

The Present Bottom-up System of Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research and Its Future

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In sustaining scientific productivity and discovery, it is essential to create a research environment to promote scientific researches based on an independent and liberal idea of individual researchers. Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology are the major source for Japanese research funding, covering about half of the total competitive research funds from the Japanese government. The grants-in-aid program is based on the peer review system of bottom-up proposals from scientists in all disciplines. To ensure transparency and fairness in the selection process of proposals for funding, JSPS became an independent administrative institution and established the Research Center for Science System within its organization in 2003. The center's staff consists of two program directors and 110 program officers in nine disciplinary groups covering 50 fields, who provide advice from a scientist's viewpoint to improve JSPS's scientific programs, especially the grant review process, e.g., listing reviewer candidates, and recommending new grant formats and systems. Besides the JSPS's efforts to improve the grants-in-aid program, a number of actions from scientific community can be taken to develop a unique funding system to create a research environment rooted in our own cultural strengths. In the present talk, I would like to discuss about the present and future of the grants-in-aid program system in Japan and to encourage young scientists to participate in the planning of the grant system.