Professor Ishihara
Answers to the Open Letter of Inquiry

Question 1: Your vision of the Faculty

I hope students become individuals who boldly challenge difficult, uncertain problems, are willing to do what others are unwilling to do, who can remember the circumstances of those less fortunate, smile and stand up no matter how many times they stumble, and do all this from a global perspective.

My aim is the creation of an intellectual community consisting of students with intellectual curiosity, a sense of justice, and ability to take action, staff with a high-level of professionalism and attachment to the field of education, and faculty who are passionate about research and leading students. I hope to make this school “the one and only” College of International Relations in the world as a global community that places importance on cooperation within the school and values each member’s individuality.

Question 2: Regarding IR Major and GS Major

1) IR Major and GS Major in education

I have also been heavily involved in the university-wide G30 Project that includes the establishment of GS. I have also visited many high schools abroad and presented the appeal of studying at Ritsumeikan University with mock lessons. For these reasons, I am intent on developing GS students and the GS program literally as our own. Our curriculum is setup where each student can take a certain number of IR and GS courses. I think the curriculum is a very flexible one that allows students to take courses from both majors according to each student’s English and Japanese abilities as well as their interests.

GS is still in its second year and does not have many students. Because spring and fall terms begin at different times, its curriculum structure and class organization is slightly complicated. Moreover, English and Japanese abilities widely vary among students. In that sense, it is a stretch to suddenly do everything together. However, needless to say, the gradual integration of GS/IR, spring/fall GS is a good thing and I most certainly would like to move in such a direction.

At the same time, it is important that the establishment of GS provides IR students with an on-campus global learning environment. To put this into practice, participating together in seminar classes, etc. is, no doubt, productive, and I would like to implement this. The first step to adapting to different cultures is placing oneself in an environment where GS and IR students can feel both the joy and difficulty of different languages.

On the other hand, taking a class in a language that one is not good at will obviously hinder the student’s ability to understand the course content. Thus, it is important to utilize the merits of learning in both languages while maintaining a decent balance learning in depth in one’s native language and working at understand and communication in a different one. I hope to increase the number of opportunities to implement this kind of learning environment.

2) “IR Major, GS Major” and student life
I’ve been concerned about this issue for a while. Of course, it’s essential that students themselves actively engage in interaction between one another, however, I also would like the College to devise various kinds of arrangements. For example, even if it is not every time, there are many possibilities such as interaction between IR and GS seminar classes via discussions, international cooperation/social action projects, study sessions/discussion groups, starting clubs together, increasing social exchange events like “IR Night,” etc. If faculty and staff also participated, I think it would be extremely beneficial to the College vision I described. I invite new ideas from GS and IR students and would by all means be happy to work on them.

Question 3: Learning environment

It is essential to think of the learning environment as having both a hard and soft side. First, the hard side is that everyone equally feels that the Koshinkan is fairly small. There are plans for some undergraduate and graduate schools to move to Ibaraki Campus as well as extending/renovating Kinugasa Campus. As this is happening, I would like to expand the College of International Relations’ space and actively reach out to the University to improve our facilities. As for the soft side, I think the College of International Relations is a school that should take the initiative in maintaining a multicultural environment. Our providing of bilingual services for all students, education that takes into consideration various religions and cultures, and maintaining of living environments should serve not just this College but act as a model for the whole University. For that reason, I think the College of International Relations learning environment should be considered a showcase Ritsumeikan pushing globalization, and I will strongly call on the University to provide sufficient environmental arrangements. I hope students, including international students, actively participate and provide ideas about how we can create a better campus environment and I hope to increase the number of opportunities for doing so.

Question 4: Academic fees

Alleviating academic fee burdens is not only extremely important for current students and their parents but also, facing a future with a declining birthrate, for being a University that high school students can continue to select. Ritsumeikan University is an excellent university founded on philosophical principles that provides learning opportunities to students in need of economic support. Even if a university is pushed by society to one of both academics and sports or if it advances globalization, it should never have to scrap its principles. Rather, as a university that can provide a high quality education to students in need in Japan and abroad, it should define its traditional principles as its identity in 21st century society. Of course, a certain amount of cost is necessary to continue to maintain a high quality educational environment. However, for universities which are educational institutes, appropriate academic fees that are competitive in a reasonable financial structure should be maintained.

In Japan, there is distinct private university aid provided by the government. Obviously, the amount of funding should increase based on the degree of contributions from the private universities to individuals in society, and we should continue to strongly appeal to the government. However, it is a fact that many things are unclear in Japan’s current economy situation such as government subsidies, policies, etc. Moreover, we cannot forget that underlying private university aid are the taxes we pay.
Therefore, as part of the substantive effort to alleviate academic fee burdens, it is necessary to further improve scholarships and expand long-term, low-interest rate loans. Moreover, it goes without saying that Ritsumeikan University, a private university, cannot be allowed to be a public university with high tuition costs. Providing educational content and an environment with appropriate academic fees while remaining distinctive is extremely important. I wish to strongly push the University to implement substantive burden alleviating measures in terms of academic fees that work in various areas.

**Question 5: Autonomy of pan-university membership**

This is one of several extremely important parts of the University’s backbone. For members of a community, it is important that opportunities to voice their opinions are guaranteed. At the same time, in everyday community operations in any organization, it is expected that a representative whom every member democratically selects is entrusted and that this representative fulfills his/her responsibilities while being held accountable. These are all principles of democracy. Prompt decision-making capable of responding appropriately to the rapidly changing environment within and out should be conducted grounded on these principles. To avoid becoming a government of a country somewhere that cannot make decisions, we should continue to tirelessly strive to seek a form of entire-membership self-governance for the 21st global environment under a relationship of trust along with a healthy amount of variance among all academy members.