”

David Janes, managing director and secretary of the Foundation, agrees. “I hope many Americans understand this vision, and are keen to contribute to this great project,”

he says. The outpouring of contributions from generous donors indicates that they are. More than fifty individual and institutional charter sponsors helped to get the Foundation started, and many more have followed.

Now in its second year, the Foundation offers an array of educational events (p. 10) to promote OIST's innovative work, support the sustainable development of Okinawa, and deepen the U.S.-Japan relationship. That relationship is critically important as both countries conduct some of the most advanced scientific research in the world. ***“To do great research, you need to hire the best people from around the world,”*** says President Gruss. “This requires funding, so...I appreciate that our friends in the U.S. created [the OIST Foundation] for people to contribute to the benefit of Okinawa's society.”

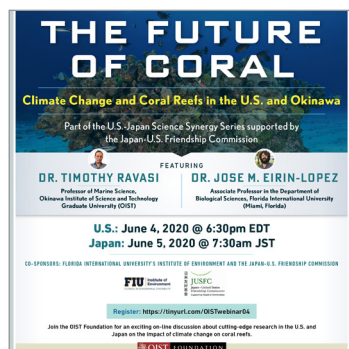
## New Series Spotlights U.S.-Japan Synergy in Science

While there is deep cooperation between the U.S. and Japan in science and technology, it tends to be hidden from the public sphere. Bringing it to the fore offers an opportunity to examine new ways to deepen collaboration, especially at a time when barriers to international cooperation seem to be increasing. To foster that visibility, the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission (JUSFC), an independent U.S. federal agency that promotes collaborative initiatives between the U.S. and Japan, granted \$5,000 to the Foundation for the inaugural U.S.-Japan Science Synergy Series.

### The program brings together prominent scientists from both countries to:

1. Highlight significant ways in which Japan does and could collaborate on scientific and technological research.
2. Build and strengthen relationships beneficial to enhancing the OIST Foundation's and OIST's relationships with institutions across the U.S.
3. Increase visibility and connections for OIST by directly engaging OIST scholars in the series.

Although originally envisioned as in-person gatherings, the series is now virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first event, held in June 2020, explored cutting-edge research on the impact of climate change on coral reefs. "The Future of Coral: Climate Change and Coral Reefs in the U.S. and Okinawa" featured Timothy Ravasi, OIST professor of marine science (p. 3). This series complements the already robust online educational offerings of the OIST Foundation.



## Online Events Connect OIST with the World

In addition to the U.S.-Japan Science Synergy Series, the Foundation developed other online programs and activities in response to the spread of COVID-19:

### U.S.-Japan Science Webinar Series

As the main education program of the Foundation, this series highlights critical scientific and innovation topics and people of importance to the U.S.-Japan relationship, such as:

- **Oceans, Climate, Cholera, and the Coronavirus**

Dr. Rita Colwell, the first woman to direct the National Science Foundation and a member of the OIST Board of Governors, shared her insights into global challenges facing the planet today. She also spoke about the obstacles women face in the field of science. "I'm very proud to be on the OIST Board. They make a big effort to recruit women scientists," Colwell told program moderator Kathy Matsui, vice chair of Goldman Sachs Japan.

- **The Science of Entrepreneurship in Japan**

This webinar featured a panel discussion on the challenges and opportunities of being an entrepreneur in Japan, the role of higher education in fostering an innovation ecosystem, and how to deepen U.S.-Japan partnerships to promote entrepreneurship.



### Co-Sponsored Webinars

These events feature partnerships with prominent institutions in the U.S., Japan, and around the globe, including:

- **Strengthening Transnational Bonds in the Era of Online Connections: Research and Educational Exchange in the U.S., Japan, and the Philippines**

Fulbright Japan, Fulbright Philippines, and the OIST Foundation collaborated to explore the impact of coronavirus on higher education. Panelists discussed how to foster international education exchange as the world shifts to more online formats.



To view all past webinar recordings and discover upcoming events, visit [oistfoundation.org/webinars](https://oistfoundation.org/webinars).



## SUPPORTING OIST'S GREATEST NEEDS

The President's Fund is made up of unrestricted donations that allow OIST to be flexible and immediately responsive in meeting changing needs as they arise. Early gifts to the fund, including approximately \$20,000 from the Kakazu family and nearly \$50,000 from OIST's founding president, Dr. Sydney Brenner, helped to establish the fund.

Today, the President's Fund continues to receive gifts from donors around the world and from within the OIST family. Senapathy "Kris" Gopalakrishnan, has been loyally supporting the fund since he joined the OIST Board of Governors in 2017. Dr. Peter Gruss, OIST's current president, is also a contributor.

