Going Global

Director of IPMU
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IPMU is shaping up truly globally. The fraction of non-Japanese scientists will exceed 50% this fall among all on-site full-time members. As far as I can tell, this is unprecedented in a Japanese research center. We have achieved a fair amount of visibility worldwide. It is amusing to meet scientists from other countries asking me about "ip-moo"; maybe this pronunciation will stick in the end. It sounds kind of cute.

Speaking of being global, our principal investigator featured in this issue is a true global thinker. Stavros Katsanevas is Greek working in Paris. He coordinates ASPERA, a network of funding agencies from 17 European countries supporting science at the interface of astronomy and particle physics. In addition, his dream is a truly global project: to build a network of large-scale experiments spread around the world. Given the great success of the Super-Kamiokande experiment in Japan, which houses fifty thousand tons of water underground, discussion for its even bigger successor has already begun. But it is not easy to find a site or funds to build an apparatus as big as a million tons. Many countries need to get involved to make the dream a reality, and even the apparatus itself can be built in modules, possibly one each in Europe, Japan, and the United States. This kind of out-of-the-box thinking and great optimism is exactly what the world science needs, and we are fortunate to have Stavros on our team.

I had a great pleasure and privilege to interview a Japanese astronaut, Takao Doi. He is famous of catching and manipulating a 1.3-ton satellite with his own hands during a spacewalk from a space shuttle. He loved stargazing as a boy, which motivated him to become an astronaut. In fact, he earned doctorate in astrophysics in his spare time between intensive training. Even though I was supposed to be the interviewer, he was so keen to learn more about dark matter and dark energy so that our roles have switched in the course.

Our science is not only global, but also local. When we organized my public lecture with the title "Does the Universe have an end?" it became so oversubscribed that I ended up giving the same lecture twice to accommodate the audience. I feel it is very important to let the public know what we have learned about the mysteries of the Universe and what problems we are attacking now. We will do our part in this important outreach activity, and I hope you enjoy this newsletter as one of its means.