These gifts help to reduce the University's dependence on the Japanese government's subsidies over time. In the past year, the President's Fund has supported visits and events for building strategic partnerships for the overall development of the University, including the initiatives highlighted in this report.

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### 5-YEAR CUMULATIVE FUNDRAISING TOTAL FOR ALL PURPOSES

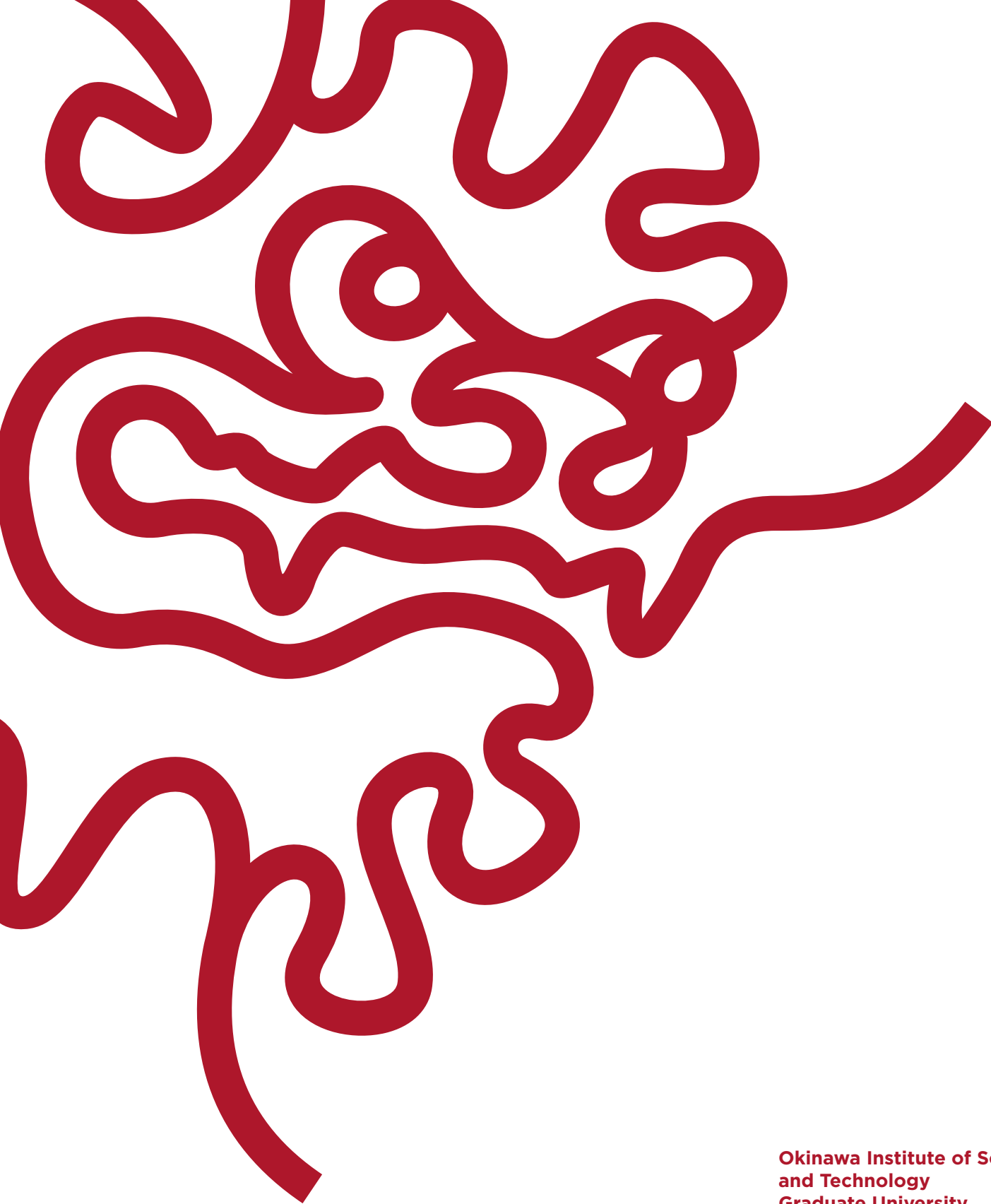
April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2020

¥125,846,647    \$1,194,788

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## THANK YOU

for supporting our mission to conduct internationally outstanding education and research in science and technology, and thus contribute to the sustainable development of Okinawa. With your partnership, OIST is able to promote and sustain the advancement of science and technology in Japan and throughout the world.



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